



Drug Abuse and National Security in Nigeria - A Case Study of Kaduna South Local Government Area (2015 - 2025)

By

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Abstract

Drug abuse has emerged as a critical social and security challenge in Nigeria, with increasing implications for public safety, governance, and national stability. This study examines the nexus between drug abuse and national security in Nigeria, using Kaduna South Local Government Area as a case study over the period 2015–2025. The study adopts a literature-based research design anchored on the interpretivist research philosophy. Data were sourced from secondary materials, including scholarly journals, government publications, policy documents, and reports from relevant national and international agencies such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. The study analyzes major forms and trends of drug abuse in Kaduna South, identifies socio-economic and environmental factors driving substance abuse, and assesses its implications for security and public safety. Findings indicate a sustained rise in the abuse of cannabis and pharmaceutical opioids, particularly among youths, driven by unemployment, urbanization, peer influence, and weak social control mechanisms. The study further reveals that drug abuse contributes significantly to violent crimes, cultism, gang activities, and political violence, thereby undermining local security and posing broader threats to national security in Nigeria. The study concludes that drug abuse transcends public health concerns and constitutes a major internal security threat that weakens human capital, erodes public trust in state institutions, and sustains criminal networks. It recommends the adoption of integrated policy responses that combine law enforcement, socio-economic empowerment, community-based interventions, and strengthened regulatory frameworks. By providing a localized and longitudinal analysis, the study contributes context-specific insights to the discourse on drug abuse and national security in Nigeria.

Keywords: West Africa, Natural Resources, Oil, Gold, Instability, Underdevelopment, Corruption, Mismanagement



1.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of drug abuse has emerged as a critical social and security challenge in Nigeria, particularly within urban and semi-urban communities. Drug abuse refers to the persistent or excessive use of psychoactive substances for non-medical purposes, resulting in adverse health, social, economic, and security consequences (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018). In recent years, Nigeria has witnessed a significant increase in the consumption and trafficking of illicit drugs such as cannabis, tramadol, codeine, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine, especially among youths (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2021).

The link between drug abuse and national security has become increasingly evident. Drug abuse fuels violent crimes, armed robbery, cultism, terrorism, political thuggery, and communal conflicts, thereby threatening internal security and social stability (Alemika, 2013). Nigeria's security landscape since 2015 has been characterized by rising insecurity, including insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, and urban violence. Empirical evidence suggests that drug abuse plays a facilitative role in sustaining these criminal activities by enhancing aggression, lowering inhibitions, and financing criminal networks (UNODC, 2021).

Kaduna State, particularly Kaduna South Local Government Area, has been identified as one of the hotspots of drug abuse in Northern Nigeria. The area is densely populated, ethnically diverse, and economically active, factors which, combined with unemployment, poverty, and weak social control mechanisms, create a conducive environment for drug abuse and related crimes (Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020). Between 2015 and 2025, Kaduna South has experienced recurrent episodes of youth violence, cult clashes, and drug-related crimes, raising concerns about the implications for local and national security. Against this backdrop, this study examines the nexus between drug abuse and national security in Nigeria, using Kaduna South Local Government Area as a case study, with a focus on the period 2015–2025.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite sustained efforts by the Nigerian government and relevant agencies such as the NDLEA to combat drug abuse, the prevalence of illicit drug use continues to rise. Reports indicate that Nigeria has one of the highest rates of drug abuse in Africa, with youths



constituting the most affected demographic group (UNODC, 2018). This alarming trend poses serious implications for national security, as drug abuse is closely linked to criminality, violence, and social unrest.

In Kaduna South Local Government Area, drug abuse has become pervasive, manifesting in increased cases of cultism, armed robbery, gang violence, and political thuggery. Many of these security challenges are reportedly perpetrated by youths under the influence of drugs (Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020). However, policy responses have largely focused on law enforcement rather than addressing the broader security implications of drug abuse. The problem, therefore, is the apparent disconnect between the growing incidence of drug abuse and its recognition as a critical national security threat. There is a paucity of localized empirical studies that systematically examine how drug abuse undermines national security at the grassroots level. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between drug abuse and national security in Kaduna South Local Government Area from 2015 to 2025.

