

# Fighting Drug Abuse among Nigerian Youths the Friendly Way: the Celebrities and Social Media Influencers-Led Campaign Approach

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**Abstract:** *The tradition and social media is awash what tales of the upsurge in drug abuse among Nigerian youths, despite various governments' efforts to curb the menace overtime. The concern that drives the fight against drug abuse is its potential threat to our collective values and wellbeing with myriad consequences on our economy, family life, healthcare, national pride, education and human capital development. Currently, the menace of drug abuse has inflicted immeasurable harm on the economy, society, public health and safety. To find an alternative approach of reversing the trend, this paper explored the friendly ways of executing the fight against the rising abuse of drugs and substances. As a desk research, the explorative research design was adopted. The Social influence theory that brings about changes in attitude and actions was adopted as the framework of analysis. Through the qualitative-descriptive means, the study found that the attention of the Nigerian youths is easily gotten by the actions of the celebrities and social media influences whom they often copy their lifestyles and believe their stories and by extension, heed to their advise. As a resultant, the paper recommended the use of celebrities and social media influencers in reaching to the youths on the proper way and why to use drugs; the way and why to abstain from the use of drugs and the why and how to join the campaign n against drug abuse for the good of theirs and the society at large.*

**Keywords:** *Drug abuse, Youths, Celebrities, Social media influencers, Social influence theory*

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## Introduction

The purpose of the paper is to underscore the need for the escalation of the use of celebrities and social media influencers as a friendly approach to the fight against drug abuse among Nigerian youths. This need is based on the recorded positive move towards the involvement of celebrities in the “end drug abuse” campaign.

The study is relevant at that time given the huge number of Nigerian youths involved in drug abuse currently and the chances of increase in the numbers hence the 2018 National Drug Use

Survey revelation that over 11 per cent of youth's population in Nigeria take hard drugs like Syrup, tramadol, Diazepam, cocaine, Shisha mix among others. By implication, around 14.3 million drug users of which close to three million suffered from a drug use disorder. As if this is not enough, despite evidence that cannabis use is associated with a variety of health and other harms, especially among regular long-term users, today, about 11 million Nigerians are cannabis users. More so, the 11 per cent rise projections in the number of people who use drugs globally by 2030, signify that Nigeria will have to grapple with approximately 20 million drug users by 2030 which further deepens the public health and public security challenge. The well-documented high rate of drug abuse and projections of further spiraling increase is despite government policy-based efforts and campaigns against drug abuse such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA); National Agency for Foods and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC); the establishment of the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP).

The seeming inability of the government policy-based approaches to the fight against drug abuse has opened up the discussion once again for an effective strategy to fight drug abuse among youths globally. Resultantly, scholars have had several propositions that collectively differ from the initial government led agency-based policy approach. For instance, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2020) proposed Youth Participation in Drug Prevention Work, which was modified in 2021 to using peer to peer strategies in drug abuse prevention. Hirsch (2020) emphasized the role of parents and parenting in the fight against drug abuse. It envelopes some family-based prevention programmes that are expected to enhance family bonding and relationships. Despite the existing strategies, the burden of drug abuse and proliferation of controlled drugs are still on the increase in the country.

Hence, the recent resolve in Nigeria to collaborate with celebrities and social change advocates to combat drug abuse and other growing social ills among Nigerian youths (Akoni & Alu, 2021). This move has received the endorsement of the government agencies hence the NDLEA tasking of celebrities on fight against drug abuse (Nwanosike, 2021).

The above trajectory in the fight against drug abuse is in sync with Hawke, Mehra, Settipani et al.(2019) observation that there are increasing calls to make mental health and substance use services youth friendly, with hopes of improving service uptake, engagement and satisfaction.

However, youth-friendliness in this respect has not been clearly defined and there is a lack of information about the characteristics that make such tasks youth friendly. Thus, this paper proposes the use of celebrities and social media influencers that appeals to the youths to address three issues bordering on "drug use- the proper way- why and how", drug abstinences, why and how' and joining the campaign, why and how.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions have been drafted to guide this study

- What makes the use of celebrities and influencers in the campaign against drug abuse, a friendly approach?
- What should form the content of a celebrity-led campaign drug abuse?

## **Literature review on drug abuse and the campaigns against it**

Relevant literature on drug abuse was done thematically hereunder.

