

Emerging Complexities in Drug Law Enforcement and Security in Nigeria: An Explorative Study

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Abstract

Drug abuse and illicit trafficking are serious security and public health problems in Nigeria. The government, though determined to fight this menace, in the wake of these emerging complexities, enforcement of drug laws and security issues have become a bit more complicated. The paper identifies such complexities through the critical analysis of historical and current challenges that the NDLEA, Nigerian Police Force, and other agencies face in enforcing drug laws and ensuring security. This paper points out some of these emerging challenges: sophistication in routes of drug trafficking; corruption amongst law enforcement personnel; new drug types and trends; resource insufficiency; and policy implementation challenges. The study investigates best practices in those countries that have decriminalized drug use, heroin-assisted treatment, safe injection sites, methadone treatment, and cannabis policy practices that could be adopted by Nigeria. Institutional theory was used in this study as a theoretical framework describing how institutional factors such as policies, laws, and regulations influence the actions in terms of law enforcement in drug law enforcement and security. The paper concludes that such a situation indeed calls for the formulation of holistic drug policies and strategies by Nigeria, emphasizing prevention, supply reduction, and treatment measures that encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration in the quest for a drug-free *Nigerian society*.

Keywords: Emerging complexities, Drug law enforcement, Security, Nigeria, Drug abuse.

Introduction

Drug abuse and illicit trafficking have grown into a global phenomenon, which affects nations from

social, economic, and political standpoints. Abuse of drugs constitutes one of the major public health challenges in Nigeria, involving millions of people with far-reaching consequences on individuals, families, and the society at large. Drug abuse refers to the ingestion of any form of drug in a manner that is contrary to medically or socially accepted norms, with the prevalence of harm to the user and those around him (Aina, Akanni, Oguntola & Bamgbala 2020). Drug abuse is more prevalent among young people in Nigeria, with cannabis, codeine, and tramadol being some of the commonly abused drugs. The issue has also received great attention from the government, major stakeholders, and the international community (Oshodi, Aina & Onajole, 2018). Besides being alarming, the rate at which Nigerian youths abuse drugs is quite disturbing because such a habit is surrounded by serious health and socio-economic consequences. To them, cannabis, codeine, and tramadol are accessible, and they most times abuse these drugs to get high and relieve stress. This has gradually led to drug addiction, and most of them find it difficult to quit the habit. Abuse of drugs has its negative effects in increased incidence of crimes, poor academic performances, and many health problems in society. This calls for concerted efforts through which the government, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, and the international community engage in tackling the problem. Drug abuse can lead to anxiety, confusion, insomnia, mood swings and violent behavior from user (Nwammuo, Ezeaka, Anunobi, Ozumba & Aghaebe, 2023).

Drug abuse has a wide range of negative impacts on society and the economy. From the rate of crime, sexual promiscuity, violence, mental and physical health problems to reduced productivity. (Adelekan, 2013). As Tolu & Sifon (2023, p. 19) note, “drug abuse has wide ramifications on the abuser, on family life, community, and society as a whole”. It leads to higher incidences of crime in the community because it results in drug users turning to thievery and other vices to support their habit. Some even go to the extent of engaging in sexual promiscuity and contracting or spreading sexually transmitted diseases, which contribute to the perpetuation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Drug abuse leads to violent behaviour, thus threatening the life of not only the abuser but also the people surrounding him or her. Second, drug abuse will result in mental and physical health problems, such as addiction, overdose, and chronic diseases of the heart and cancer. It decreases productivity, affecting the labour force and aggregate economic output. Therefore, drug abuse control has to be handled in a multidiscipline manner, ranging from prevention to treatment and enforcement of the law. Drug abuse is a prevailing global public health concern which has been

identified to have diverse and devastating effects in the society (Ezeaka, Nwodu & Agbanu 2022).

Although drug abuse is highly devastating, the Government of Nigeria, like many other low and middle-income countries, does have significant challenges in trying to wage war against the menace (Adelekan, Abioye-Kuteyi & Oni, 2013). The challenges include weak regulatory frameworks, inadequate resources, a lack of awareness and education on the danger of drug abuse, and poor implementation of drug policies. The Government of Nigeria has continued to take the matter seriously, adopting various policies and strategies toward addressing the menace (Adebayo, 2019). Secondly, it has established a national drug control agency known as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA (Ekpu, 2018; Akinseye & Ayoade, 2020). Despite that, however, drug abuse and illicit trafficking remain an essential threat to security and socio-economic development in Nigeria.

This paper, therefore, seeks to highlight the growing complexities in the enforcement of the law on narcotics and ensuring security in Nigeria. The research will critically assess historical and current challenges facing the NDLEA, the Nigeria Police Force, and other agencies entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing the law on narcotics and ensuring security. This therefore makes the study timely and of critical importance to the security and socio-economic development of Nigeria, since drug abuse and illicit trafficking remain key factors driving insurgency, terrorism, and youth restiveness.