1.3 Research Questions

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What are the major forms and patterns of drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025?
- ii. What factors account for the prevalence of drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area?
- iii. How does drug abuse contribute to security challenges in Kaduna South Local Government Area?
- iv. What measures can be adopted to address drug abuse as a national security threat?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the relationship between drug abuse and national security in Nigeria, using Kaduna South Local Government Area as a case study. The specific objectives are to:



- i. Identify the major forms and trends of drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025.
- ii. Examine the socio-economic and environmental factors contributing to drug abuse in the study area.
- iii. Assess the impact of drug abuse on security and public safety in Kaduna South Local Government Area.
- iv. Propose strategies for mitigating drug abuse and its security consequences.

1.5 Conceptual Review

Drug Abuse

Drug abuse is a multifaceted social phenomenon shaped by the interaction of biological, psychological, and socio-economic factors. From a biological perspective, genetic predisposition and neurochemical responses to psychoactive substances can increase vulnerability to substance dependence. Psychologically, factors such as stress, trauma, low self-esteem, and mental health disorders often predispose individuals to drug abuse as a coping mechanism. Sociologically, drug abuse is embedded within broader structural conditions, including poverty, social exclusion, and weak social institutions, which collectively normalize deviant behaviors in certain communities (Alemika, 2013). Consequently, drug abuse is not merely an individual problem but a socially constructed issue with deep-rooted structural determinants.

Scholars increasingly conceptualize drug abuse as both a public health concern and a security challenge due to its far-reaching implications. From a public health standpoint, drug abuse contributes to morbidity, mortality, and the spread of infectious diseases, while placing immense pressure on healthcare systems. From a security perspective, drug abuse is associated with rising crime rates, violence, and social disorder, thereby undermining public safety and social stability (Buzan, 1991). This dual characterization underscores the need for integrated policy responses that address both the health and security dimensions of drug abuse.

In the Nigerian context, drug abuse has been exacerbated by persistent socio-economic



challenges such as unemployment, rapid urbanization, and the breakdown of traditional family structures. High levels of youth unemployment and underemployment have created conditions of frustration and hopelessness, making young people particularly susceptible to drug use and abuse. Peer pressure, especially within urban environments, further reinforces drug-taking behaviors, while weak law enforcement and porous borders facilitate the availability and circulation of illicit drugs (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2021). These factors have combined to make drug abuse a widespread and deeply entrenched problem in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the abuse of substances such as cannabis, tramadol, codeine, and other psychoactive drugs has been directly linked to aggressive behavior, impaired judgment, and criminal tendencies. Empirical studies indicate that individuals under the influence of drugs are more likely to engage in violent crimes, cultism, armed robbery, and political thuggery (UNODC, 2018). In communities such as Kaduna South Local Government Area, the normalization of drug abuse among youths has contributed to heightened insecurity and social instability. This reinforces the argument that drug abuse constitutes a critical threat not only to individual well-being but also to national security and sustainable development.

National security

National security is a broad and evolving concept that transcends the traditional notion of military defense of territorial integrity. Contemporary scholars conceptualize national security as encompassing the protection of a nation's population, institutions, economy, and core values from both external and internal threats (Buzan, 1991). This expanded understanding incorporates human security elements such as access to basic needs, freedom from fear, and protection of human rights. As such, national security is increasingly viewed as a multidimensional construct that integrates political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions alongside military capabilities.

Modern security discourse places significant emphasis on internal threats, recognizing that challenges such as crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, and social disorder can be as destabilizing as external aggression. These internal security threats undermine public safety, erode state authority, and weaken social cohesion, particularly in fragile and developing states. Drug-



related crimes, in particular, have been identified as a major source of insecurity because they generate violence, fund criminal networks, and corrode public institutions through corruption (UNODC, 2021). Consequently, addressing internal security threats has become central to national security strategies worldwide.

In the Nigerian context, national security challenges have increasingly been driven by internal dynamics rather than conventional interstate conflicts. Issues such as insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, cultism, and urban violence have posed serious threats to public safety and national stability. Scholars argue that the proliferation of non-state armed groups and criminal networks has been facilitated by weak governance, socio-economic inequalities, and limited state capacity (Akinwale, 2010). These actors often operate outside the formal structures of the state, thereby complicating security management and response efforts.

