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DRUG ABUSE AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES IN KUJE AREA COUNCIL OF ABUJA, NIGERIA*

Okpuvwie, Ejuvweyere Jonathan & Egidi, Stephen Achuen

The goal of the study is to investigate drug abuse and criminal activities in Kuje Area Council of Abuja, Nigeria. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques, including interviews, and questionnaire were applied for the study. Using the Taro Yamane sampling technique, 400 participants were chosen for the investigation. Furthermore, the study's foundation was the Routine Activities Theory which provided a framework for understanding how drug abuse influences the routine activities of individuals. Drug abuse in the study area, is mostly committed among people of 14-50 years. Findings revealed that 95 percent of drug offenders were males, unlike females that accounted for 5 percent. Marijuana, cannabis and "Colorado" are commonly abused drugs. It was established that drug offenders obtained the illicit substances from illegal chemist stores, pharmacies, and drug cartels. The study recommends that the Nigeria National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency organize community-based prevention programs and provide access to treatment and rehabilitation services in the study area.

KEYWORDS: Abuse, Cannabis, Crime, Health, Illicit, Law Enforcement, Narcotics

INTRODUCTION

Crime is an unacceptable behaviour that denies other people's freedom to live in peace (Okpuvwie, Tohozin and Akinyede, 2023). Crime is a particular activity carried out by an individual or group of persons in violation of the law. Section 2 of the Criminal Code Act CAP 77, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990, defined crime as an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment. Researchers have long associated crime with the use of illicit drugs, mainly controlled substances and narcotics such as opium derivatives, heroin, marijuana, cocaine, and cannabis (Swartz and Lurigio, 2022).

Despite the medical benefits of drugs for human health, the destructive effects of the misuse of drugs on the entire society are highly alarming. Various countries around the world produce and consume illegal drugs. Notable among these countries are the United States, Afghanistan, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Russia, United Kingdom, and Nigeria amongst others (Gorman, 2022). Criminals use illegal drugs to enhance their activities (Guimaraes, et al.2017). All groups of people, irrespective of age, sex, faith, and nationality use drugs. However, there are individual differences in the use of drugs. Research shows that the most significant users of illegal drugs are the poor, unemployed, uneducated, and the uninsured (Swartz and Lurigio, 2022). Law enforcement agencies have established strong links between illicit drug use and criminal activity in Nigeria.

Brigadier General Buba Marwa, the Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) stated in a meeting with stakeholders that there is a close link between crime and the use of illegal drugs in Nigeria. Marwa opines that crime enables drug use, and drug use serves as a catalyst for other forms of crime, such as rape, kidnapping, arson, and murder (Marwa, 2021). Various categories of crime, such as kidnapping, terrorist activity, rape, robbery, theft, murder, gang robbery, and scavenger activities, occur daily in the Kuje Area Council of Abuja (Nigeria Sun Newspaper, 2023). It is worth noting that scavenger activities relate to those engaged by some young persons looking for scrap and condemned metals, plastics and irons dumped in waste bins or dumpsites. The Kuje Area Council has been the epicenter of kidnapping in the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (HumAngle, 2021). Investigation reveals that some of the crimes had a lot to do with the perpetrators' use of illegal drugs to facilitate their activities. The effects of drug usage on socioeconomic activity and national development in the study area have been the subject of numerous research studies. Regrettably, no significant work has been done on the demographics/genders of drug offenders in the study area. This work, therefore aimed at filling this observed gap. Accordingly, the study examines the concept and nature of illicit drugs and substance abuse, the causes of drug abuse, and the adverse effects of substance abuse on criminal behaviour.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept and Nature of Illicit Drugs and Drug Abuse

Johnson (2013) posited that people frequently use drugs, depending on how they are utilized, as they can either benefit or impair human health. Many drugs can affect a person's capacity for rational thought and informed decision-making, as well as increase their risk of getting ill and becoming addicted. A drug is a substance that has a physiological effect on the body after ingestion. It refers to any medication that is not food and is used to treat, prevent, or relieve the symptoms of a disease. The Collins English dictionary defines drug as "any chemical substances administered to humans to cure or prevent a disease." Drugs can also change a person's mood, awareness, thoughts, feelings, or behaviour by altering how the brain and the rest of the body function. Johnson (2013) defined drug as any substance that can change someone's perception, behaviour, mood, and feelings after it has been consumed. According to the World Health Organisation, a drug is "a material that can change how a living thing functions". Drugs could alter the physical or mental functions of the body (Shalini, 2022, cited in Chekwube and Agodi, 2024). Governments across the world regulate the consumption of drugs to preserve human health, dignity, and life. The government also prohibits those drugs that are seen to be dangerous to human life, and these categories of drugs are generally called illicit, controlled, and prohibited drugs. Drugs fall into several types, including stimulants, depressants, and hallucinogens (Schifano et al. 2023).

