

Drug Abuse and National Security in Nigeria: A Case Study of Delta State (2015-2023)

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Abstract

Drug abuse has become an escalating concern in Nigeria, particularly due to its far-reaching impact on national security. This study focuses on Delta State, one of Nigeria's states grappling with increasing rates of drug abuse and related security issues. By examining drug abuse trends from 2015 to 2023, the research highlights how the rise in drug use, particularly among the young population, correlates with the state's growing crime rates, including murder, rape, armed robbery, and cult clashes. The study also delves into the effectiveness of existing drug control policies, exploring the efforts made by government agencies, including the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), in collaboration with state authorities, to address the problem. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the research analyzes the structural factors contributing to the persistence of drug abuse, such as poverty, unemployment, and peer pressure, and assesses their implications on national security. Theoretical framework, as structural functionalism is employed to explore the broader societal impact of these issues. The findings emphasize the need for stronger political will, improved rehabilitation efforts, international drug policy implementation, and enhanced community involvement to curb

drug abuse and restore security. The study provides recommendations, incorporating the Commission on Narcotics Drugs (CND) Demand and Supply Reduction Policy for policymakers on how to implement more effective strategies to combat the menace, with the hope of reducing the societal and security-related challenges posed by drug abuse in Delta State and Nigeria as a whole.

Keywords: Drug abuse, national security, Delta State, NDLEA, young population, crime.

Introduction

Drug abuse is a critical global issue, with significant implications for national security, and socio-economic stability. In Nigeria, the problem has escalated over the years, affecting both urban and rural populations. The rise in the use of illicit drugs, especially among the young population, has resulted in a spike in criminal activities such as armed robbery, rape, kidnapping, murder, theft, terrorism and violent gang wars.

Nigeria, which is an enormously diverse state with over 400 ethnicities and many religious groups give the need for drug abuse to be viewed within a broader context, due to its multi-cultural nature (Ekpenyong S.N, 2012). However despite the nature of the Nigeria population, there is a consistent outcry from the public, police, preachers, health professionals, teachers, regulatory agencies and parents on the growing burden of drug abuse and the corresponding negative impact on national Security.

Drug Abuse is a growing problem in Nigeria with daily increase, especially among the young population. The threat of drug abuse has been identified in Nigeria and now very

prevalent in the southern region. NDLEA stressed that it had arrested and detained over 2,205 persons in 2015 on the crimes related to drugs and substance abuse (ICIR, 2016). Also, 25% of those arrested for drug abuse related offences are minors and young persons (Namadi, 2016). The statistics indicate a relationship between drug abuse and crime and other anti-social activities.

Delta state in the southern region of Nigeria has been known for its rich cultural heritage and abundant resources, its problem of drug abuse was primarily within the old aged and elderly people who were mostly seen taking local snuff and piping tobacco and smoking cigarettes at some point. The security landscape was within its borders and crime rate was moderated, making solving crimes less complex as direct investigations would lead to arrest of perpetrators. Drug abuse at that time made no connection to security problems, but over the years, Delta state has experienced an alarming rise in drug abuse especially among the young population, and a disturbing trend, from a widespread use of illicit substances such as Cannabis, Marijuana and now a changing pattern of drug abuse in favour of pharmaceutical drugs such as codeine, tramadol, diazepam, rohypnol and other anti-anxiety drugs, and a significant number of the young population both men and women engage in this unmannered behaviour. The increase in the rate of drug use in Delta state has led to the increase in its security challenges. It means that drug abuse is a predisposing factor to the commission of many criminal offenses like murder, rape, arson, armed robbery and other acts of terrorism and it has left so many as victims of rape, patients of mental disorder, inmates of prison and rehabilitation centres. So many measures have been put in place to contain this menace of drug abuse in Delta state but even so it has still been on the rise, as a result, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Delta state

command in conjunction with Delta state government and other stakeholders have organized workshops/seminars to address and educate the public. A policy dialogue was also set up in government house, Asaba, that aimed at formulating policies to combat drug abuse and trafficking in the state (Oladapo, 2023). Furthermore, the NDLEA have destroyed over 90,000 kilograms of illicit drugs made up of mostly cannabis sativa at Ogwashi-uku in Aniocha LGA (NDLEA, 2019). After which the NDLEA chairman at the time, retired colonel Mohammed Abdallah held that since the destruction of over 54,000 kilograms of drugs in the state, drug seizures has still increased tremendously, adding that the biggest clandestine laboratory for manufacturing of Methamphetamine, which posed a serious danger to humans and the environment was discovered in Asaba in 2016 (Agha, 2016).