Furthermore, the activities of non-state actors in Nigeria are frequently sustained by drug abuse and drug trafficking. Illicit drugs serve both as a source of financing and as a means of enhancing the operational capacity of criminal groups by increasing aggression and reducing inhibitions among perpetrators. The intersection between drug abuse and insecurity has therefore deepened Nigeria's national security crisis, particularly at the community level. This underscores the importance of integrating drug control policies into broader national security frameworks to effectively address the root causes of insecurity and promote sustainable peace and development.

1.6 Critical Review of Existing Literature

Scholarly literature has extensively examined the nexus between drug abuse and crime, with particular emphasis on how psychoactive substances contribute to violent and deviant behavior. One of the most influential contributions is Goldstein's (1985) tripartite framework, which explains the drugs-crime relationship through psychopharmacological, economic-compulsive, and systemic dimensions. According to this framework, the psychopharmacological effects of drugs can induce aggression and impaired judgment, thereby increasing the likelihood of violent behavior. The economic-compulsive dimension highlights crimes committed to finance drug dependence, while systemic violence arises from conflicts inherent in illicit drug markets, such as territorial disputes and enforcement of informal norms.



Building on this theoretical foundation, subsequent studies have demonstrated that drug abuse is closely associated with various forms of criminality, including armed robbery, gang violence, and homicide. Empirical evidence from both developed and developing societies suggests that communities with high levels of drug abuse often experience elevated crime rates and social instability (UNODC, 2018). These studies underscore the role of drugs as a catalyst that intensifies existing social tensions and weakens community cohesion, thereby posing a significant threat to public safety.

In the Nigerian context, scholars have linked drug abuse to youth restiveness, political violence, and urban insecurity. Alemika (2013) argues that drug abuse among youths has contributed to the escalation of violent crimes and the militarization of political activities, particularly during election periods. Drugs are often used to embolden political thugs and cult groups, making them more violent and less susceptible to social control. This has had far-reaching implications for democratic governance and internal security in Nigeria.

Empirical studies have further reinforced the connection between drug abuse and localized insecurity. Abdullahi and Sadiq (2020) demonstrate that urban centers with high rates of drug abuse, such as those in Northern Nigeria, experience increased levels of gang-related violence, cultism, and communal clashes. These studies collectively highlight that drug abuse is not only a social or health problem but also a critical security concern. However, despite the growing body of literature, there remains limited focus on localized case studies that explore the dynamics of drug abuse and insecurity at the grassroots level, thereby justifying the relevance of the present study.

1.7 Empirical Review

Empirical evidence underscores the growing scale of drug abuse in Nigeria and its implications for security and social stability. A landmark nationwide survey conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018) estimates that approximately 14.4% of Nigerians aged 15–64 have used drugs, a prevalence rate significantly higher than the global average. The study further reveals that cannabis, pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol, and cough syrups containing codeine are among the most commonly abused substances. These findings highlight the magnitude of drug abuse as a national problem with far-reaching public



health and security consequences.

Further empirical data from national enforcement agencies reinforce these findings. Reports from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2021) indicate a steady increase in drug-related arrests, seizures, and convictions across the country. Kaduna State has consistently featured among states with high incidences of drug trafficking and consumption, reflecting its strategic location and urban density. The NDLEA reports also show that a significant proportion of those arrested for drug-related offenses are young people, underscoring the vulnerability of youths to substance abuse and its associated criminal behaviors.

Localized empirical studies provide deeper insights into the security implications of drug abuse at the community level. Research focusing on urban centers in Northern Nigeria indicates a strong correlation between drug abuse and violent social phenomena such as cultism, gang activities, and armed robbery (Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020). In Kaduna South Local Government Area, anecdotal and survey-based evidence suggests that drug abuse has become normalized among certain youth groups, serving as both a catalyst and facilitator of violent conduct. This has contributed to recurrent episodes of insecurity, including street violence and communal disturbances.