### **What is drug abuse?**

To the National Cancer Institute (2022), The use of illegal drugs or the use of prescription or over-the-counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used, or in excessive amounts. The Encyclopedia Britannica (2023) defines drug abuse, the excessive, maladaptive, or addictive use of drugs for nonmedical purposes despite social, psychological, and physical problems that may arise from such use. It can be referred to as the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. drug abuse, is the use of a drug in amounts or by methods that are harmful to the individual or others. It is a form of substance-related disorder.

According to Nwokolo (2019), Drug Abuse, otherwise known as Substance Abuse, is an umbrella term for describing the excessive and habitual use of hard/illicit drugs. It can also be regarded as the misuse or improper way of using a drug. These are drugs like marijuana, heroin, morphine, among others. Most people use the drugs majorly to alter their mood or affect a body function unnecessarily, which may, in turn, trigger some adverse effects. Mamman, et al. (2014), viewed drug abuse as a protracted problem that posed a serious threat on social, economic and health conditions of the individual, family's commonalities, the nations and the entire global world. These problems can be categorised into social, physical, emotional, and job-related problems (NCI).

According to Robinson, Smith and Segal (nd), People from all walks of life can experience problems with their drug use, regardless of age, race, background, or the reason they started using drugs in the first place. Some people experiment with recreational drugs out of curiosity, to have a good time, because friends are doing it, or to ease problems such as stress, anxiety, or depression. However, it's not just illegal drugs, such as cocaine or heroin that can lead to abuse and addiction. Prescription medications such as painkillers, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers can cause similar problems. In fact, next to marijuana, prescription painkillers are the most abused drugs in the U.S. and more people die from overdosing powerful opioid painkillers each day than from traffic accidents and gun deaths combined. Addiction to opioid painkillers can be so powerful it has become the major risk factor for heroin abuse. Of course, drug use either illegal or prescription doesn't automatically lead to abuse. Some people are able to use recreational or prescription drugs without experiencing negative effects, while others find that substance use takes a serious toll on their health and well-being. Similarly, there is no specific point at which drug use moves from casual to problematic. Drug abuse and addiction is less about the type or amount of the substance consumed or the frequency of your drug use, and more about the consequences of that drug use. If your drug use is causing problems in your life at work, school, home, or in your relationships, you likely have a drug abuse or addiction problem.

### **Drug Abuse among Youths in Nigeria**

Drugs and substance abuse pose a threat to our collective values and wellbeing with myriad of consequences on our economy, family life, healthcare, national pride, education and human capital development. Drug abuse and misuse inflict immeasurable harm on the economy, society,

public health and safety around the world each year. It also threatens the peaceful development and smooth functioning of many systems that keep a nation moving. Particularly, there have been increased suicide rates and increased economic costs in the management of drug-induced disorders. Also, there have been higher crime rates under the influence of drugs and to secure finances to support continued drug consumption and addiction, which is a threat to public safety. Already, about 14.4 million Nigerians are currently on drugs and 25 per cent of them are women (Muanya, 2019).

North-west of Nigeria recorded the highest number (37.5 per cent) of abusers. Southwest 17.3 per cent, the South-East 13.5 per cent, North-central 11.7 per cent, and the North-east zone has 8.5 per cent of the drug abusers in the country (Fotso et al., 2011). Most abuse substance among the population found in both rural and urban areas are cannabis 10.8 per cent, psychotropic drugs such as benzodiazepines and amphetamine-type stimulants 10.6 per cent, followed by heroin with 1.6 per cent, and cocaine 1.4 per cent respectively. Males' populations are higher 94.2 per cent among the substance users than females, and females are 5.8 per cent (Alemika, 2006).

A survey conducted by NDLEA (2018) on the problem of drugs and substance abuse in Northern Nigeria ranked Kano and Jigawa as the States with the highest number of youths who engaged in drug abuse. Over 3 million bottles of codeine syrup were consumed daily in these States. NDLEA further stressed that it had arrested and detained over 2,205 persons in 2015 on the crime related to drugs and substance abuse in the North. Some of the widely abused drugs are cough syrup, cigarettes, inhalants, cannabis and alcohol (Nelson, 2018). It was a known phenomenon that in those days the commonest illicit and drugs widely taken were marijuana, heroin, and cocaine (Nelson, 2018). However, things have changed; youth have gone to the extent of abusing new substance "that would cause similar or even more sensational effects as conventional narcotics. The study reported by the NDLEA covers not only Jigawa State alone but the Neighboring Kano State, so it is not conducted in the North-east zone of Jigawa State alone.