Drug abuse in the contemporary time has become one issue that cast a gloomy shadow and constitutes a major threat to the security of Delta state. The high rise in crimes and acts of terrorism that result to loss of lives and properties are usually linked to the activities of individuals under the influence of drugs. Drug abuse leads to criminal offenses such as rape, gang warfare, cult clashes, armed robbery, murder, vandalism, and inducing fear among the general public etc. (Siro, 2014). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, where it revealed in 2017 an increase in the amount of drug seizures and arrests in Delta State, it also recorded an increase in the total cases reported in Delta State to 7,150 (5.3%) in its crime statistics (NBS, 2017). This was as a result of the high rise of criminal activities such as armed robbery, rape, murder, kidnapping, that bedevilled Delta State following the prevalence of drug abuse.

Also, the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC), Delta state command has recorded a significant increase in road accidents which a sizable number has been linked to drug abuse. In 2017, the state analysis of road traffic crashes showed that a total number of 31 road crashes occurred, including 18 fatal and 13 serious accidents that resulted in 141 number of injured people, 36 number of killed people, 177 number of total casualty, making 307 people involved (RTC, 2018). In 2019, the total number of road crashes increased to 202, comprising 63 fatal, 108 serious and 31 minor accidents and the total number of people involved increased to 1,488, comprising of 541 number of injured people, 94 number of killed people and 635 total casualty (RTC, 2019). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has indicated an increase in drug seizure and arrest from 2,556.19 kilograms and 210 persons respectively in 2017 to 3,245.30 kilograms and 296 arrested persons in 2019 (NBS, 2020). Delta state suffers these major security problem because its population which is a component of national security is ridden with non-productive youths that are deeply engaged in drug abuse and trafficking, and in the long-run the non-productivity of the young population will deteriorate the economy of the state. Drug abuse has also reduced the population strength of the state as it leads to premature deaths, while it affects the population power as it leaves many users mentally handicapped.

This study investigates the relationship between drug abuse and national security, focusing on Delta State between 2015 and 2023.

Literature Review

Understanding Drug Abuse

The term drug means different things to different people, for a physician drug is any substance with medical or therapeutic properties. But to a sociologist and others, drugs are perceived as any substance, medicinal or not, such as heroin, marijuana, alcohol etc. (Odivwri, 2008). The world Health Organization (2011) defines drug as any substance which when taken modifies one or more functions of the body both manor animal. This definition considers anything that influences human or animal body as drug. The definition added to knowledge by identifying features of drug and how it enters human body.

Drug abuse can be defined as the self-administration of drugs without any medical advice or not adhering to medical advice concerning the use of a prescribed drug (WHO, 2020). The world Health Organization further sees drug abuse as “persistence or sporadic drug use inconsistent with or unrelated with acceptable medical use”. Dambazau (1999) opines that drug abuse refers to an excessive, maladaptive and addictive use of drugs for non-medical purposes.

Drug abuse or substance abuse as it is mostly interchanged is also the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain. There are over 190 million drug users around the world especially among young adults. Apart from the long term damage it causes to the body, drug addicts who use needles are also at risk of contracting HIV and Hepatitis B and C infections. These drugs of abuse are usually psychoactive drugs that are used for different reasons which include: as part of religious practices or rituals, as a means of obtaining creative inspiration, recreational purposes and

for pleasures. These drugs fall into categories – depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens etc. Example of these drugs include tobacco, cocaine from cocoa, marijuana from cannabis, synthetic drugs such as heroin, ecstasy etc.

There are several different routes of administration for these drugs of abuse including orally in form a pill, intravenously in form of an injection, by inhaling the substance in form of smoke or via snorting the substance so it is absorbed into the blood vessels of the nose.