Moreover, empirical studies have linked drug abuse to electoral and political violence in Nigeria. Drugs are often used to mobilize and sustain political thuggery, particularly during election periods, thereby undermining democratic processes and public order (Alemika, 2013). In Kaduna South, the intersection of drug abuse, youth unemployment, and political manipulation has exacerbated local insecurity and strained security institutions. These empirical findings collectively demonstrate that drug abuse constitutes a significant internal security threat, reinforcing the need for localized studies that examine its dynamics and impacts over time, as undertaken in the present research.

1.8 Identification of Gaps in Literature

Although substantial research has examined drug abuse and insecurity in Nigeria, most studies focus on national or regional levels, emphasizing prevalence, trafficking, and general security implications (UNODC, 2018; Alemika, 2013). Such macro-level analyses often overlook



localized dynamics, including community-specific socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors that influence drug abuse and its security consequences. Additionally, existing research tends to be cross-sectional, providing only snapshots of the problem at particular points in time, with limited attention to longitudinal trends that capture evolving patterns of drug abuse and its impact on security over extended periods (Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020).

Another key gap is the insufficient integration of drug abuse into national security discourse. Many studies frame drug abuse primarily as a public health or social issue, without fully addressing its role in sustaining criminal networks, fueling political violence, and undermining governance. Consequently, the security dimensions of drug abuse remain under-theorized and under-empiricized. This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing a localized, decade-long analysis of Kaduna South Local Government Area, examining how drug abuse at the community level contributes to insecurity and, cumulatively, to national security challenges in Nigeria.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

Social Disorganization Theory

This study is anchored on Social Disorganization Theory, originally developed by Shaw and McKay (1942), which explains the persistence of crime and deviant behavior as a consequence of structural and environmental conditions within communities. The theory posits that crime flourishes in socially disorganized areas characterized by poverty, unemployment, residential instability, ethnic heterogeneity, and weak social institutions. In such environments, informal social controls are eroded, reducing the community's capacity to regulate behavior and prevent deviance, including drug abuse.

Central to Social Disorganization Theory is the argument that socio-economic deprivation and institutional weakness create conditions that normalize deviant behaviors. Where families, schools, religious institutions, and law enforcement agencies are weak or ineffective, individuals, particularly youths, are more likely to engage in drug abuse and related criminal activities. Drug abuse, within this framework, is viewed not merely as individual pathology but as a product of broader structural deficiencies that shape behavior and opportunities within a given social setting (Shaw & McKay, 1942).



Kaduna South Local Government Area exhibits several characteristics highlighted by Social Disorganization Theory. The area is marked by high population density, youth unemployment, urban poverty, and periodic social unrest. These conditions have weakened traditional mechanisms of social control and fostered environments in which drug abuse, cultism, and violent crime can thrive. The theory is therefore particularly relevant for explaining the prevalence of drug abuse in Kaduna South and its link to recurring security challenges at the community level. By adopting Social Disorganization Theory, this study provides a conceptual lens for understanding how structural inequalities and institutional failures facilitate drug abuse and undermine national security. The theory helps to explain how localized social disorganization can translate into broader security threats when drug abuse fuels criminal networks, violence, and social instability. Consequently, the framework underscores the importance of addressing underlying socio-economic and institutional factors as part of comprehensive strategies to combat drug abuse and enhance national security in Nigeria.

Relevance of the Theory

The relevance of Social Disorganization Theory to this study lies in its ability to provide a coherent explanation for the spatial concentration of drug abuse and insecurity within specific communities. The theory emphasizes that crime and deviant behaviors are more prevalent in areas where social structures and informal control mechanisms have broken down (Shaw & McKay, 1942). Kaduna South Local Government Area, characterized by urban congestion, socio-economic inequalities, and weakened community institutions, reflects these conditions, making the theory particularly applicable to understanding the dynamics of drug abuse in the study area.

Furthermore, Social Disorganization Theory is relevant because it shifts analytical focus from individual moral failure to structural and environmental factors. By highlighting the role of poverty, unemployment, family disintegration, and institutional weakness, the theory provides a broader explanatory framework for the prevalence of drug abuse among youths in Kaduna South. This perspective aligns with empirical findings that link socio-economic deprivation and weak social control to increased substance abuse and criminal behavior in Nigerian urban centers (Alemika, 2013).