Statement of the Problem

Drug abuse has now attained the dimensions of a drug problem in Nigeria. It is prejudicial to health, security, and economic development. Against this background, the government made laws and set up narcotics drug law enforcement agencies to address the problem but it persists with increased complexities. The abuse of illicit drugs like tramadol, codeine, and cannabis, among others, has continued to increase, especially among the youth in Nigeria. New routes for trafficking in narcotics and the coming in of large organized criminal networks have brought on new challenges for drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria. A new challenge facing drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria is the use of the dark web, which is increasingly becoming a place upon which drug trafficking is conducted. In recent times, conventional criminal networks have been increasingly

using the dark web forum in single-network drug transactions, which are very hard to track and intercept by law-enforcement agencies. Through anonymity, the dark web has ensured that heroin, cocaine, and many other illicit drugs have been traded in large volumes. This has contributed to the rise in drug abuse and its attendant crimes in Nigeria, further compounded by the fact that the networks engaged in this illicit drug trade do so outside the purview of the law.

Emerging areas of complexities in the enforcement of drug laws and security in Nigeria range from drug trafficking to transnational organized crimes. Drug traffickers are devising new methods for transporting drugs in a sophisticated manner and in camouflaged states with seemingly innocuous items such as foodstuff and electronic gadgets. For example, in 2020 alone, NDLEA seized 1,031.6 kilograms of illicit drugs tucked in garri, a kind of food that is very popularly consumed among West African nationals. The use of such ingenious methods of drug smuggling presents an uphill task regarding its detection and interception by law enforcement agencies. Another level of intricacy facing drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria involves corruption on the part of law enforcement personnel themselves. Corruption has defaced this agency, which is supposed to be the cornerstone for the control and prevention of drugs in Nigeria; hence, low morale among law enforcement personnel and reduced public confidence in the agency's capability to perform its duties. Diversion of seized drugs and other forms of bribery therefore demean efforts at drug law enforcement, with the ultimate effect of hindering progress in efforts towards reducing drug abuse in the country.

However, be that as it may, the emerging complexities in drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria necessarily call for an overview of what hitherto has been the policies and strategies put in place to curtail the problem. As such, the researchers sought to ask: What are the emerging complexities of drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria, and how are these affecting the effort to prevent drug abuse in the country? It is here that the thrust of this study lies.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Ascertain the present status of legislation and regulations relating to drugs in Nigeria.
2. Analyze the effectiveness of existing drug-related laws in the war against drug trafficking and abuse.

3. Examine the current state of drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria.
4. Discover the problems the agencies responsible for enforcing drug law confront in a bid to be functional in curbing drug-related criminal activities.
5. Investigate the complex links among drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Institutional Theory

This theory enables the explanation of how institutions shape behaviour in organizations. In Nigeria, institutional factors such as policies, laws, and regulations influence the actions in terms of law enforcement in drug law enforcement and security. The theory also indicates the legal and regulatory environment in influencing organizational behaviour, especially in the drug law enforcement and security sectors (Allen, 2016). Such institutions in Nigeria, like the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, are key in enforcing law and order in drug dealings and security matters affecting the nation. The Institutional Theory also explains the roles of social norms and values in the shaping of organizational behaviour. These norms and values are moulded through cultural, social, and political factors which affect the behavior of individuals within the organizations. Such are the cultural, normative, and expectation contexts that significantly influence attitudes and behaviors of law enforcement officials in Nigeria and, thus, their security and drug law enforcement. Indeed, the most effective way of devising effective strategies to respond to the emerging complexities is to understand institutional factors and cultural dynamics shaping practices of drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Historical Overview of Drug Law Enforcement and Security in Nigeria

The history of drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria is rather long and complex. A glimpse into the history of drugs and their abuses in the country reveals that this dates as far back as the colonial era when the British authorities introduced opium in the Gold Coast Colony including what is now Nigeria as a pain reliever. In the 1950s, Nigeria faced an unprecedented epidemic in drug abuse (Ogundana, 2020). For this reason, the Nigerian government devised the Pharmaceutical Act of 1950, which controlled the manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs within the country. The

establishment of NDLEA in 1989 by the Nigerian government made it the primary agency for drug control and prevention in the country. This gave birth to the NDLEA, which was a direct consequence of an upward spiral in international concern regarding drug trafficking and abuse universal problem reaching most countries (Aliyu, Shehu, Akolade & Abdulkareem, 2020)..