Concept of National Security

National Security is a fundamental concern for every nation, it encompasses various dimensions that aim to safeguard a country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, citizen's well-being. National security also refers to the measures taken by a country to protect itself from internal and external threats that may jeopardize its interests, values or existence. It encompasses a broad range of areas, including defence, intelligence, diplomacy, law enforcement, economic stability and societal resilience. The primary objective of national security is to ensure the safety and well-being of a nation's citizen, protect its borders and promote its strategic interests. National Security is not solely a domestic affair, it often requires international cooperation and alliances. Nations collaborate to combat global challenges such as terrorism, transnational crimes and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. National security entails the ability of a nation to advance her interests and objectives, to contain instability, control crime, eliminate corruption, improve the welfare, and quality of life of every citizen (Obasanjo, 1999.) Among the core issues of national

security are law and order. National security has also been defined as the "aggregate of the security interest of all individuals, communities, ethnic groups, political entities and institutions which inhabit the territory of Nigeria". In his interpretation of the aforesaid definition, Mohammed (2006) concludes that:

National security from any perspective is about safeguarding the interests of the citizenry and providing the type of atmosphere that is free of threats that could inhibit the pursuit of the good of all. It is about the processes and measures required to preserve law and order.

A matter of national security implies then a threat to any of these state attributes. These elements can be discussed as objects of security in their own right (they can be threatened individually), and at the same time the interaction between them determines the national security problematique. If one of them is harmed the other three will become more susceptible to threats. A government is necessary in order to grant the security of the population against internal or external threats. If the capacity of the institutional component of the state is constrained by either limited internal or external threats or, even worse, if the institutions of the state collapse because of internal or external threats, the integrity of the population, the territory, and sovereignty of the state will be more susceptible to threat. At the same time, a healthy and productive population as well as a productive territory are necessary in order to grant the economic viability of a state as a whole and to assure that the state will be able to extract resources for the implementation of policies.

The nature of the threats and security discourses are often changing, and dynamic security pattern has disappeared from the state security and military designs. In this new

environment of security and in particular in the light of changing global realities observed at the end of the cold war, national security can now be viewed from two(2) perspectives: The Conventional or Militaristic Approach and The Non-conventional Approach. Globalization, global violence and climate change around the world, are needed to be defined as non-conventional security threats in an inclusive manner

The Conventional / Traditional Approach think of national security as being exclusively a military problem, and a military problem as a weapon problem. And mainly it defines national security as the vastness and sophistication of a nation's military machine. But this perception became increasingly unacceptable due to emerging serious internal social upheavals witnessed in many countries with pervasive and intimidating armament. In essence scholars became convinced that national security is not coterminous with the vastness and sophistication of a nation's military machine. The conventional approach bases on the realist school of thought and it traces its origins from writings of classical realist scholars like Sun Tzu, Thomas Hobbes, Niccolo Machiavelli and Hans Morgenthau. However, despite the relevance of conventional security, it fails to recognize non-military threats like unemployment, population explosion, poverty etc. In fact, it was warned of the danger inherent in this simplistic, narrow and militaristic approach to security thus: There is among us an almost ineradicable tendency to think of our security problem as being exclusively a military problem, and to think of the military problem as being exclusively a weapons or manpower problem... We still tend to assure that it is primarily this purely military ingredient that creates security (McNamara, 1968).

The Non-conventional/ Non-traditional Approach to national security believes that a nation's security transcends its purely militaristic connotations and that while the sanctity of a nation's territorial integrity is hardly in doubt, it is not in any sense synonymous with the political and Socioeconomic survival of that nation. While not oblivious to the primacy of the physical safety of a nation, Oberg(1984:29) rightly asserts that: Security measures must be directed towards also immaterial objects like lifestyle, culture, freedom, identity and the protection of nature. An individual who has not satisfied his or her basic needs like food, cloth, housing, health, education and work can hardly be called secure – no matter how much weaponry the individual may have at his disposal. Furthermore, an individual lacking in basic rights to speak, travel, meet and communicate is also not a secure human being.

Drug Abuse and National Security

The literature on drug abuse and national security is vast, but specific attention must be paid to Nigeria's unique socio-cultural and economic landscape. Several studies highlight the strong correlation between drug abuse and rising insecurity generally in Nigeria but not much literature on Delta state specifically. Drug abuse is linked to various social and health problems, but its impact on security is especially concerning. Previous research indicates that as drug use increases, so does the rate of violent crime and other anti-social behaviors. This section will explore the existing literature on the subject, with a focus on the intersection of drug abuse, crime, and security challenges in Nigeria.