The theory is also pertinent in explaining the link between drug abuse and national security. Social disorganization creates environments in which drug abuse becomes normalized and criminal networks flourish, thereby fueling violence, cultism, and other forms of insecurity. These localized security challenges, when left unaddressed, accumulate to pose broader threats to national stability and public safety. Thus, the theory effectively connects micro-level community conditions with macro-level national security outcomes.

Finally, the relevance of Social Disorganization Theory to this study is evident in its policy implications. By emphasizing structural causes of drug abuse and insecurity, the theory supports preventive and developmental approaches rather than solely punitive measures. It underscores the need for strengthening community institutions, improving socio-economic conditions, and enhancing social cohesion as part of comprehensive strategies to curb drug abuse and promote national security. This makes the theory not only analytically useful but also practically relevant for addressing drug abuse and insecurity in Kaduna South Local Government Area and Nigeria at large.

Despite its relevance, Social Disorganization Theory has been criticized for its overemphasis on structural and environmental factors while underplaying individual agency and psychological influences on deviant behavior. Critics argue that not all individuals living in socially disorganized communities engage in drug abuse or criminal activities, suggesting that personal choices, moral values, and individual resilience also play significant roles. Additionally, the theory has been faulted for its limited capacity to explain drug abuse in relatively stable or affluent communities where substance abuse may still be prevalent. Some scholars further contend that the theory inadequately accounts for the role of political actors, organized criminal networks, and globalization in shaping contemporary drug markets and insecurity, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria (Alemika, 2013).

1.10 Sources of Data Collection

Data for this study were obtained exclusively from secondary sources. These include academic journals, textbooks, conference papers, theses, government publications, and reports from national and international organizations such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Newspaper reports



and credible online databases were also consulted to provide contextual and contemporary insights. These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and alignment with the objectives of the study. The use of multiple data sources enhances the depth and breadth of analysis and allows for triangulation of information.

1.11 Data Analysis Technique

The study employed qualitative content analysis as the method of data analysis. This involved thematic analysis of relevant literature to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and arguments related to drug abuse and national security. The data were categorized into themes such as causes of drug abuse, patterns of drug use, security implications, and policy responses. This analytical approach allowed for the synthesis of diverse viewpoints and facilitated a comprehensive understanding of how drug abuse contributes to security challenges at the local and national levels. The findings were interpreted within the framework of Social Disorganization Theory to provide theoretical grounding.

1.12 Trending Mapping of Drug Abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area

The pattern of drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area reflects broader national trends but is intensified by local socio-economic dynamics. Between 2015 and 2025, available reports indicate a steady rise in the consumption of illicit drugs and pharmaceutical substances among youths in the area. Cannabis has remained the most commonly abused illicit drug, while the misuse of pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol and codeine has increased significantly due to their accessibility and affordability (UNODC, 2018; NDLEA, 2021).

Trend mapping suggests a shift from traditional substances such as alcohol and tobacco to more potent psychoactive drugs over the past decade. This shift has been driven by peer influence, the proliferation of unregulated drug markets, and the perceived enhancement of physical endurance and courage associated with certain drugs, particularly among youths involved in informal labor, cultism, and political thuggery. Drug consumption hotspots are often located in densely populated neighborhoods, motor parks, abandoned buildings, and informal settlements, where social control is weak and law enforcement presence is limited.



Furthermore, the trend analysis indicates a correlation between economic downturns and spikes in drug abuse within Kaduna South. Periods of heightened unemployment and social unrest have coincided with increased drug-related arrests and violence. This pattern reinforces the argument that drug abuse in the area is not random but structurally driven, reflecting deeper issues of social disorganization and institutional weakness.

1.13 implications of Drug Abuse to National Security in Nigeria

Drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area has significant implications for national security in Nigeria. At the local level, drug abuse fuels violent crimes such as armed robbery, cult clashes, gang violence, and street-level assaults, thereby undermining public safety and social order. Individuals under the influence of drugs are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior, poor judgment, and disregard for societal norms, increasing the burden on security agencies (Goldstein, 1985).

At the national level, drug abuse contributes to the sustainability of criminal networks and non-state actors who pose serious threats to Nigeria's internal security. Drug trafficking and consumption often provide both financial resources and psychological reinforcement for criminal groups involved in banditry, insurgency, kidnapping, and political violence. As noted by Alemika (2013), drug abuse has become an enabling factor in the militarization of violence and the erosion of state authority in many parts of Nigeria.