According to Ibrahim et al (2017), the highest influential factor leading to substance misuse among youth is peer group influencers who are males. It reveals that 70 per cent of the substance users engaged in the menace as a result of peer group influence and it is due to improper care 28 per cent by their parents led them to abuse drug. Therefore, the culture and religion of the people of the area as factors that stops females from mixing freely with their males' counterpart. Apart from peer group drug seller were also blamed that they were encouraging the youth into drug use. The strategies for control measures of the substance abuse menace such as primary, secondary and tertiary controls. The primary control; people should stop using the drug without a proper medical test or prescription by a qualified physician or health worker. A parent should also keep an eye to the people whom their children are mingling with to observe if there is any change in attitude or behaviour of their children. Secondary Controls: In this case, if a person is discovered taking drugs should immediately be consulted and make him desist from it before his/her condition become out of control. This can be done through sensitization and counselling on the adverse effect of drug abuse. "Tertiary Controls: measures are taken up to rehabilitate the full pledge addict, these could be achieved in the rehabilitation centres or at homes under the strict medical supervision" (Borhan et al., 2018).

Tong et al., (2012) argued that drugs that were used as a pain reliever to a patient who was physically sick did not lead to drug addiction. It is observed that addiction is mostly among people

with a history of drug use, a painkilling tablet such as Tramadol does not make people addicted while taking to relieve pains, but prolonged usage may lead to addiction. The study outlined how individual become addicted due to self-medication or prolonged use of the prescription drug. However, the present study is concern about the use of drugs not for painkilling but rather as energy-boosting substance that would enhance and encourage person to do more work.

Nouh et al., (2007) observed that alcohol, cannabis and prescription drugs were common practices in drug abuse. The major reasons for their drug intake were reported as pleasure, curiosity, and relaxation. The reasons for the prevalence of drug use are lack of enforcement by the government, illegal drug vendors and untrained health personnel (Onwubiko et al. 2015; Ering et al., 2016; Osonwa & Duke, 2018). The finding also reveals the rampant abuse of alcohol, Tramadol, marijuana and injectable drugs as the drugs mostly abused in the area. Locally made alcoholic drink is the predominant substance and is reported as being part of the culture of the area. It is concluded by observing the role of globalization to the prevalence of narcotics drugs such as Tramadol which is a foreign product in the study area, government neglect of the communities in term of provision of basic amenities, and less law enforcement agencies in the area. The finding is closely related to the present study as the author conducted the study among rural dwellers of some Northern Nigeria but the cultural difference is observed in term of alcohol usage. While the author revealed the prevalence of alcohol usage, the culture of the area under study considers alcoholic drinks a taboo.

Onyencho et al. (2020) found that the rampant abuse of tramadol, marijuana and cigarette as the most widely abused drugs. It shows that tramadol users constituted the highest number 56.2 per cent, marijuana smokers were 46.3 per cent and cigarette smokers were 37.9 per cent. It was noticed that 80.4 per cent of the respondents were male and 19.6 per cent were female. Both of them were of youth age category as their mean age was 28.6 years. The finding rated tramadol as the most dangerous drugs because of the difficulties involved in rehabilitating the addicted persons, there is a problem associated with a withdrawal syndrome. It was recommended that government should strengthen the concern agencies to control drug addiction and supply (Onyencho et al., 2020).

Manufacturing of Narcotics Drugs created serious health and social problems in Nigeria. Imported products like tobacco/cigarettes, brewery products and counterfeit drugs created many health-related problems in communities (Blackstone, et al., 2014). Majid, (2000) stated that “the cigarette is the most widely distributed global consumer product on earth, the most profitable, and the deadliest.” And “nicotine is more addictive than either alcohol or cocaine. It is believed that tobacco consumption is among the most serious health catastrophe that threatens the lives of both smokers and even nonsmoking individuals. Cigarette consumption is increasing predominantly among youth despite public awareness and enlightenment on the danger associated with its consumptions by the concern authorities According WHO (2019) tobacco is reported to have “killed more than 8 million people a year. More than 7 million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use while around 1.2 million are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke” (Müllerová, 2021, p. 193).