The drug problem further deteriorated in Nigeria especially within the 1990s and early 2000 with the introduction of new routes that drugs passed through and dangerous drugs such as cocaine, heroin, and cannabis being used. According to Kanayo & Ifeanyi (2015, p. 7), "The drug problem in Nigeria has been an operational affair since the 1990s and has continued to deteriorate. New ways of drug trafficking have emerged, and drug traffickers can smuggle drugs into the country easily". As such, hard drugs like cocaine, heroin, and cannabis have become rampant in Nigerian society. This has, in turn, raised cases of addiction, spiking rates for drug-related crimes. Notwithstanding the conscious effort towards reigning in the drug trade, it would appear that the problem abounds in Nigeria, and so more needs to be done to that effect. Prompted by the snowballing crisis, the Federal Republic of Nigerian government enacted the NDLEA Act of 2004. This act gave the NDLEA expanded powers in the pursuit of its obligations to efficiently enforce laws concerning drug abuse while controlling drugs manufactured, imported, exported, distributed and sold within Nigeria (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, 2010).

In this regard, the government has emphasized a multi-pronged approach in the forms of prevention, treatment, and supply reduction strategies as a way to lessen the pressure caused by drug abuse in the country (Abdulrahman, 2017). However, the proportion and scope of the emerging intricacies in enforcement related to drug-related laws and securities in Nigeria, including corruption on the part of law enforcement personnel, have brought forth new dimensions to the struggle against the epidemic. While efforts have been made to try and stem the problem, drug abuse is still prevalent in Nigeria and most specifically amongst the youth of the country, who are the most vulnerable to all the negative consequences of drug abuse, such as mental health issues, violence, and crime (Aniekan, Kufre, Udom & Kufre, 2019). This calls for the need to have constant and systematic reviews in the area of drug law enforcement and security policies and strategies to meet emerging complexities in the country that would reduce drug abuse and other related harms.

Contemporary Challenges and Complexities

The contemporary challenges and complexities facing drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria are multifaceted and complex. They include:

i. New drug types and trends

The Nigerian drug traffickers constantly develop new drugs and methods of drug consumption, such as synthetic opioids and new psychoactive substances, which are hard to detect and trace. Increased drug abuse among women and children adds another new dimension to this challenge for the agencies in charge of enforcing drug laws. The World Drug Report (2020) says that Nigerian drug traffickers do not leave any probable means of producing, transporting, and distributing various drugs unmoved, in an effort not to be caught by the drug law enforcement agencies. For example, tramadol and fentanyl are synthetic opioids potent and easy to produce and have increasingly been trafficked into and within Nigeria. Most of the drugs are packaged to appear as regular medicines and then smuggled into the country from the neighbouring West African countries where production is mainly taking place. Other emerging drugs, which the Nigerian drug traffickers are exploiting, are the new psychoactive substances popularly referred to as designer drugs. These substances are designed to mimic the action and effects of prohibited drugs such as cocaine, LSD, and cannabis. Even though not popularly known in the country, there have been a few emerging cases and reports on the use of NPS. Other recent drug trends in Nigeria include increased use of codeine and other prescription cough syrups, leading to further addictions and substance abuse by women and children (Segun & Bayo, 2022). The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control had estimated that three million bottles of codeine-laced cough syrup were consumed every day.

Drug abuse among women and children has been on the increase and poses a new challenge for drug law enforcement agencies in Nigeria. Such is the case with the increasing trend of NPS and other designer drugs' use in the country, especially among young people and the most vulnerable groups, which are women and children (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Such women are victims of gender-based violence, and most of them cannot seek help due to the stigma which drug abuse carries. Be that as it may, on the issue of the emerging challenge of new types and trends of drugs, the drug law enforcement agencies in Nigeria are putting in place measures to ensure that their surveillance and monitoring systems are enhanced to detect and track patterns of these drugs.

Powers further cooperate in dismantling drug-trafficking networks with international partners to disturb suppliers of emerging drugs. In order to minimize further tragedies, different initiatives have been taken to advocate and raise awareness among the general public, especially women and children, about drug abuse and addiction.

ii. **Increased Drug Trafficking Activities**

International drug trade involves several countries and regions, with Nigeria being a major transit hub. That has made law enforcement agencies' jobs more difficult as the activities of drug trafficking get more and more sophisticated. For instance, Nigeria was found to be a transit country for cocaine, heroin, and cannabis heading towards Europe, Asia, and America. Operatives of the NDLEA arrested two Brazilians and a Nigerian in 2019 over 4,750kg of cocaine while raiding the Murtala Muhammed International Airport. The drug, which was concealed in bags of food, was believed to be part of a larger drug cartel's consignment. There is the 2020 arrest of the Nigerian drug kingpin in South Africa trafficking in cocaine via Brazil. The drug kingpin coordinated from South Africa the recruiting of the drug mules and the shipment of drugs from South America to Nigeria and other countries. The same drug trafficking networks are also involved in the production and distribution of amphetamine-type stimulants such as methamphetamine and ecstasy in Nigeria (Lekan, 2017). Apparently, ATS production in Nigeria is increasing, with drug trafficking networks taking advantage of porous borders to import precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of the drugs. Drug trafficking activities in Nigeria pose enormous problems for the agencies charged with the responsibility of enforcing drug legislation. Traffickers also employ sophisticated methods of concealment in foodstuffs and false bottoms of luggage so as not to be detected and arrested (Philip & Chinonso, 2021). Besides, drug-trafficking organizations are often operating in Nigeria in the form of networks of small cells that have little or no direct contact with one another; hence, law enforcement agencies face great difficulties in tracing such entities.