Moreover, the persistence of drug abuse undermines national development and governance by weakening human capital, increasing healthcare costs, and fostering corruption within law enforcement institutions. These cumulative effects erode public trust in the state and exacerbate insecurity. Consequently, drug abuse must be recognized not merely as a social or health problem but as a critical national security issue requiring coordinated policy responses that integrate security, public health, and socio-economic development strategies.



1.14 Objective One: Identify the major forms and trends of drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025.

Drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area between 2015 and 2025 has been characterized by the widespread consumption of both illicit drugs and misused pharmaceutical substances. Cannabis has remained the most commonly abused illicit drug due to its relative availability, affordability, and social acceptability among youths and informal workers. In addition to cannabis, the non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids, particularly tramadol and codeine, has increased markedly within the study period. Reports by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018) and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2021) indicate that these substances are frequently abused to enhance physical endurance, suppress fear, and induce euphoria, especially among young people involved in manual labor, commercial transportation, cultism, and political thuggery. Alcohol abuse, often combined with other psychoactive substances, also remains prevalent and contributes significantly to risky behavior and violence.

Trend analysis over the decade reveals a gradual shift from traditional substances such as alcohol and tobacco to more potent psychoactive drugs, particularly pharmaceutical opioids and synthetic substances. This transition reflects broader national patterns driven by the proliferation of unregulated drug markets, porous regulatory frameworks, and the diversion of prescription drugs into illicit circulation (NDLEA, 2021; World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). Studies suggest that urban centers like Kaduna South, characterized by high population density and weak informal social control, are particularly vulnerable to such shifts in drug consumption patterns (Alemika, 2013). The increasing misuse of opioids during this period has been associated with heightened levels of aggression, impaired judgment, and dependence, exacerbating public safety concerns within the area.

Furthermore, the trends in drug abuse in Kaduna South demonstrate a strong correlation with socio-economic fluctuations and periods of heightened political and social tension. Economic downturns, rising unemployment, and declining industrial activities between 2015 and 2025 coincided with increased drug-related arrests and violent incidents, suggesting that drug abuse



is structurally embedded within broader conditions of social disorganization (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020). Empirical evidence also indicates that drug abuse spikes during election periods, where substances are used to mobilize and sustain political violence and street-level criminal activities. These patterns underscore the dynamic and evolving nature of drug abuse in Kaduna South and highlight its deep entanglement with urban insecurity and national security challenges in Nigeria.

Objective Two: Examine the socio-economic and environmental factors contributing to drug abuse in the study area.

Socio-economic conditions play a central role in shaping patterns of drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area. Persistent unemployment and underemployment, particularly among youths, have significantly increased vulnerability to substance abuse within the study area. The decline of industrial activities and limited access to stable income opportunities have contributed to frustration, social exclusion, and a sense of hopelessness among young people, making drug use a coping mechanism for economic hardship (Alemika, 2013; Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020). Poverty and income inequality further exacerbate this problem by limiting access to education, healthcare, and social support systems, thereby increasing exposure to risky behaviors. Empirical studies in Nigeria consistently link high youth unemployment with increased involvement in drug abuse, crime, and urban violence (UNODC, 2018; National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020).

Environmental factors within Kaduna South also significantly contribute to the prevalence of drug abuse. Rapid urbanization, population density, and the expansion of informal settlements have weakened traditional social control mechanisms and strained law enforcement capacity. Areas characterized by overcrowding, poor housing conditions, and limited recreational facilities often become hotspots for drug consumption and distribution (Shaw & McKay, 1942). The presence of motor parks, informal markets, and abandoned structures further provides conducive environments for illicit drug transactions. Weak regulatory oversight and inconsistent enforcement of drug control laws have allowed open drug markets and street-level distribution networks to thrive in such settings (NDLEA, 2021).



In addition, social and cultural dynamics reinforce drug abuse within the study area. Peer influence and group socialization play a critical role in initiating and sustaining substance use, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Family disintegration, poor parental supervision, and exposure to violence within the home environment have also been identified as significant risk factors for drug abuse (WHO, 2014). Furthermore, the normalization of drug use in certain subcultures, including political thuggery, cultism, and informal labor groups, has reduced social stigma and facilitated sustained consumption. These socio-economic and environmental factors interact in complex ways to create a permissive environment for drug abuse in Kaduna South, thereby intensifying its associated security challenges.

