

The impact of drug use and trafficking in Africa

Chaib Mohamed Toufik ¹

¹ University of Mohamed Kheider Biskra, chaibmohamedtoufik@gmail.com

Received: 27/08/2024

Accepted: 01/10/2024

Published:15/10/2024

Abstract:

The pervasive issue of drug use and trafficking in Africa has profound social, economic, and political ramification. This explores the multifaceted impact of this crisis on the continent. Drugs trafficking routes often intersect with region plagued by political instability, exacerbating violence and corruption economically, the illicit drug trade undermines legitimate business and diverts resources from essential services, stunting development socially, and drug abuse contributes to public crisis, including the spread of the infectious diseases and increased morality rates.

Efforts to combat this scourge involve a combination of law enforcement public health initiatives, and international cooperation.

Keywords: drug, trafficking, substance, disease, instability, prevention, treatment, impact, combat, threatening, policy, legislation, illicit.

Corresponding author: Chaib Mohamed Toufik , chaibmohamedtoufik@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Across Africa, illegal drug trade and substance dependence publishing down the region's economies and growth prospects unsustainable patterns of production, high incidence addiction consumption, poor global and region wide controls lack of homeland security, insufficient community resilience, poor development stability, and too high a level of corrupt activities and unrestricted growth in arms and drug trafficking are all fueling an increase in illicit trade. This illicit trade is causing huge negative impact an economic growth prospects in affected regions, moreover, such periphery gaps and inequalities, hence threatening local regional and global security aspects.

Substance use disorders are defined as “the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs” by the world health organization (W.H.O). Substance use disorders are further defined as “a collection of cognitive, behavioral and physiological symptoms, which indicate that the individual continues using the substance despite significant substance related problems”.

WHO has classified substance use disorders into two broad categories: substance dependence and substance misuse or abuse. Substance characterized by an array of behavioral, emotional, and social problems as a result of the continuous use of the substances and the inability to meet life obligation in various areas such as employment, education, interpersonal relationships, and caregiving roles. Substance misuse or abuse may necessarily lead to the individual displaying signs of addiction¹.

2. Historical overview of drugs use and trafficking in Africa

The historical of drug use and trafficking in Africa is complex and multifaceted by various social, economic, and political factors ever time.

2.1 Early history

Traditionally, substances like alcohol, cannabises and that have been use in various African cultures for centuries. These substances were often integrated into social and religious practices².

2.2 Colonial era

During the colonial period, the introduction of new substances and the establishment of trade route significantly impacted drug use trafficking the colonial powers often controlled the production and distribution of substances like alcohol and opium³.

2.3 Post-colonial period

After gaining indecency many African countries faced instability, poverty and social unrest, which contributed to the rise in drug use and trafficking, the 20th century saw the emergence of more potent drugs like heroin and cocaine, which were trafficking through Africa to often parts of the world⁴.

2.4 Modern era

In recent decades Africa has become a significant grant point for drug trafficking, particularly for cocaine from south America and heroin from Asia, the continent's strategies location and porous borders make it an attractive route for drug traffickers, additionally the rise of synthetic drugs and pharmaceuticals has added new dimension to the drug problem⁵.

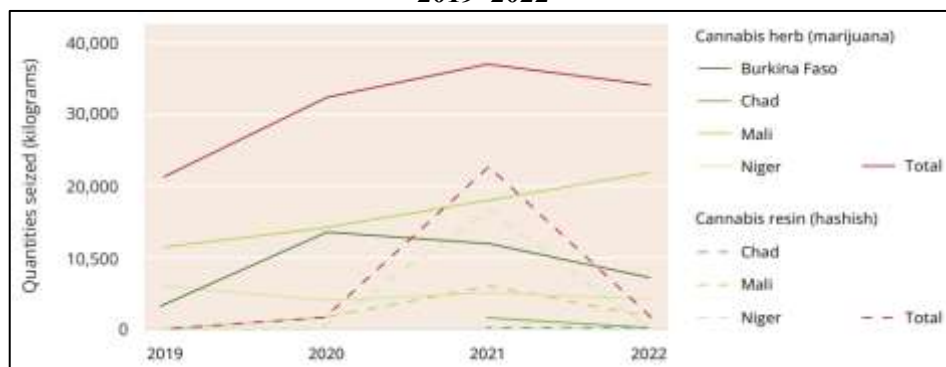
3. Current trends and patterns of drug use and trafficking in Africa

3.1 A-Drug use

A-Canabis:

Cannabis remains the worldliest used drug in Africa. The prevalence of cannabis use in west and central Africa is higher than the global average, with about 10% of the population ages 15 to 64 using it⁶.