The use of prohibited drugs negatively influences criminal activities (Guimaraes et al. 2017). Organized groups or cartels typically control drug supply because single individuals rarely move significant amounts of drugs (Diaz, 2012). Traffic patterns are frequently dictated by the nature of the drug and its parent nation. For example, the trafficking of cocaine originates in the Andes and proceeds northward via Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean, ultimately reaching North America, Europe, and other destinations. Narcotics covered by international drug control treaties are considered illicit narcotics. (Babor, Caulkins and Edwards 2010). Illegal drugs are those whose production, sale, distribution, purchase, possession, or use is outright forbidden by the law. Some clear examples of illicit drugs include heroin and cocaine. Figure 2.1 shows some illicit drugs cultivation countries around the world. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show some illegal drugs found in Nigeria and drug use in Nigeria respectively.

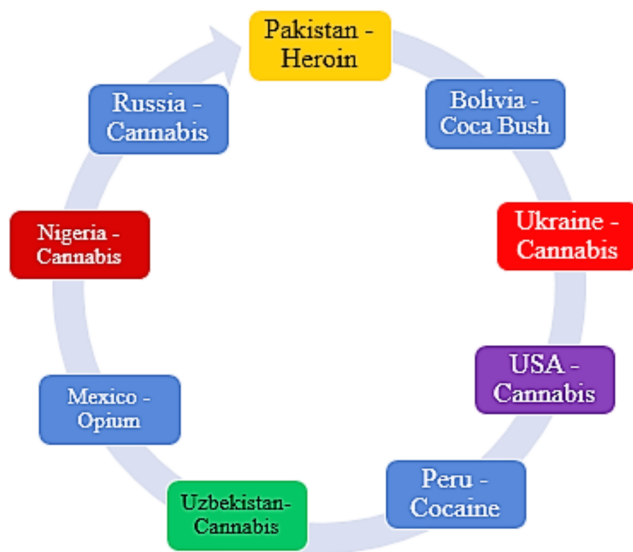


Figure 2.1 Some Global Illicit Drugs Cultivation Countries

Source: Adapted from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

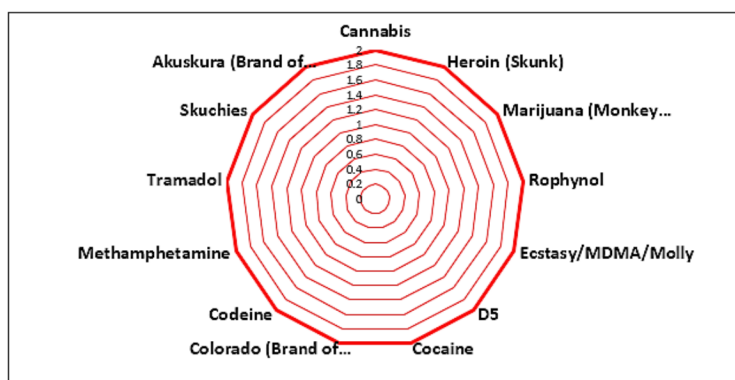


Figure 2.2 Some Illicit Drugs Found in Nigeria

Source: Nigeria National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (2023)

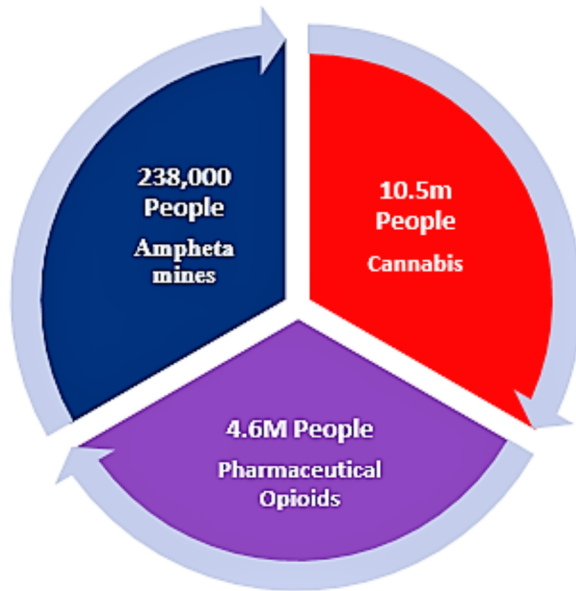


Figure 2.3 Drug Use in Nigeria

Source: Adapted from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018)