WHO further stated that approximately 80 per cent of the tobacco smokers globally reside “in low- and middle- income countries.” Despite the health hazards associated with cigarette smoking African governments are lackadaisical about it. In Nigeria, the journey to discourage tobacco smoking started since 2004 when the country becomes part of the signatories of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The Senate of the federal republic passed a bill prohibition tobacco smoking in offices and other public places in March 2011 to regulate and control production, manufacture, sale, advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco or tobacco products” (Agaku, et al. 2012; Sunday et al., 2014; Ekuri et al., 2016). Similarly, the government has made it mandatory to the tobacco companies to write boldly on the packages health warnings such as “The Federal Ministry of Health warns that Tobacco Smoking is Dangerous to Health. Since 2013 “Smokers are liable to die young” (Agaku, et al.2012).

Another dangerous drug is alcohol which is categorized as a depressant. It is sometimes culturally allowed among Kofyar tribe of North-central Nigeria, the tribes of South-south and Igbo tribe of Southeast of Nigeria. It is strictly prohibited in Northern Nigeria among Hausa-Fulani Muslim communities of the country as they believed. Alcohol is an illegal drug as far the Sharia Islamic Law (Aghedo et al., 2017). Valium or diazepam tablet (Benzodiazepine) is prohibited for a non-medical purpose (Compton and Volkow, 2006). Codeine-based Cough syrups have extensively been used by the youth especially in the Northern part of the country. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Radio Africa Hausa service. Hence reported the government of Nigeria banned both the importation and production of codeine syrups (Aghedo et al., 2017).

Tramadol is another most widely abused prescription drugs globally. This drug was approved in 1995 by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) “as a non-controlled, non- traditional, centrally acting analgesic under the trade name ULTRAM® (50 mg tramadol) for marketing in the United States” (Dasgupta, 2013, p. 543). Today tramadol and related narcotics drug like codeine has become a problem globally, as it constitutes among the highest narcotics that contributes to the deteriorating health condition of most of the Nigerian youth (Oraegbune, Adole, and Adeyemo, 2017). Codeine is another widely used over-the-counter drug. Frequent use may lead to many health problems. The rampant misuse of the drug in form of cough syrup necessitated the Nigerian government to ban the import of this product as well as manufacturing these drugs.

### **Government Efforts in Preventing Drug Abuse in Nigeria**

The menace of drug abuse needs to be checked, otherwise, it can impair all the efforts being made to put the nation on a higher political and economic pedestal (Muanya, 2019). To this end, the Nigeria government has always given due attention to the quest for elimination of drug abuse or at least, keeping it at bare.

Resultantly, they have introduced many policies, established many agencies and empowered organizations to ensure that abuse of drug is a thing of the past within the territory.

Below are some of the efforts of the movement towards presenting drug abuse in the country.

The NDLEA has been launching nationwide enforcement activities to seize drugs of abuse and arrest drug abusers in the community; sensitization program, rehabilitation and border patrol to checkmate trafficking of illicit drugs to and from Nigeria (National Drug Laws Enforcement Agency, 2020). The 2019 NDLEA report has shown that in the last 10 years of operations, a total of 56,

745, 795, 555 kg of drugs were seized, 85, 058 persons with drug-related offences were arrested and 16, 937 cases were secured and convicted (Abdallah, 2019).

Recently, The Federal government of Nigeria, through Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) -an agency in charge of regulating the practice of pharmacy in Nigeria, banned the operation of open drug markets in Nigeria (Akinkuotu, 2020). This effort was introduced to sanitize the drug distribution system in the country. The PCN also prohibits the handling of drugs by unlicensed personnel, especially prescription and controlled only drugs (Pharmacists Council of Nigeria, 2020).

The National Agency for Foods and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), an agency of the Federal government of Nigeria, banned the manufacturing, importation and sale (without a valid prescription) of codeine and codeine-containing syrups in Nigeria (Reuters, 2020). In 2018, the agency shut down some pharmaceutical companies involved in the manufacturing of codeine-containing syrups in the country (NAFDAC, 2018).