Figure 1: Trends in cannabis seizures in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger, 2019–2022



Sources : UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire 2019, 2021 and 2022 from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger

B-Opioids:

There is a significant issue with opioid use particularly with pharmaceutical opioids like tramadol, thee region accounts for half of the global seizures of this substance.

C-Synthetic Drugs:

The use of synthetic drugs, including methamphetamines and synthetic cannabinoids is in the rise⁷.

3.2 Drug trafficking

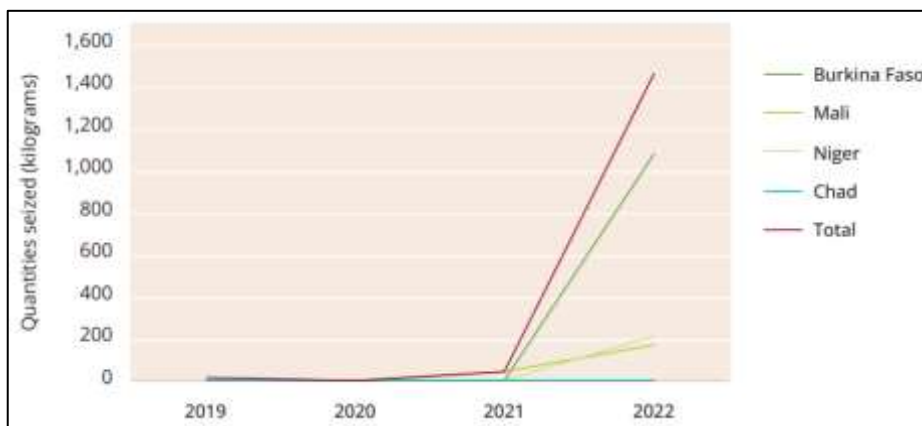
A-Cocaine:

West Africa is a key transit region for cocaine trafficking the amount of cocaine seize in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger)⁸ has sharply increased indicting a growing problem⁹.

Figure 1 : “Sahel countries” refers to Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger.



Figure : Trends in cocaine seizures in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger, 2019–2022



Sources : UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire 2019, 2021 and 2022 from Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Chad.

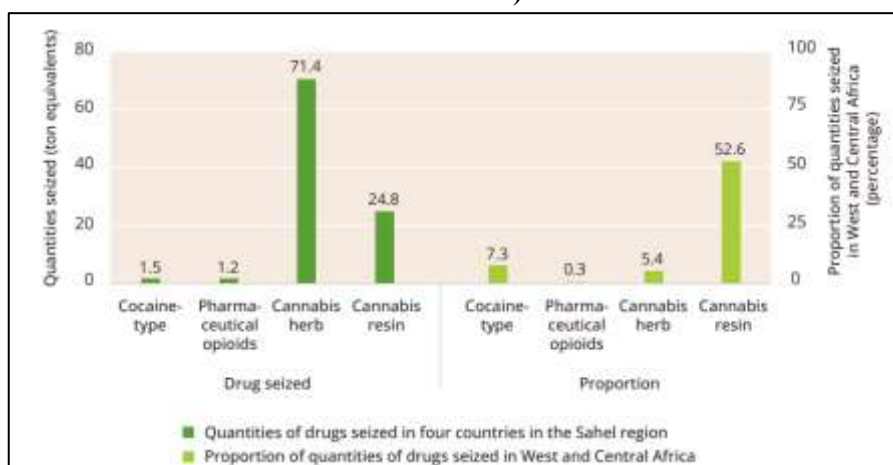
B-Heroin:

East serves as a transit point for heroin trafficking, with the drug often originating from Afghanistan and moving through the region to other parts of the world¹⁰.

C-Cannabis resin:

North Africa is a significant producer and transit region for cannabis resin.

Figure 4: Drug seizures in four of the Sahel countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, the Niger and Chad)



Sources: UNODC, responses to the annual report questionnaire 2021 and 2022 from Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo.

4. Social economic and political impact of drug use and trafficking in Africa

4.1 Social impact:

A-Health issues:

Drug use leads to a range of health problem, including injections diseases (like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis), mental health disorder and overdose dealers.

B-Crime and violence:

Drug trafficking is often linked to the increased crimes such as homicide, armed robbery and abduction¹¹.

C-Family and community disruption:

Drug addiction can lead to family breakdowns, neglect of children and community instability¹².

4.2 Economic impact:

A-Health cause costs:

The treatment of drug related issues places a significant financial burden in health care systems¹³.

B-lost productivity:

Drug use can lead to decreased productivity and increased absenteeism in the work force¹⁴.