Causes of Drug Abuse

One of the health problems affecting most people around the world is drug abuse. This has been a severe source of worry and concerns for both the masses and the government at all levels (Okafor, 2020). A person is said to be a "drug abuser" if they allow a psychoactive substance to control him/her (Merck, 2009; cited in Okafor, 2020). There are various reasons people engage in drug abuse. Some people may be more predisposed to drug abuse due to their genetic makeup. Growing up in an environment with drug abuse, poverty, violence and neglect can increase the risk of drug abuse. Drug abuse can also result from mental health issues like bipolar illness, sadness, and anxiety when used as a self-medication technique. In the same vein, peer pressure, friends, and social groups can encourage drug use which could lead to experimentation and addiction. People can abuse drugs as a result of experiencing trauma, such as physical or emotional abuse as a coping mechanism.

The availability of drugs can also make it easier for individuals to experiment and become addicted to drugs. Moreover, experimentation and addiction can be exacerbated by a lack of information and education regarding the risks associated with drug abuse, particularly for young people. Some people abuse drugs for the desire to fit in with a social group; age mates, urge for self-administration of drug; and varying degree of parental deprivation (Olatude, 2000 and Akunyili, 2003, cited in Okafor, 2020). Others include doing it for fun, overcoming illness, overcoming shyness, gaining confidence, facilitating communication, getting over many social issues, and forcing themselves to work harder than they physically can.

Pourallahvirdi et al. (2016) and Fatima (2017) argued that curiosity, peer pressure, and the availability of drugs are some of the leading causes why some young people abuse drugs. Fatima (2017) posited that friends are under pressure to use drugs when they are with shady companions, most especially in schools. The work of Kundwei and Mbwirire (2020) on the causes of drug misuse in secondary schools in Zimbabwe indicated that the leading causes of drug addiction in schools are exposure, experimentation, family issues, and pressure from friends and age mates. Available records indicate young people frequently use drugs when compared to other age groups. Men are also more involved in drug abuse than women.

Similarly, urban dwellers are more inclined to drug abuse than rural dwellers around the world. Vivek and Tharu, (2011); cited in Kamlesh and Soma, (2012), identified, biological, psychological, and social factors of drug abuse. Biological factors include cravings, withdrawal symptoms, personality issues, and family history. Psychological causes include, but are not limited to, lack of self-control, low self-esteem, social disobedience, childhood loss trauma, and psychological suffering. The societal factors that lead to drug misuse are depicted in Figure 2.4.

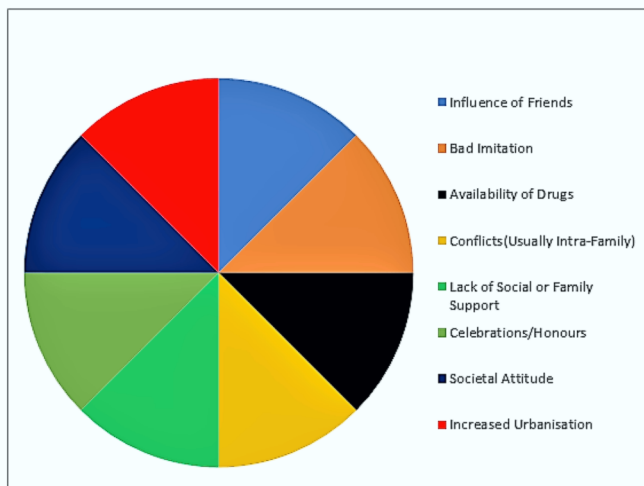


Figure 2.4 Social Factors that Caused Drug Abuse
Source: Adapted from Kamlesh and Soma (2012)

Negative Effects of Drug Abuse on Criminal Activities

Crime, drug use, and abuse all have a connection to one another (Raheleh, Saeede and Alireza, 2013). Crimes do not always result from drug use and sales because they are not always forbidden. However, there are some links between drug use and criminal behaviours. For instance, the direct negative influence of drugs on the mind and body may result in emotional or physical conditions that unintentionally promote crime or violence. Also, there is a nexus between drugs and crime when a drug user has a strong desire to use drugs but lacks the finances to do so. In such cases, theft, robbery, and burglary may likely occur (Richard and Scott, 2017). The availability and abuse of drugs are directly correlated with an increase in criminal activities like robberies, traffic accidents, militancy, and rape, among other crimes (Johnson, 2013). Some criminals are unable to function independently without using drugs. Therefore, drug abuse has a strong influence on crime. The use of illegal drugs can result in death in a number of different ways. Using illegal drugs at any point in time increases the chance that someone will die young from an illness or accident.