Other strategies by the Federal government include the establishment of the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP). The NDCMP is a national blueprint for addressing the complex issues of drug trafficking, production, cultivation, and abuse in Nigeria. In 2018, the Federal government constituted a Presidential Advisory Committee for the Elimination of Drug abuse in Nigeria. The committee was saddled with the responsibility of advising the government on ways to reduce the increasing burden of drug abuse in the country (The News Agency of Nigeria, 2019). However, the literature suggests that the burden of drug abuse may continue to rise in Nigeria due to the involvement of politics in law enforcement and lack of political goodwill (Klantschnig, 2009; Yakubu, Isa, Abubakar, Oreagba & Awaisu, 2020).

### **Gap in Literature**

Literature is rife on what drug abuse is and what it is not. Literature is also eloquent on the approaches and practices of the fight against drug abuse, including efforts of governments and international communities. In all these literature, what is clear is that despite the efforts and approaches, the trend and threat of drug abuse especially in Nigeria has continued to escalate. One thing has however appeared clearly, and it is the need to keep the fight against drug abuse friendly among the youths. This is in tandem with current societal reality, hence the new trend of getting celebrities involved in the campaign against drug abuse. But because, some of these celebrities are guilty of the same offence, it becomes necessary to clarify that point of friendliness in the new trend of campaign against drug abuse. This clarification is the gap this paper seeks to fill.

### **Theoretical Base**

This study is anchored on the Social influence theory. The theory was developed by Herbert Kelman in the year 1958. The Social influence theory is the idea that people are heavily influenced by the thoughts and actions of others. This theory is usually applied in realms of persuasion, influencing large groups or influencing behavior over time. The central theme of social influence theory, as proposed by Kelman (1958), is that an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and subsequent

actions or behaviors are influenced by referent others through three processes: compliance, identification, and internalization.

Each of the three processes can be represented by a function of the following three determinants of influence: (a) the relative importance of the anticipated effect, (b) the relative power of the influencing agent, and (c) the prepotency of the induced response (Kelman 1958).

In this regard, celebrities and entertainers have the power to change attitudes, subvert established norms, and spark a movement for a drug-free future by sharing their own personal journeys of recovery and advocating for prevention and rehabilitation (Olayiwola, 2023).

### **Materials and methods**

This is a qualitative desk research. The research design is explorative research design. Data used were generated through the secondary sources embodied in journal articles, newspapers articles, magazine stories as well as articles on the internet. These data were analyzed with the content analysis approach. This approach was considered suitable for this study because of the secondary nature of the data used.

### **Discussions**

#### **What makes celebrities and social media influencers –led campaign against drug abuse a friendly and approach?**

Insight into who a celebrity is and what stands him/her out will be helpful in answering the above question.

#### **Who is a celebrity and what stands him/her out?**

A celebrity is a person of fame and broad public recognition as a result of the attention given to him/her by mass media. A celebrity is a famous or celebrated person. In collective, these are famous persons especially in entertainment or sport. They are actors, musicians, comedians, footballers, athletes, entrepreneurs and politicians. What that means, is that an individual may attain a celebrity status from having great wealth (Dangote, Otedola, Obi Cubana), their participation in sports (Anthony Joshua, Victor Osehmen, Jay Jay Okocha, Kanu Nwankwo) or the entertainment industry (Davido, Phino, Olamide, Tiwa Savage, Basket Mouth, I go die, AY), their position as a political figure (Peter Obi, Dino Melaye), or even from their connection to another celebrity. Cubana Chief Priest is a good example celebrity by virtue of connection to another celebrity (Brockes, 2010).

Everyone loves celebrities. Our interest and excitement in who they are and what they do are what *makes* them celebrities.

For all their financial wealth and all their skill in their chosen fields, a celebrity would not *be a celebrity* if it were not for their publicity, for the adoration of their fans, and for the considerable amount of public attention that they garner on a regular basis. Celebrities are known for their charisma, wealth, public presence, and connections (Ren, 2019).

#### **Why are they considered apt and friendly?**

Celebrities, with all of their charisma, wealth, public presence, and connections, possess the ability to make real changes in areas that they feel strongly about and the multiplier effect of

having celebrities join in the campaign against drugs is that millions of youths will likely be influenced positively by their message. Several celebrities already work hard at supporting, funding, even starting campaigns in various humanitarian, environmental, educational or political issues (Ren, 2019).