C-Economic instability:

Drug trafficking can distort local economics, leading to inflation and economic instability¹⁵.

4.3 Political impact

A-Corruption:

High profits from drug trafficking can lead to corruption at various levels of government and law enforcement¹⁶.

B-Funding of armed groups:

In region like the Sahel, drug trafficking funds armed groups, contributing to political instability and conflict¹⁷.

C-Undermining rule of law:

The pervasive in fluency of drug trafficking undermines the rule of law weakens state institutions¹⁸.

5. Efforts and strategies to combat Drug use and trafficking

5.1 Prevention and Education

A-Awareness campaigns:

Implementing public awareness to educate people about the dangers of drug use and the consequence of trafficking.

B-School programs:

Integrating drug education into school curriculums to inform young people about the risks associated with drug use.

C-Community outreach:

Engaging community leaders and organizations to spread awareness and support to those at risk.

5.2 Treatment and rehabilitation

A-Access to treatment:

Expanding access to treatment facilities and services for individuals struggling with addiction.

B-Rehabilitation programs:

Developing comprehensive rehabilitation programs that include medical treatment counseling and social support.

C-Support groups:

Encouraging the formation of support groups for individuals in recovery to share experience and provide mutual support¹⁹.

5.3 Law enforcement:

A-Strengthening laws:

Enhancing legal framework to impose stricter penalties for drug trafficking and related crimes.

B-Training and resources:

Providing law enforcement agencies with the necessary training and resources to effectively combat drug trafficking.

C-international cooperation:

Collaborating with international organization and neighboring countries to dismantle drug trafficking networks.

5.4 Harm Reduction

A-Needle exchange programs:

Implementing needle exchange programs to reduce the spread of

injections diseases among drug users.

B-Supervised injection sites:

Establishing supervised injection sites where individuals can use drugs under medical supervision to prevent overdoses.

C-Naloxone Distribution:

Making naloxone, a medication that can reverse provide overdoses widely available to first responders and the public.

5.5 Policy and legislation

A-Decriminalization:

Decriminalization of certain drugs to reduce the burden on the criminal justice system and focus on treatment.

B-Regulation:

Regulation the production and distribution of certain substance to control their quality and reduce the risks associated with their use.

C-Monitoring and evaluation:

Continuously monitoring and evaluating drug policies and program to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments²⁰.

5.6 community and social support

A-Family support programs:

Providing support and resources to families effected by drug use to help them cope and support their loved ones.

B-Employment and Education:

Offering job training and educational opportunities to individuals in recovery to help them reintegrate into society.

C-Housing assistance:

Providing housing assistance to individuals in recovery to ensure they have a stable and supportive environment.

6. CONCLUSION

The impact of drug use and trafficking in Africa and conclude our exploration.

1-Drug use in Africa:

A growing challenge by 2030 demographers project that the number of people using drugs will rise by 11% globally and as much as 40% in

Africa alone²¹.

In 2018, approximately 60 million out of the estimated 269 million people who used drugs were in Africa. This surge compounded by population growth, as Africa is expected to experience the largest rise in population between 2018 and 2030 consequently the number of people using drugs on the continent could increase by 38%.

2-Ramification of drug use:

The consequences of this ballooning drug use are significant. Drug use costs live almost half a million people dying due to drug related issues in 2019.

Additionally, the illicit drug trade hinders economic and social development; it also poses a fundamental threat to security and stability in certain region²².

In summary, addressing drug use and trafficking in Africa requires concerted efforts to prevent harm, enhance access to care and discourage new market for trafficking by understanding the scale of the problem and it's far reaching Consequences, we can work towards effective solution²³.

7. Bibliography List:

- ¹ Onaolapo, Olakunle James et al. “Substance use and substance use disorders in Africa: An epidemiological approach to the review of existing literature.” *World journal of psychiatry* vol. 12,10 1268-1286. 19 Oct. 2022
- ² <https://link.springer.com/>
- ³ Oxford.com
- ⁴ <https://link.springer.com/>
- ⁵ <https://link.springer.com/>
- ⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-sahel>
- ⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ¹¹ <https://link.springer.com/>
- ¹² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ¹³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ¹⁴ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ¹⁶ United States Agency for International Development (<https://www.usaid.gov/>)
- ¹⁷ Social, Political, Economic and Environmental Issues That Affect Us All (<https://www.globalissues.org/>)
- ¹⁸ Social, Political, Economic and Environmental Issues That Affect Us All (<https://www.globalissues.org/>)
- ¹⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ²⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ²¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (<https://www.unodc.org/>)
- ²³ <https://enactafrica.org/>