Trafficking in drugs brings in significant wealth. A global currency is used to purchase or convert money, transfer it to financial centers, and then send it electronically worldwide. This leads to the crime of money laundering. Also, in United States of America, research carried out in 2010 revealed that about 70% of male inmates used drugs (Raheleh, *et al*, 2013).

Furthermore, numerous drug addicts who relapse will turn to crime to satisfy their needs. This is why hard drug users frequently commit violent crimes. New or inexperienced users of a substance may quickly display violent tendencies, mood swings, and other extreme emotions depending on the substance (Alvarado, 2021). Numerous gangs and terrorist organizations are involved in or closely linked to illicit drug trade. Frequently, power and money are the two's connecting factors. There are some cases around the world where terrorists and drug dealers joined forces together to fight government and destabilize society. Marijuana (popularly known among Nigerians as "wee-wee", "monkey-tail", cocaine, heroin, "akuskura", "colorado" and amphetamines are a few examples of drugs with a high abuse potential (NDLEA, 2023).

Furthermore, numerous drug addicts who relapse will turn to crime to satisfy their needs. This is why hard drug users frequently commit violent crimes. New or inexperienced users of a substance may quickly display violent tendencies, mood swings, and other extreme emotions depending on the substance (Alvarado, 2021). Numerous gangs and terrorist organizations are involved in or closely linked to illicit drug trade. Frequently, power and money are the two's connecting factors. There are some cases around the world where terrorists and drug dealers joined forces together to fight government and destabilize society. Marijuana (popularly known among Nigerians as "wee-wee", "monkey-tail", cocaine, heroin, "akuskura", "colorado" and amphetamines are a few examples of drugs with a high abuse potential (NDLEA, 2023). Kamlesh and Soma (2012) argued that drug abuse is spreading at an alarming rate across the world, posing serious threats to every nation through declining health, severing relationships, increasing crime, eroding social and moral values, stifling productivity, and impeding society's advancement.

Young people are being held hostage by the threat of substance abuse more and more often, and their vulnerability is rising. Drug users do not have jobs. This state of joblessness influences their inability to provide for their immediate wants. Hence, they partake in illegitimate activities like prostitution, drug trafficking and theft (Raheleh et al., 2013).

Theoretical Framework

One of the theories considered for this study is the Routine Activities Theory. Marcus Felson and Lawrence Cohen propounded this theory in 1979. The theory posits that crime occurs when three elements meet in a particular place and time. These elements include a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. The Theory provides a framework for understanding how drug abuse contributes to criminality by influencing the routine activities of individuals. Individuals who abuse drugs may be more inclined to engage in criminal activities to support their addiction. Drug abuse can make individuals vulnerable to victimization and exploitation.

Drug users may be targeted by other criminals for robbery, assault, or exploitation due to their impaired judgment, weakened social ties, and increased likelihood of carrying cash or valuable possessions to support their addiction. In the context of the absence of a capable guidance, Drug abuse can erode social bonds and support networks, leaving individuals without adequate protection or guidance from family, friends, or community institutions. This absence of social control mechanisms can increase the likelihood of drug users engaging in criminal activities.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Materials

Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data include oral interviews and a structured questionnaire. Key locations of interest in the study area were identified using a hand-held GPS device.

The identified locations of interest were areas where most of the young persons that congregate and take drugs of different kind within the study area. Also, both published and unpublished sources provided secondary data. Journals and national newspapers were also consulted online through www.google.com to enhance the quality of the work.

Method

A simple random sampling technique was adopted to choose the respondents for the study. The Taro Yamane sampling technique was used to obtain a total of 400 respondents for the study. Time, budget, and logistical feasibility, informed the use of this sample size. Hence, this sample size strikes a balance between the need for robust data collection and the resources available for conducting the research. It is worthy to mention that out of the 400 questionnaire administered, 395 was retrieved from the respondents leaving 5 to be unaccounted for. The retrieved 395 questionnaires accounted for about 99 percent, which is good enough for the study. The respondents' demographic details and drug abuse variables were explained with the aid of percentages. Collected data were subjected to statistical analysis through the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences. The Microsoft Excel and Arc GIS version 10.8 were equally used for the preparation of the various charts, graphs and map analysis. All these enhanced the quality and effectiveness of the study. Figure 3.1 shows the methodological flowchart for the study.