Meanwhile, the governments are taking proper pains to combat the increasingly sophisticated activities of drug trafficking in Nigeria through advanced technologies. These include deploying x-ray machines and detection dogs to boost efficiency in unmasking drugs at the country's ports, airports, and borders. In addition, law enforcement agencies coordinate their activities with their international partners in terms of sharing intelligence on tracking and disrupting drug trafficking

networks.

iii. **Corruption Among Law Enforcement Personnel:**

Corruption by law enforcement personnel is one of the oldest problems that bedevil the country. The prevalence of corrupt practices in law enforcement agencies undermines the effectiveness of drug law enforcement and security efforts. Instances of corrupt practices by law enforcement officers have been recorded several times. In 2019, the NDLEA Chairman, Muhammad Abdallah, announced the dismissal of 400 officers of the agency on various counts of corruption that included bribery, extortion, and trafficking in hard drugs (Vanguard Nigeria, 2019). The NDLEA has similarly acknowledged the involvement of some of its officers in drug trafficking and other forms of corrupt practices. In 2019, two officers of the Nigeria Customs Service were arrested over the attempt to smuggle 54 cartons of Tramadol, a controlled substance, through the Seme border between Nigeria and Benin Republic. The officers were alleged to have taken bribes from the drug traffickers to allow the illicit shipment (Premium Times Nigeria, 2019).

The drug trafficking situation has also been immensely contributed to by corruption among personnel in the law enforcement agencies in Nigeria. These corrupt officers always align themselves with the drug traffickers to advance their activities, which also include protection for drug cartels and allowing drug couriers to pass through borders (Azeez, 2019). Corruption among law enforcement personnel in Nigeria has been a very intricate and chronic problem deeply entrenched within the fabric of law enforcement culture in Nigeria. The non-transparency and non-accountability at the time of recruitment and training of law enforcement officers add to the problem. Furthermore, poor wages given to law enforcement officers make them inclined towards corruption for extra money to spend on their specific living.

It is important to note that the Nigerian government has done a lot in trying to rid corruption among law enforcement personnel, which includes reforming the way law enforcement officers are recruited and trained, raising salaries for the law enforcement officers, and putting mechanisms in place aimed at holding the officers internally accountable. However, much is required to be achieved to reduce corruption among law enforcement personnel and to enhance drug law enforcement in the country.

iv. **Insufficient Resources**

The agencies that deal with drug law enforcement in Nigeria have continued to be challenged by the shortage of appropriate funding, equipment, and personnel. Perhaps, it is a factor of inadequate resources that has hampered how effective and efficient the country makes its effort in drug law enforcement and security. For instance, in 2019, NDLEA complained about the inadequacy of resources. Specifically, the agency mentioned that it lacked sufficient funds and equipment to carry out the mandate given to it. It stated that it lacked operational vehicles, drug detection equipment, and firearms required to enforce the drug laws (The Guardian Nigeria, 2019).

Similarly, the scarcity of sufficient resources has grossly confronted the Nigeria Police Force, also entrusted with the enforcement of the drug laws. Inadequate funds allocated to the NPF have made it grossly insufficient in basic police gear such as ballistic vests and bulletproof helmets, and patrol vehicles. Other than this, the low staffing in the law enforcement agencies was another challenge. Although many officers have retired or been laid off in recent years, the Nigerian government is yet to recruit and train new personnel, leaving a shortfall of personnel required for effective enforcement of drug laws (Vanguard Nigeria, 2018).

These are some of the challenges that have faced drug law enforcement and securities in Nigeria and have led to increased trafficking and consumption. They have also been made less effective in tracking, identifying, and intercepting drug traffickers because of inadequate funding and equipment. Moreover, shortage of personnel has made the task difficult for the authorities to cover the vast geographical terrain of the country noted with drug-smuggling routes. Meanwhile, addressing the problem of insufficient resources calls for a strong government in Nigeria to infuse more funds and other resources in law enforcement agencies involved in drug laws enforcement. Besides these, recruitment and training of new personnel in order to make up for the shortfall of experienced staff are also much needed on the part of the government in law enforcement agencies.

v. **Policy Implementation Challenges**

Governance, political will, and citizen engagement are major inhibitions to the proper implementation of drug policies and strategies in Nigeria. It has continued to be the major bane for effective drug laws and security operations. In fact, one key area of challenge that is often cited as related to governance impacts the implementation of policies in Nigeria (Michael & Michael, 2019).