Drug abuse is today the most serious problem in organized crime throughout the world with billions of dollars profits generated for underworld activities as a result of

selling and consumption of illegal drugs causing immense damages to individuals, families and government. Drug abuse / trafficking is a source of political conflict and instability and monetary and fiscal problems among countries of the world especially Mexico, Afghanistan and Columbia. The drug abusers and traffickers with a worldwide network have several and complex methods such as couriers, shipping, smuggling in boats, aircrafts and motor vehicles (Reid, 1997).

Drug abuse/trafficking has been a great source for the finance of terrorists, secessionist and other non-state actors' activities since the end of the cold war. Before and during the cold war, the nature and character of war was inter-state, but however, the post-cold war era changed the character of war from inter-state to asymmetric war (the war within), which the proceeds from drug business have fueled and sponsored the activities of terrorist groups, separatist and other transnational organized crimes. Some drug kingpins are said to be founders of most terrorist organizations. The most comprehensive evidence is in the trail of Boko Haram suspects in Chad who were involved in drug abuse and trafficking of heroin and cocaine across the West African Sub Region (Berry, Gurtis, Hudson and Kollar, 2002).

In contemporary Nigeria, the nexus between drug and crime cannot be overlooked. The rate at which drugs are recovered from suspected criminals across the country is preposterous. According to Mateen (2018), over 600 suspect were arrested by the police for various drug induced crimes ranging from armed robbery, kidnap and cultism in Lagos State alone in 2017. In the same vein, the Lagos State commandant of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, at the time, Sule Aliyu, revealed that the agency in the year

2017 recovered about ten tons of drugs and prosecuted more than 300 suspects (Mateen, 2018).

According to Ibrahim et al. (2017), the highest influential factor leading to substance misuse among the youths in Nigeria is peer group influence. It reveals that 70% of the substance users engaged in the menace as a result of peer group influence and it's due to improper care by their parents that led them into drug abuse.

Drug abuse being already identified as a problem in Delta State has raised so much concerns from authorities, the government, the youths, the communities, security operatives and families because of its results, negative influences and all sorts of atrocities which it has embedded and rooted as consequences in several communities in Delta State. Several communities in Delta State began recording increased reports of crime and criminal activities shortly after the increased rate of drug abuse among the youths.

The Delta state government have partnered with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), in collaboration with all stakeholders, including traditional rulers and community gatekeepers to ensure that the scourge of drug and substance abuse and illicit trafficking is stamped out from communities in the state. The NDLEA personnel have been deployed to local government areas in Delta state to establish their presence in the grassroots. As part of efforts to reduce the harmful effects of drug abuse among youths, Delta state government have also taken sensitization campaigns for behavioural change to the grass root level as well. These campaigns were held at various local government areas including Isoko South, Ika South, Oshimili South etc. The youths

were called on to shun drug and substance abuse, emphasizing how it is harmful to the health and general well-being.

Ekoku and Vogt (1990:226) have also observed that nation can only boast of credible security if its home is first of all in order. Schelling et al (1996) as cited in Tonry (2009:503) listed about 50 harms related to drug use and abuse and based their list on three dimensions of harm that include those of health, social and economic related matters, safety and public order, and also criminal justice.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for the study is Structural functionalism. Paraphrased as functionalism, is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This theory attempts to explain why society functions the way it does by focusing on relationships between various social institutions that make up society (government, judiciary, religion etc.)

The Structural functionalism theory is relevant to the study because it explains that when the different social structures of the society uphold their various functions and maintain it diligently, that is when it can flourish and prosper for the well-being of its citizens. The theory explains that drug abuse as a social and security problem continues to persist and prevail because some social structures have failed to perform their functions effectively. The failure of the family to inculcate discipline and drug abuse awareness in the early stages of a youth can lead the youth to be easily influenced and to engage in drug

abuse. And also the problem of domestic violence and broken home can as well lead the child into drug abuse and other social vices.