Methodological Flowchart

Study Area

The focal point of the research is the Kuje Area Council of Abuja. Six area councils comprise Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory and Kuje is one of them. Others are Gwagwalada, Abaji, Bwari, Kwali and Abuja Municipal Council. The six area councils were established in November 1987 (Ndakatu, Yakubu and Yusuf, 2010). Kuje is located approximately 40 km southwest of Abuja (Abdullahi and Yunusa, 2019). It is situated in Abuja's north central region. At the moment, Kuchiyako is Kuje's most developed neighbourhood. Kuje is located between latitudes 8° 30' and 8° 50' North and longitudes 7° 00' - 7° 30' East (Mephors et al. 2021).

The study area is bordered to the north-east by the Abuja Municipal Area Council, to the north-west by the Gwagwalada Area Council, and to the west by the Kwali Area Council. Kuje Area Council shares a southern boundary with Abaji Area Council. Kuje makes up 1,800 square kilometers of land. According to the 2006 population census, Kuje Area Council has 97,367 residents (Ndakatu, Yakubu and Yusuf, 2010; Nigerian Federal Capital Development Agency, 2018). Since then, the study area's population has significantly increased. Depending on the weather, the maximum temperature varies between 270 and 300C; nonetheless, Harmattan denotes dry, chilly weather from November to January (Yakasai, 2010).

Kuje Area Council has a busy market in Kuje with several roadside shops selling a variety of goods and products such as medicines, food and building materials. People also trade on phones, cards etc. The towns and villages that make up the Kuje Area Council include Damakusa, Bugako, Chida, Jeli, Kiyi, Shaji, Lafiya, Tuage and Rubochi. The study area is home to many diverse ethnic groups, including the Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba and other tribes from across Nigeria. Islam and Christianity are the main religions practiced by most of the people in the Area Council. The study area has great attractions such as the popular Kuje Prison, the Government Secondary School and the Nigeria-Ghana International College. There are two distinct seasons in Kuje Area Council: the dry season and the rainy season. According to www.worlddata.info/climate, the dry season runs from November to April, whereas the rainy season lasts from May to October.

The average humidity level of Kuje Area Council is 41% while the total precipitation in the area is put at 1250 mm of rainfall per annum. Kuje Area Council grows economic crops like peanuts, potatoes, onions and maize. Some residents also raised livestock like cattle, chickens, goats and lambs (Aluko, Sennuga and Emeana, 2021; Olayemi et al., 2022). Other economic activities in the study area are handicrafts and wood work, banks, and hotels. Administratively, the Kuje Area Council has 10 political wards. These wards include; Chibiri, Gaube, Gudun karya, Gwargwada and Kabi. Others are Kuje, Kujekwa, Kwaku, Rubochi and Yenche.

Figure 3.2 shows the location map of Kuje Area Council.

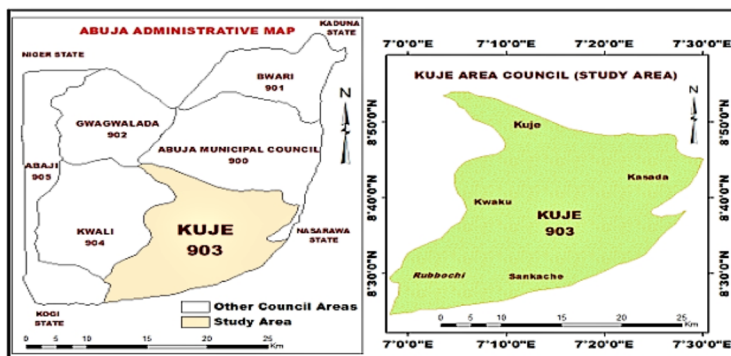


Figure 2.1 Location Map
Source: Author's Work (2023)

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Findings and Analysis

A. Common Drugs Used by Drug Offenders in Kuje Area Council

The study identified various drugs which drug offenders commonly abuse. From the study at Figure 4.1, 200 respondents accounting for 51 percent agreed that marijuana is a commonly abused drugs in Kuje Area Council of Abuja, while 100 respondents accounting for 25 percent opine that cannabis is equally abused. Additionally, 75 respondents which accounted for 19 percent agreed that "colorado" is also commonly abused.

However, 15 respondents which accounted for 4 percent stated that people also abused codeine while 5 respondents accounting for 1.3 percent of the total respondents believed that people abused other drugs such as tramadol, D5, skutches, ecstasy and rophynol among others. Generally, marijuana, cannabis and "colorado" are the most common abused drugs in the study area.