In terms of being the apt approach, globally, celebrity influence is huge, and with the advent of social media, they are able to reach more fans and also get feedback from them more easily. Their power has become so enormous that they are able to sway opinions, arouse interest and influence their followers.

It is no surprise that brands and companies use celebrities to promote their products. One example of the evidence of celebrity influence occurred in June 2021 when Coca-Cola's shares dropped by \$5 billion after footballer Cristiano Ronaldo visibly rejected the soft drink on his table during a press conference opting for water instead. Snapchat lost \$1.3 billion of the company's market value in 2018 after reality TV star Kylie Jenner tweeted that she had stopped using the social media app.

In terms of being a friendly approach, the pop culture has already glamorized drug and substance use among youths through their music and video. Music and movies have a significant influence on young people, and their portrayal of drugs as cool trendy substances has played huge role in encouraging the use of illegal substances among young Nigerians. Pop artistes sing about drugs and how it makes them feel, explicitly projecting its usage in their music videos and infusing slang related to drugs in their lyrics. Burna Boy's "I need igbo and shayooo" is a canny example giving his popularity among youths in Nigeria, Africa and beyond.

According to a National Library of Medicine report, drugs are present in nearly half of all music videos. The glamorisation of drugs coupled with celebrity power and influence has led many young people into drug abuse as a mark of 'street' credibility or, in social media parlance, "to feel among" (Yusuf, 2022).

With the above, one dares ask: should artistes, creators, and players in the entertainment industry, who young people have taken as role models, be blamed for the rising cases of drug usage and abuse in the country? Your guess is good as mind, but one thing is certain and that is the fact that the influence of artistes transcends their music, movie and other forms of art. Fandom and celebrity worship are so rife that it has birthed violent engagement of rival fandoms on social media.

Indeed, if celebrities do have such power to influence people and sway opinions, then they have the power to also positively impact the lives of their followers. Nigerian celebrities can help in the fight against substance abuse, especially among youths, by making a 180-degree turn from encouraging the use of drugs to abstaining from it by pointing out the short-term and long-term consequences of substance abuse.

Along this line, if they can apply the genuineness and vulnerability principle, it will certain sway the youths towards considering dropping drug abuse habits. The genuineness and vulnerability principle entails the celebrities and entertainers' willful opening up about their own experiences

with substance usage. It helps to humanise the problem and build stronger bonds with their audience. These people prove that drug usage can harm anyone, no matter their career or popularity, by being open and vulnerable. By being transparent, one may strengthen the significance of getting help and therapy while also fostering empathy, understanding, and support for those who are battling addiction

Lastly, in others climes, it is well established that celebrities have taken firm stand in the fight against drug abuse. According to Dekin (2019), campaigning against drug use has been a popular cause that many celebrities have embraced. In a popular campaign, Egyptian footballer Mohamed Salah appeared in an anti-drug PSA targeting Egyptian youth and encouraging them to stay clean when it came to drugs. His “Just Say No” PSA was credited with a 400% increase in calls to the national drug rehab hotline within three days.

Anti-drug campaigns supported by celebrities can be found around the world. In India, Bollywood actors, including Soha Ali Khan, Kunal Kemmu, and Sanjay Dutt, are backing the #DrugFreeIndia campaign, started by producer Mahaveer Jain. Leading up to the formal launch of the movement, many Bollywood stars posted encouraging messages using the hashtag and speaking out against drug use. The stars plan to attend anti-drug events at schools around the nation, interacting with students and doing hands-on prevention work to help the next generation steer clear of the dangers of illicit drugs. Jackie Chan, the Kung Fu artist, and movie star, was been named Singapore’s first anti-drug ambassador. He devotes his energy to reaching out to students and letting them know that remaining drug-free is of the utmost importance to protect their futures. Southeast Asia has become a hotspot in the global drug trade, which makes Jackie Chan’s advocacy even more needed.

The celebrities can actually escalate the vanguard against drug abuse through two means: advocancy and awareness and through their music and films. Football stars and athletes can join the fray while comedians should creates contents that are at the heart of the negative impact of drug abuse on the youths, aged, families, organizations and society at large

**Advocacy and Awareness-** By leveraging their platforms to advocate for drug misuse prevention, treatment, and recovery, many celebrities and entertainers work in the advocacy field. They can spread awareness of the risks associated with drug usage and compel people to get assistance by donating their voices to campaigns, assisting organisations, or taking part in PSAs. Their participation in these projects contributes to the de-stigmatization of addiction and recovery, the provision of services, and the normalisation of these dialogues.