Finally, according to the theory, the only way to achieve development in a society is for the identified parts in the society to mutually contribute their quota towards the support of the whole society, and failure of any part in its function and relationship will affect the growth and development of the whole society. In relation to Delta state and Nigeria in general, before the problem of drug abuse and the intake of other illicit substances among youths and other issues of national security threat can be effectively combated, all Nigerian institutions and social structures such as family, schools, religious leaders, government and its functionary, health practitioners, community leaders, etc. must work together for effective control of the issue, to save lives of the Nigerian youth and to restore sanity and national security.

Methodology

The methodology of this research is the pragmatic approach and it is guided by the philosophy of Pragmatism, which is the doctrine that practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. This approach was adopted because of everything it is and it's interpretation. Pragmatism is philosophy of the social world which is based on the utilization of the mixed method or hybrid method of data collection. The research includes primary data collected through surveys and interviews with key informants, including law enforcement officials, healthcare professionals, and community leaders in Delta State. Secondary data is drawn from existing literature, government reports, and international drug control agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The sample size consists of respondents from Oshimili South and Ika South Local Government Areas (LGAs), selected based on their high prevalence of drug abuse-related activities.

Findings and Discussion

The study revealed a significant increase in drug abuse among young people in Delta State, with the most commonly abused substances being cannabis, tramadol, codeine and methamphetamine. Respondents cited peer pressure (87.8%), unemployment (75%), and the availability of drugs (58.3%) as the main drivers of drug abuse. Drug abuse is strongly linked to criminal activities, with 76% of respondents reporting that drug-related crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and cultism had increased over the study period. Collaborating with information from a security officer in National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) that revealed that: “There is a relationship between drug abuse and national security because part of consequences of drug abuse is insecurity. Almost every criminal activities in Nigeria happens under the influence of drugs – armed robbery, kidnapping etc. Even an environment where there is high prevalence of drug abuse is not secured.”(Victor Ijeh, Investigation Unit, NDLEA, Ogwashi-uku, 2024), and Kawugana and Faruna (2018) revelation that drug abuse has caused most of the young population to take to life of crime, which has populated many insurgent groups and led to the displacement of lives and properties, this study posits that drug abuse has a relationship with national security.

On the findings regarding the challenges of curbing drug abuse in Delta state, it explains that numerous challenges mitigate the effective control of drug abuse. The data

from respondents indicate that corruption is a major challenge in Delta state and Nigeria in general, that hinders the effective mitigation of drug abuse, and worst of it, is that the corruption is also within the agencies responsible for the control of drug abuse. The availability of drugs is also a challenge facing the curbing of drugs in Delta state as these illicit drugs are no longer difficult to find. According to respondents, these drugs are available in any location and even in different corners of the street. The availability of these drugs makes it difficult to contain. Key informant interviews supported these findings, with law enforcement officers pointing to porous borders as another major challenge.

Finally, the findings suggest diverse strategies for the control of drug abuse in Delta state. Dealing with porous borders is a strategy that will be effective in reducing the prevalence of drug abuse. This strategy will focus and check on boundaries and borders of communities in Delta state, because most drug traffickers transport drugs through porous borders in the rural communities. They navigate their path in and out of states through porous borders. Education and awareness is another vital strategy, which if taken seriously will have positive effects in the mitigation of drug abuse in the country. Government and stakeholders should educate and create awareness on the dangers of drug abuse especially in secondary schools and among the young population. Other strategies found by the research includes amendment of NDLEA Acts, creating job opportunities for the young population, establishing more offices in drug control agencies, providing logistics and employing more security personnel. The NDLEA should also implement international drug policy commitments and take advantage of the UNODC demand and supply reduction recommendations.

Conclusion

This study underscores the critical relationship between drug abuse and national security, particularly in Delta State, Nigeria. The rise in drug use, particularly among the younger population has exacerbated security challenges in the region, leading to an increase in violent crime. The effectiveness of existing drug control policies is hindered by resource constraints and insufficient political will. To curb the menace of drug abuse and its impact on national security, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach that includes strengthening drug laws, improving rehabilitation efforts, addressing socio-economic issues such as poverty and unemployment, collaboration of international and local law enforcement, cooperation between affiliated authorities and local communities and also the implementation of international drug policy commitments, particularly the UNODC demand and supply reduction recommendations.

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