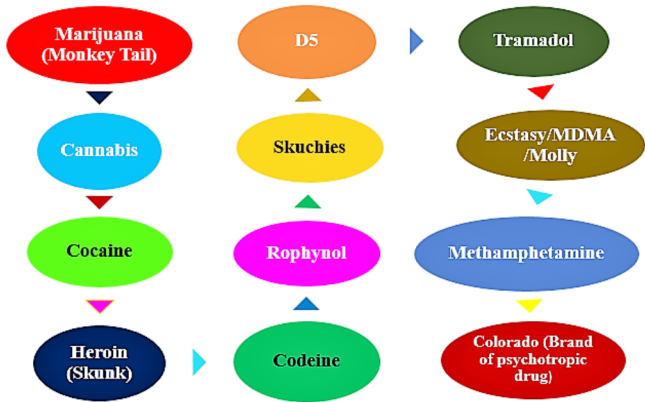


Figure 4.1 Common Drugs Used/Abused by Drug Offenders in Kuje Area Council

Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2024)

B. Sex Distribution of Drug Offenders in Kuje Area Council

Figure 4.2 below shows the age distribution of drug offenders in the study area of Abuja. Most drug abusers, according to the study, are dominantly of the male folks. The study reveals that 375 respondents accounting for 95 percent agreed that most of the drug offenders were males, while 20 respondents which accounted for 5 percent stated that females also abused drugs in the study area. Generally, the study established that most of the drug offenders in the study area were males. The findings of the study are in tandem with reality on ground in the study area as most of the criminal activities perpetrated in the area were commonly traced to the male folks who used drugs to enhance their criminal activities.

C. Age Distribution Drug Offenders in Kuje Area Council

Figure 4.3 below shows the age distribution of drug offenders. The study identified various categories of drug abusers based on their age distribution.

From the survey, 250 respondents which accounted for 63 percent of the total respondents, stated that most of the drug offenders are within the age bracket 17-35 years in Kuje area council. This age bracket, according to the study, are active in drug abuse and criminal activities in the study area. Also, 95 respondents accounting for 24 percent of the total respondents opine that some drug offenders fall within the age bracket 36-50 years, while 30 respondents accounting for 8 percent agreed that some of the drug offenders in the study area are within age bracket 14-16 years and above. Additionally, 15 respondents which accounted for 4 percent of the total respondents stated that some of the drug offenders fall within the age bracket of 51-60 years, while 5 respondents accounting for one percent believed that drug offenders are of the age bracket of 61 years and above. The respondents believed that these categories of drug offenders (61 years and above) are relatively less culpable in drug abuse, signifying that their influence on crime in the study area is far lesser than people of age bracket 14-50 years. What the study reveals is that 375 respondents which accounted for 95 percent of the total respondents agreed that most of the drug offenders are within age bracket of 14-50 years, unlike 5 percent of the respondents which stated that drug offenders in the study area fall within age bracket 51 years and above.

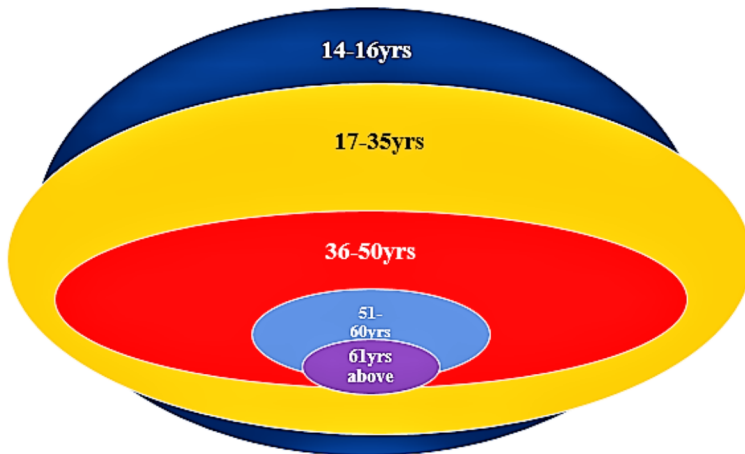


Figure 4.3 Age distribution drug offenders in Kuje Area Council
Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2024)

D. Duration of Stay of Respondents in Kuje Area Council

Figure 4.4 shows the duration of stay of respondents in the study area. From the study, 240 respondents accounting for 61 percent have spent approximately 6-10 years in the study area. This is closely followed by 100 respondents, accounting for 25 percent that have resided equally in the study area for about 11-15 years. The study also reveals that 30 respondents, which accounted for 8 percent, have also spent 1-5 years in the study area, with 25 respondents accounting for 6 percent who have lived there for about 16 years and above. The study established that most of the respondents have spent a quality number of years in the study area. This makes them to be more qualified and experienced to understand the subject under investigation.