**Through Music and Film-** Celebrity musicians can write songs that express themes about overcoming adversity, the value of making wise decisions, and the dangers of drug addiction. They provide an engaging soundtrack for transformation by including substance addiction prevention narratives into their art. While actors and filmmakers can incorporate stories about substance misuse into their works. They could try to evoke empathy, start discussions, and motivate people to escape the clutches of addiction by presenting realistic circumstances and the effects of drug consumption. The music and film industries have a considerable influence on societal norms and values. If drug abuse is depicted as glamorous or exciting in Nigerian music,

movies, or music videos, it can influence perceptions and attitudes towards drug use among the audience. Conversely, realistic portrayals of the negative consequences of drug abuse can raise awareness and discourage such behaviour.

➤ **What should form the content of a celebrity-led campaign drug abuse?**

The celebrity-led campaign against drug abuse is simply a preventive approach to the fight against drug abuse among the youths. Ordinarily, prevention programmes address all forms of drug abuse, alone or in combination, including the underage use of legal drugs (e.g., tobacco or alcohol); the use of illegal drugs (e.g., marijuana or heroin); and the inappropriate use of legally obtained substances (e.g., inhalants), prescription medications, or over-the-counter drugs (Johnston; O'Malley and Bachman 2002), but for sustainability of the gains of the use of celebrities and social media influencers in this fight, the content of this campaign covers:

**The how and why of using drug the proper way**

- The right age to use legal drugs (e.g., tobacco or alcohol);
- The need not to use illegal drugs (e.g., marijuana or heroin)
- The appropriate use of legally obtained substances (e.g., inhalants), prescription medications, or over-the-counter drugs
- The why of the use of drug the proper way is simply because drug abuse is using legal drugs illegally and the illegal use of legal drugs.

**The why and how of abstaining from the use of certain drugs**

- The drugs don't make you feel free, your mindset does
- Your health is very important because a sick man does not feel good
- You don't need drugs/substances to become successful, you just need to be critical in your thinking
- Drug abuse is equal to suicide
- It makes you complacent in the death of your loved ones
- Not to be a disappointment to your generation
- The how is to join the train to make Nigeria drug free

**The how and why of getting the youths to join the campaign against drug abuse**

- To get youths to be involved in the campaign against drug abuse, celebrities are to collaborate with institutions where youths constitute the majority of their members- such as schools (secondary and tertiary ) as well as the church
- It is very pertinent to get youths involved in the campaign against drug abuse, because of the power of peer pressure and influence that has been credited to have contributed immensely to the escalation of drug abuse in the first place.
- The felt need approach is incontrovertible in this respect. If we are able to get few youths who are victims of drug abuse to turn around and start preaching against it, the job of the celebrities in collaboration with youth-based institutions will be achieved and sustained

### **Concluding Remarks**

Drug and alcohol abuse in Nigeria are serious problems and has contributed largely to the sorry state of our dear nation. It has birthed a lot of social and medical problems, including school dropout, armed robbery, violence, mental disorder, irritability, heart disorders, to mention but a few.

The solution to this menace from the government is no longer enough, thus calling for every individual, communities, families, schools, civil society, religious organizations, the media, and business entities to be involved. However, because campaign is considered a friendly approach, the escalation of the use of celebrities and social media influencers has become a necessity. According to Nwokolo (2019), Celebrities are of great influence in the life of most youths; in fact, they are considered as role models in society. These are popular figures, ranging from musicians, footballers, actors and actresses, entertainers, etc. Due to this high level of influence, celebrities are capable of eradicating widespread drug abuse in Nigeria. They can do so by organizing/participating/sponsoring campaigns that is against the use of hard drugs. They should also be an exemplary leader; they should avoid indulging in anything that has to do with the distribution, trading, or use of hard substances so that the audiences can easily grasp their message and shun drug abuse. Another way celebrities can help prevent/reduce drug abuse in Nigeria is by donating funds to organizations and agencies that advocate against the use of hard substances.

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