The weak governance structures have caused the lack of proper mechanisms for enforcing laws and accountability mechanisms, which has hindered the effectiveness of agencies involved in drug law enforcement. Many cases have occurred where law enforcement officers have never carried out their duties because no one was held accountable. For instance, a court in Lagos discharged a Nigerian senator arrested in 2019 for drug trafficking owing to a lack of evidence. (Global Initiative, 2017).

Moreover, there has also been a lack of political will in the enforcement of drug laws in Nigeria. Top politicians in the country have close relations with drug traffickers, and would not want to see any policy and strategies that would affect their illicit business. In certain conditions, politicians are suspected of interference in the operations of law enforcement agencies to further weaken their effectiveness. Lack of public support is also another challenge. In fact, without this support, a close check on the policies and strategies to control the illegal drug trade and its abuse will be severely hampered. Thus, awareness of the dangerous tendencies of drug abuse and its impacts on society has not been sufficiently created in most parts of Nigeria, and as such, public awareness needs to be enhanced in a way that will muster the required support for the enforcement of the laws against drug use. These are challenges that have made the effectiveness of drug law enforcement in Nigeria only a mirage, with a myriad of barriers to effective implementation of policies and strategies on drugs. In this light, there is weak governance, lack of political will, or public support for the policies. Yet, addressing such challenges requires that governance structures, particularly around the rule of law and accountability, be tightened up by the government of Nigeria. There must also be a requirement to instill political will to enforce laws on drugs and hold politicians involved in drug trafficking accountable. Above all, public awareness will ensure that members of the general public are supportive of drug law enforcement agencies in their efforts and advocate for a drug-free society (Premium Times Nigeria, 2019).

Be that as it may, there is every reason to pay systematic attention to addressing the emerging challenges and complexities facing drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria with comprehensive strategies and multi-stakeholder collaborations. Promotion of inter-agency cooperation, investment in training and capacity building, deployment of advanced technologies, and promotion of community participation are but a few avenues for the country to effectively enhance drug control and prevention.

The Emerging Complexities in Drug Law Enforcement and Security in Nigeria

There is no doubt that the 21st century came with new challenges that confront the very fight against drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria, as drug users, particularly young people, have devised several techniques for drug smuggling and use. Some of these complexities include smuggling to the plantation of illicit drug substances in hidden locations. Little wonder why Samuel & Omodot (2022) corroborate that "the 21st century brought about various challenges to the enforcement of drug laws and security in Nigeria. To be disconnected from information is to cease to exist (Enemuo, Ezeanyi & Ezeaka 2019).

The other challenge facing probation officers is an increase in the number of young people who have since discovered new ways of smuggling and using illegal drugs". These include planting illegal drug substances in hideouts and other sophisticated ways of evading law enforcement agencies. These emerging challenges include but are not limited to:

- i. Increase in drug trafficking: There are more cases of drug trafficking in Nigeria because new drug cartels have emerged.
- ii. The apparent cases of corruption among police and other law enforcement agencies have made the effective enforcement of laws related to drugs difficult to implement.
- iii. Widespread drug abuse: The fast rise in drug abuse within the country has made the supply and demand control of illicit drugs quite difficult.
- iv. Inadequate funding of law enforcement: Inadequate funding of drug law enforcement agencies has meant ineffectiveness of the measures put in place to address drug trafficking and abuse.
- v. Poor border control: Inefficient border control systems have made it easy for drugs to be smuggled into or outside the country.
- vi. Drug production: The local manufacturing of illicit drugs, like cannabis and methamphetamine, within Nigeria has further complicated the situation related to drug law enforcement and security.
- vii. Drug trafficking has gone a notch higher with the use of technology in encrypted messaging applications, dark web marketplaces, tracking, and intercepting hard for law enforcement in drug transactions.