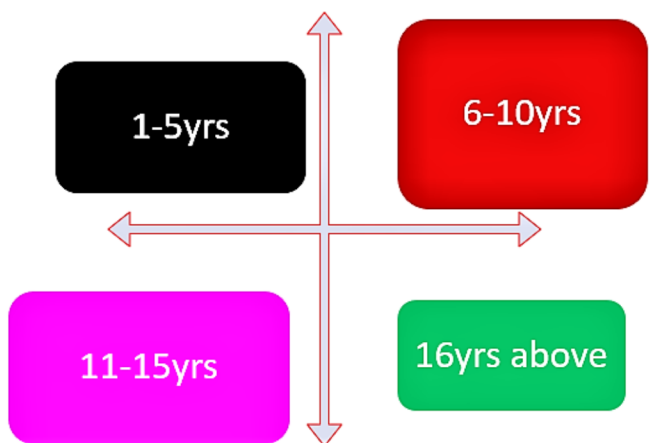


Figure 4.4 Duration of Stay of Respondents in Kuje Area Council
Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2024)

E. Sources of Drug Supply to Drug Offenders in Kuje Area Council

The study explores various sources of drug supply to drug offenders in the study area. From Figure 4.5 below, drug offenders in the study area obtained their drugs from various sources like illegal chemist stores, drug cartel and government approved chemist stores among others.

The study reveals that 250 respondents which accounted for 63 percent stated that most drug offenders got their supplies from illegal chemist stores, while 25 respondents accounting for 6 percent opine that drug offenders obtained their supplies from government approved chemist stores. Additionally, 5 of the respondents which accounted for one percent of the total respondents believed that drug offenders in the study area obtained their supplies from friends and relatives. This is contrary to the views of 85 respondents, accounting for 22 percent which stated that drug offenders in Kuje Area Council got their supplies from drug cartels. Similarly, 20 respondents which accounted for 5 percent were of the view that drug offenders obtained their supplies from government approved pharmacy stores. However, 10 respondents, accounting for 3 percent of the total respondents, believed that drug offenders got their supplies from drug manufacturing companies. Generally, the study reveals that 335 of the respondents, which accounted for 85 percent of the total respondents, were of the view that drug offenders obtained their drugs through illegal chemist stores, government-approved pharmacy/chemist stores and drug cartels.



Figure 4.5 Sources of Drug Supply to Drug Offenders in Kuje Area Council
Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2024)

F. Causes of Drug Abuse in Kuje Area Council

Figure 4.6 below shows the causes of drug abuse. From the study, most of the victims abused drugs due to various reasons. For example, 90 respondents which accounted for 23 percent of the total respondents agreed that people abused drugs in the study area due to frustration, while 55 respondents accounting for 14 percent stated that people abused drugs in order to relieve their stress. Also, 35 respondents which accounted for 9 percent attributed family neglect as a cause of drug misuse, while 75 respondents, accounting for 19 percent stated that pressure from friends pushed some of the drug offenders to abuse drugs. In the same vein, 60 respondents which accounted for 15 percent were of the view that availability of drugs makes some of the offenders to abuse drugs. Additionally, 48 respondents accounting for 12 percent of the total respondents were of the opinion that some of the drug abusers were involved in the act for experimentation purpose. Family background, according to 20 respondents, accounting for 5 percent caused some of the offenders to abuse drugs in the study area. Furthermore, 8 respondents which accounted for 2 percent agreed that poverty makes some of the offenders to abuse drugs, while 4 respondents accounting for one percent were of the view that availability of money at the disposal of some of the offenders pushed them to abuse drugs. Generally, it could be inferred that 328 respondents which accounted for 83 percent agreed that frustration, pressure from friends, availability of drugs, reduction of stress and experimentation pushed most of the offenders to abuse drugs in Kuje Area Council, while 67 of the respondents which accounted for 17 percent were of the view that poverty, family background, family neglect and availability of money pushed some of the offenders into drug abuse.