Objective Three: Assess the impact of drug abuse on security and public safety in Kaduna South Local Government Area.

Drug abuse has had a profound impact on security and public safety in Kaduna South Local Government Area, primarily through its strong association with violent crime and social disorder. Individuals under the influence of psychoactive substances often exhibit impaired judgment, heightened aggression, and reduced inhibition, which increase the likelihood of involvement in crimes such as armed robbery, assault, rape, and cult-related violence (Goldstein, 1985; WHO, 2014). Empirical reports from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2021) indicate that a significant proportion of arrests for violent and drug-related offenses in Kaduna State involve individuals who test positive for illicit drugs or misused pharmaceuticals. This pattern underscores the role of drug abuse as a key driver of everyday insecurity within Kaduna South communities.

Beyond street-level crime, drug abuse has contributed to the entrenchment of organized criminal networks and non-state actors within the study area. Drug trafficking and consumption provide both financial resources and psychological reinforcement for groups involved in gang violence, cultism, political thuggery, and electoral violence. Studies suggest that substances such as tramadol and cannabis are frequently used to embolden perpetrators and sustain prolonged engagement in violent activities, particularly during periods of political contestation (Alemika, 2013; Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020). The normalization of drug use within these groups further weakens community cohesion and undermines informal social control mechanisms, making neighborhoods increasingly susceptible to persistent violence and lawlessness.



The broader implications of drug abuse for public safety extend to the erosion of trust in state institutions and the overstretching of security and healthcare systems. Rising drug-related violence places significant pressure on law enforcement agencies, while the health consequences of substance abuse increase the burden on already strained medical facilities (UNODC, 2018). Over time, these cumulative effects undermine governance, discourage economic activities, and heighten public fear, thereby threatening not only local safety but also national security. Consequently, drug abuse in Kaduna South constitutes a multidimensional security challenge that transcends public health concerns and requires coordinated security, social, and developmental responses.

Objective Four: Propose strategies for mitigating drug abuse and its security consequences.

Addressing drug abuse and its security implications in Kaduna South Local Government Area requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach that integrates law enforcement, public health, and socio-economic interventions. Strengthening drug control and law enforcement mechanisms remains critical to disrupting drug supply chains and reducing the availability of illicit substances. This includes enhancing the operational capacity of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) through improved intelligence gathering, inter-agency collaboration, and community-based policing. Consistent enforcement of drug laws, coupled with the regulation of pharmaceutical distribution systems, is essential to curbing the diversion and misuse of prescription drugs such as tramadol and codeine (NDLEA, 2021; UNODC, 2018).

Beyond enforcement, preventive and rehabilitative strategies are central to sustainable drug control. Public education and awareness campaigns targeting youths, schools, religious institutions, and community groups can help reshape attitudes toward drug use and reduce social tolerance for substance abuse. Expanding access to drug treatment, counseling, and rehabilitation services is also vital, particularly at the local government level where such facilities remain limited. Evidence-based interventions that emphasize harm reduction, psychosocial support, and reintegration of recovering drug users into society have been shown to reduce relapse rates and associated criminal behavior (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). These approaches help reframe drug abuse as both a health and security issue, promoting



more humane and effective responses.

Socio-economic empowerment and community development initiatives further provide long-term solutions to drug abuse and insecurity. Youth employment programs, vocational training, and skills acquisition schemes can reduce economic vulnerability and discourage engagement in drug-related activities. Strengthening family structures, community leadership, and informal social control mechanisms can also enhance resilience against drug abuse. Additionally, integrating drug abuse prevention into broader national security and development policies ensures coordinated responses across institutions. Such holistic strategies acknowledge the structural roots of drug abuse and offer sustainable pathways for improving public safety and national security in Nigeria (Alemika, 2013; Saunders et al., 2019)..