These are the modern technologies being put to use by Nigerian drug trafficking networks, while

more elaborate money laundering schemes are also developed in attempts at outranking law enforcement agencies. Segun & Patrick (2023, p. 5) have observed that "in recent years, drug trafficking networks have grown into a highly sophisticated and elaborate system in Nigeria". They have continuously opted for modern technologies of encrypted messaging applications and dark web marketplaces for communications and conduct of operations. They have also become adept at using complex and advanced money laundering schemes to evade law enforcement agencies. In this context, it typically includes many layers of middlemen and front companies to camouflage the source of illicit funds. It is their growing sophistication and increased capacity that presents a formidable task for the Nigerian authorities, who need to stay ahead of the ever-evolving pattern in the aspects of organized crime through continuous adjustment of strategies and techniques. In fact, increased production and consumption of illicit drugs have also contributed to an increased prevalence of drug addiction and corresponding criminal activities due to narcotics in the country. Another layer of difficulty in the area of enforcing drug laws and ensuring security in Nigeria is to effectively coordinate activities between agencies responsible for law enforcement. According to Olatunji (2017), there is a lack of effective coordination among law enforcement agencies, resulting in poor sharing of information and the lack of synergy during operations, hence weakening the effectiveness of the enforcement of drug laws in Nigeria. The different agencies that participate in the enforcement as concerns drug laws should conveniently cooperate and share intelligence information for efficiency.

Meanwhile, corruption has remained one of the major impediments in the enforcement of drug-related laws within Nigeria. Corruption generally refers to the misuse of power or authority for personal gains, and in the Nigerian setting, this practice is high among the law enforcement officers who are supposed to enforce drug laws. These corrupt officers at times get gratification in terms of money and even join in the narcotics acts by being blind to the happenings. This subsequently makes law enforcement weak and decreases the war against drug trafficking. This results in increased crime related to drugs and a surge in drug abuse (Jide, Kehinde & Obaro, 2021). Corruption at times shields drug-related offences from prosecution; therefore, no one is held accountable, further promoting the vicious circle of corruption. In the end, corruption remains one of the major obstacles to rightful drug law enforcement in Nigeria; for this reason, its control becomes vital for the protection and well-being of Nigerian citizens. Agbiboa (2016) identifies how corruption has infiltrated the various cadres of law enforcement agencies, promoting drug trafficking and money

laundering.

The problem of corruption can only be corrected if there are laws related to accountability and ensuring these law enforcement activities become transparent. Another challenge about drug law enforcement in Nigeria is that there is a lack of technology-driven solutions. The lack of technology-driven solutions is another challenge to drug law enforcement in Nigeria (Duru, 2023). Against the background of technology advances that affect all aspects of life, not least in the field of crime and law enforcement, one issue seriously raising concern in Nigeria's narcotics trafficking combat is a situation where technology-based solutions are absent. The use of such obsolete and ineffective methods could not allow progress; there was no reliable and consistent data, and information sharing among stakeholders was slow. This leads to failure in monitoring and interdiction of drug shipment, identification of drug traffickers, and conducting criminal investigations accordingly. The absence of technological solutions inhibits the capacity to understand the trend of drug abuse and respond properly, hence resulting in a shortcoming in treatment or prevention programs. Put differently, this means that the big challenge facing drug law enforcement in Nigeria is a lack of technology-driven solutions. The need to embark on modern methods cannot be emphasized enough in making progress toward a drug-free society. In this light, law enforcement agencies have to embrace modern technology solutions such as the use of electronic surveillance, tracking devices, and forensic technology in efforts towards enhancing their capacity for the detection, investigation, and prosecution of drug traffickers (Adepoju & Salami, 2020).

Best Practices from other Countries

Several countries of the world have put up stringent policies in their fight against drug abuse. In this regard, several strategies and policies have been put in place by these nations as strategies in the fight against drug abuse. These strategies, however, have become effective measures for other nations to emulate. These strategies include:

❖ **Portugal's Decriminalization Model:**

It de-penalized drug use for public health reasons in 2001 and was invested in harm-reduction strategies. Since then, the country reduced harm from drugs and to date has been recognized as a model for drug-related policy reforms. One such policy intervention which attempted to mitigate the harms related to drug use in a way which prioritized public health is the Portuguese model of

decriminalization. The model initiated in 2001 sought to shift emphasis from punishment for drug users to treatment; these were persons who needed support and care. In that approach, the government decriminalized the use of all drugs; hence, cannabis and heroin use is not considered a criminal offence under their law. Huge spending on harm-reduction strategies followed this model: needle exchange programs, education about drugs, and therapy for drug use. The success of the decriminalization model has been impressive since Portugal is now reportedly showing significantly lower rates of drug-related deaths, infections, and crime compared to countries which have implemented traditional punitive measures. The practical experience gained with the decriminalization model employed by Portugal offers quite a few lessons that could be instructive for the reform of global drug policies. This approach puts the well-being of the drug user in the spotlight and seeks to minimize harm rather than punish. It shifts away from the traditional approach around the 'war on drugs', conventionally adopted by so many countries. The model provides good evidence that public health-oriented policies are effective in reducing drug-related harm and could be explored more widely. Investment in harm-reduction strategies makes the comprehensive approach to drug policy very important, with drug use being taken as a complex issue requiring a variety of interventions. In this respect, the Portuguese model on decriminalization offers an innovative approach that is compassionate in dealing with drugs and prioritizes public health, thus constituting useful insight for countries that want to address the harms associated with drug use.

❖ **Swiss Heroin-Assisted Treatment Programme:**

The Swiss have a heroin treatment program in which heroin is prescribed to treatment clients who have failed all other forms of treatment. It has been a very successful program, which has greatly reduced the harm of drugs and the related crimes and social costs of using drugs. The Swiss heroin-assisted treatment program is one of the most unusual approaches to date in treating drug addiction for which there has been no response with other forms of treatment (Ahmed, 2017). It involves the prescription of pharmaceutical-grade heroin to clients in supervised clinical settings with the express purpose of lessening drug-related harm and enhancing general health outcomes. This approach also views addiction as a chronic illness where one needs to be supported continuously in treatment. Therefore, others may need a more intensive form of intervention. Some tangible outcomes observed upon those who went through the program were reduced drug-related harm, thus improvement in physical and mental health; a reduction in criminal activities and social

stability increased.

The Swiss heroin-assisted treatment program offers an instructive example of the way in which effective harm-reduction strategies may work in the fight against drug addiction. Pharmaceutical-grade heroin, provided in a clinical setting, ensures that clients cannot be subject to overdose and infection with street heroin. It is a pragmatic acknowledgment of how real the problem of drug addiction is and provides a safe, supportive environment within which recovery from drug addiction may take place. The program puts into light the need for drug policy to be compassionate and evidence-based and ensures that priorities lie with public health outcomes, not punitive measures. The very success of heroin-assisted treatment in Switzerland makes for a strong argument to push other countries toward integrating such harm-reduction strategies into their attempts at addressing drug addiction.

❖ **Safe Injection Sites in Canada:**

Canada has established injection sites where users take their drugs in a clean environment under the supervision of specially trained medical personnel. These have been shown to reduce drug-related harm, including overdose deaths, and they provide a platform connecting the drug users with health and social services. Setting up safe injection sites across Canada is a major, new shift in modern drug policy, recognizing harm reduction as an important part of the suite of strategies to reduce drug-related harm. Safe injection sites operate to provide a clean, hygienic space where users can consume drugs under the supervision of trained medical personnel (Fish, Adams & Grills, 2019). Overdose risk is minimized in addition to the transmission of infectious diseases, among other harms, while taking drugs at such facilities. Injection sites ensure access to health and social services, including drug treatment services and individual counseling, with referrals to other support services. Barriers due to stigma and marginalization break down; hence, there are better health outcomes among users.

Its aim of reducing the harms from drug use makes developments in safe injection sites relevant for other countries as well. This approach by the injecting site on drug addiction is commendable as it recognizes that drug addiction is multifaceted and, accordingly, has manifold sites for intervention. The harm reduction intervention can be provided by the government by way of offering a safer, cleaner place wherein drug users can ingest drugs without fear of legal consequences (Daniel, 2021).

Such sites allow for the engagement of health and social services, therefore offering a range of services that users can access in the improvement of overall health and well-being. Conclusion: Safe injection sites are one of the important policies of harm reduction that afford a unique opportunity to address the problems of addiction to drugs and improving health while reducing drug-related harm.

❖ **Australia's Methadone Treatment Programme:**

Australia has a methadone treatment programme that provides opioid substitution therapy to opioid-dependent persons. The treatment has been successful in reducing drug-related harm and also significantly improved general health and well-being among opioid-addicted victims. Australia's Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program is a harm reduction measure that offers substitution therapy for opioids to opioid-dependent individuals, most of whom are heroin addicts (Martins & Harry, 2015). The programme aims at reducing drug use harms while providing a safe, supervised treatment environment. This is a methadone medication program, a synthetic opioid taken orally once daily, which gradually diminishes opioid withdrawal symptoms and reduces the desire to take opioid drugs. Counseling, self-help peer groups, and referrals to additional health and social services are also made available to users through the program in order to help cope with addiction and its ramifications. In this aspect, the program was successful, as drug-related harms such as overdose deaths, transmission of HIV and hepatitis C, and crimes associated with drug use were reduced (George & George, 2018). Those who received methadone treatment also reported significant overall health and well-being improvements, thereby increasing their chances of overcoming addiction.

The Australia Methadone Treatment Programme offers a critical insight into the effectiveness of the harm reduction approach in drug-related harm reduction and the alleviation of drug addiction. This program has shown that opioid substitution treatment, together with other interventions such as counseling and support services, offers a practical approach to opioid addiction and improvement in population health outcomes. The programmes have also been realized to be cost-effective in drug-related harm reduction, such as crime and health problems (Cambell, Augustine & White, 2018). These advantages will not only be confined to Australia but will extend to other areas where opioid addiction exists. Therefore, other countries can learn from the Australian experience and explore the feasibility of introducing such programmes as part of their drug policy reform strategies. In

short, the Australia Methadone Treatment Programme represents an innovative, effective approach that is evidence-based, both to deal with opioid addiction and to reduce drug-related harm.