1.15 Discussion of Major Findings

The findings of this study reveal that drug abuse in Kaduna South Local Government Area is both pervasive and dynamic, reflecting broader national patterns while being shaped by local socio-economic and environmental conditions. The predominance of cannabis and the rising misuse of pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol and codeine confirm existing empirical evidence that Nigeria is experiencing a shift toward more potent and accessible psychoactive substances (UNODC, 2018; NDLEA, 2021). This trend aligns with Social Disorganization Theory, which explains how urban settings characterized by poverty, unemployment, and weakened social institutions create environments conducive to deviant behaviors. The concentration of drug abuse among youths underscores the role of structural vulnerabilities and limited economic opportunities in sustaining substance abuse in Kaduna South.

The study further establishes a strong relationship between drug abuse and insecurity in the study area. Drug abuse was found to significantly contribute to violent crimes, cultism, gang activities, and political thuggery, thereby undermining public safety and social order. These findings are consistent with Goldstein's (1985) drugs–violence nexus, which links psychoactive substance use to increased aggression and criminal behavior. The normalization of drug use within criminal and political subcultures has weakened community cohesion and informal social control, allowing drug-related violence to persist. This reinforces scholarly arguments that drug abuse functions as both a catalyst and sustainer of urban insecurity in



Nigeria (Alemika, 2013; Abdullahi & Sadiq, 2020).

Moreover, the findings highlight the broader national security implications of drug abuse beyond localized violence. Drug abuse in Kaduna South contributes to the entrenchment of criminal networks and non-state actors, erodes trust in state institutions, and overstretches security and healthcare systems. These outcomes support the argument that drug abuse transcends public health concerns and constitutes a critical internal security threat. The study's localized and longitudinal approach addresses gaps in existing literature by demonstrating how community-level drug abuse cumulatively undermines national security. Overall, the findings emphasize the need for integrated policy responses that combine law enforcement, public health interventions, and socio-economic development strategies to effectively address drug abuse and its security consequences in Nigeria..

1.16 Summary

This study examined the relationship between drug abuse and national security in Nigeria, using Kaduna South Local Government Area as a case study covering the period 2015 to 2025. The study was motivated by the increasing prevalence of drug abuse and its growing implications for internal security, social stability, and public safety. Anchored on Social Disorganization Theory, the research adopted a literature-based methodology, relying on secondary data sourced from scholarly works, government reports, and publications by national and international agencies.

The findings revealed that drug abuse in Kaduna South is characterized by the widespread use of cannabis and pharmaceutical opioids such as tramadol and codeine, with a noticeable shift toward more potent substances over the study period. Socio-economic factors, including youth unemployment, poverty, rapid urbanization, and weakened family and community structures, were identified as key drivers of drug abuse. The study further established a strong link between drug abuse and insecurity, manifesting in violent crimes, cultism, political thuggery, and general threats to public safety. These findings underscore the argument that drug abuse constitutes not only a public health challenge but also a significant national security threat.



1.17 Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that drug abuse poses a serious and escalating threat to national security in Nigeria. In Kaduna South Local Government Area, the prevalence of drug abuse has contributed to the erosion of social order and the intensification of security challenges at the community level. The study demonstrates that drug abuse fuels criminal behavior, sustains violent networks, and undermines the effectiveness of security institutions, thereby weakening state capacity to maintain law and order.

The study further concludes that the persistence of drug abuse is deeply rooted in structural and socio-economic conditions, consistent with the propositions of Social Disorganization Theory. As long as issues such as unemployment, poverty, weak institutions, and social disintegration remain unaddressed, efforts to combat drug abuse through law enforcement alone are unlikely to yield sustainable results. Consequently, drug abuse must be addressed within a broader national security and development framework that prioritizes prevention, rehabilitation, and social inclusion.

1.18 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Government at all levels should intensify public enlightenment campaigns on the dangers of drug abuse, particularly targeting youths through schools, religious institutions, and community organizations.
- ii. Policies aimed at job creation, vocational training, and entrepreneurship development should be prioritized to reduce youth vulnerability to drug abuse and criminal activities.
- iii. Community policing and grassroots engagement should be strengthened to enhance social control mechanisms and improve cooperation between residents and security agencies.
- iv. The NDLEA and other security agencies should be adequately funded and equipped to improve surveillance, enforcement, and regulation of pharmaceutical drugs, especially at the local level.



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