❖ **Cannabis Policy of the Netherlands:**

The country has implemented a non-penal policy in the use of cannabis and has allowed the setting up of regulated cannabis coffee shops. The above-mentioned has subsequently reduced the divergent range of harms that occur alongside cannabis use and include drug-related crimes and public nuisance. The cannabis policy of the Netherlands allows for a non-penal approach towards cannabis use and the regulated establishment of cannabis coffee shops. This policy aims to reduce the drug-related harms and other social nuisances associated with cannabis use. The licensed coffee shops create a legally controlled environment for cannabis use in which consumers can be treated as confident users of high-quality tested products. The coffee shops are also regulated by high norms and regulations, such as age limits and limits regarding the amount of cannabis to be bought, as a measure of reducing the risk of dependency and abuse. This approach has been quite successful in reducing the harms associated with the use of cannabis and has helped alleviate the burden of law enforcement for drug-related offences.

The policy of cannabis in the Netherlands has given other countries cues on how to go about drug policy reforms, reducing the drug harms associated with cannabis use. Non-penal approaches toward cannabis use, as embraced by the country, allow a country to deprioritize criminalizing drug users and concentrate on promoting public health outcomes (Ramsy, Pedro & Casadei, 2017). In addition to lowering the rate of drug-related crimes and public nuisance, regulating the production and sale of cannabis provides increased revenues for the government, better allocated to drug treatment and harm-reduction facilities. What was clear from the Dutch model is how drug use harms could be minimized sans punitive measures. It thus follows that countries battling with the challenge posed by cannabis and drug use should consider the possibility of enacting a similar policy as part of their drug policy reform strategies.

These practices have been highly effective in minimizing drug-related harm and may be translated into action in Nigeria's fight against the trade-in and abuse of drugs. What is needed is a full-scale and sustainable policy on drugs, oriented toward public health and the reduction of harm, with provisions for treatment and the prevention of drug-related crimes.

Conclusions

The abuse of drugs and illicit trafficking remains one of the key security and public health concerns in Nigeria that affect a large proportion of people and retard the socio-economic development process in the country. The study has discussed several issues and challenges, which the enforcement of the law against drugs and security faces in Nigeria, starting from the magnitude and organization of the activities of drug trafficking to personnel corruption, and also from a lack of enough resources to effective policy implementation. The challenges have posed serious barriers to efforts towards curbing drug trafficking and abuse in the country. Such challenges require comprehensive strategies for multi-stakeholder collaborations, inter-agency cooperation, investment in training and capacity building, the deployment of advanced technologies, and promotion of community participation. This is supported by various international experiences, such as the Decriminalization Model in Portugal, the Heroin-Assisted Treatment Program in Switzerland, Safe Injection Sites in Canada, the Methadone Treatment Program in Australia, and the Cannabis Policy in the Netherlands, which would have something valuable to offer in insight and perhaps even practical solutions to the betterment of drug law enforcement and security in Nigeria. What the government of Nigeria has to do is implement proper policies and strategies, invest in drug prevention and treatment programs, and involve all stakeholders' enforcement agencies, civil society, and the private sector in achieving a drug-free society in Nigeria.

Recommendations

- i. The NDLEA and the Nigerian Police Force are the agencies charged with drug law enforcement; they should be so equipped with modern equipment, personnel, and other resources to effectively combat new forms of complexities in drug trafficking and abuse in Nigeria. For this purpose, regular training and capacity-building programs will sufficiently equip their officers with the knowledge and skills necessary for addressing the emerging challenges in drug law enforcement.
- ii. The effectiveness of drug law enforcement in Nigeria is seriously hampered due to corruption among law enforcement personnel. In this respect, the government should take firm measures so that the menace of corruption can be reduced and transparency in drug law enforcement agencies may be ensured along with accountability.
- iii. The state of ignorance among the populace is one of the ways through which addressing the

drug abuse and trafficking situation in Nigeria is hindered. It is at this point that the government, nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders should increase public awareness of the dangers of drug abuse and promote drug prevention and treatment programs across the country.

- iv. Synergy between Drug Law enforcement agencies and other government agencies like the Nigerian Customs Service, NAFDAC, and Nigerian Immigration Service is greatly needed in effectively tackling the emerging challenges arising from drug trafficking and abuse.
- v. The government is in need of articulating and implementing a broad-based drug policy and strategy for Nigeria with respect to the increasing intricacies in the enforcement of drug laws and securities while reflecting the thinking of the best international practices. Such policies should give prominence to preventive measures, supply reduction, and treatment principles, and encourage multi-partnerships towards a drug-free society in Nigeria.

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