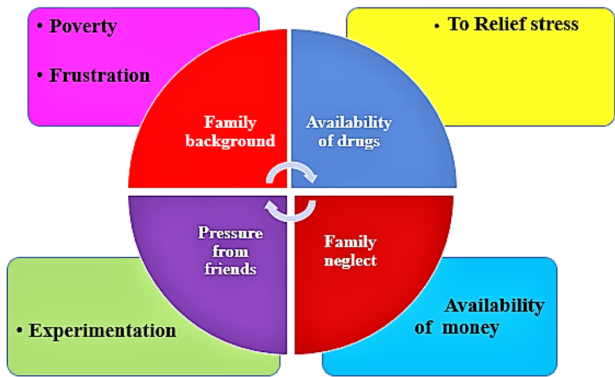


Figure 4.6 Causes of Drug Abuse in Kuje Area Council
Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2024)

G. Negative Effects of Drug Abuse on Crime

The work looked at the negative effects of drug abuse on criminal activities in the study area. From Figure 4.7 below, the study identified various negative effects of drug abuse on the drug abuser and the society in general. The study revealed a clear link between misuse of drugs and criminal activities. Accordingly, 190 respondents which accounted for 48 percent agreed that drug abuse influenced terrorism, while 90 respondents, accounting for 23 percent opine that drug abuse has negative effects on theft/burglary. The study also revealed that 30 respondents accounting for 7.6 percent were of the view that drug abuse has negative effects on political thuggery, while 40 respondents which accounted for 10 percent of the total respondents believed that drug abuse has influence on prostitution. Also, 25 respondents which accounted for 6.3 percent stated that drug abuse has negative effects on illegal use of firearms, with 10 respondents accounting for 2.5 percent stated that drug abuse has influence on domestic violence/unrest. Similarly, 5 respondents which accounted for 1.3 percent agreed that drug abuse has negative effects on murder, while 3 respondents accounting for 0.8 percent asserted that drug abuse has influence on rape. The study also showed that 2 respondents which accounted for 0.5 percent linked money laundering to drug abuse. Generally, 375 of the respondents which accounted for 95 percent of the total respondents agreed that drug abuse has negative effects on terrorism, theft/burglary, prostitution, political thuggery and illegal use of fire arms, while 20 respondents accounting for 5 percent believed that drug abuse has negative influence on rape, murder, money laundering, and domestic violence/unrest.

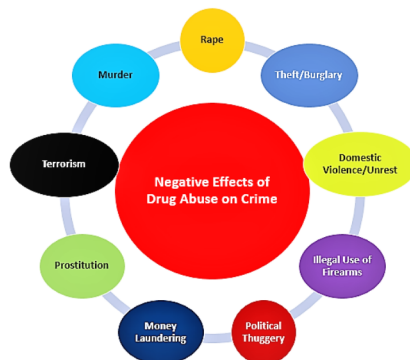


Figure 4.7 Negative effects of drug abuse on crime
Source: Authors' Fieldwork (2024)

Discussion

The issue of drug abuse and its connection to criminal activities is a pervasive concern in many communities worldwide, including Kuje Area Council of Abuja. The prevalence of drug abuse in Kuje Area Council underscores the need for comprehensive interventions that address both substance abuse and associated criminal behaviours. The study identified marijuana, cannabis, "colorado" tramadol, and D5 among others as commonly abused drugs in Kuje Area Council. Findings of the work were in line with the work of Adepeju and Osunwoye (2022) on drug abuse among Nigerian Youth as well as the work of Enrique (2016). These scholars identified alcohol, heroin, cannabis, opium, codeine, cough syrups, and methadone among others as commonly abused drugs in Nigeria. Also, the work of Donald, Prerna, and Harish (2023) on substance use and abuse in adolescents, and the work of Jie et al. (2023) on the analysis, occurrence, and consumption of substances with abuse potential in China, equally supported the findings of the study.

Similarly, the study identified the most common gender that abused drugs in the study area. The study revealed male population which accounted for 95 percent, as the dominant sex that abused drugs in the study area unlike the females that accounted for 5 percent. The findings of the study corroborated the work of De Vogel et al. (2022). They found that more than half of the women (56.7 percent) and men (68.4 percent) who participated in their research on gender differences in substance abuse history and offending behaviour in Dutch Forensic Psychiatry had a history of substance abuse. The study reveals that men were diagnosed with substance abuse disorders more and to have committed the index offense while under the influence of alcohol. Additionally, the work of Heather et al. (2023) also supported the findings of the study. They asserted that the estimated prevalence of injection drugs was highest among male population in the USA (2.1 percent; 95 percent confidence interval).

Furthermore, the study identified various sources where drug abusers obtained their drugs from. It was revealed from the study that most drug offenders got their drugs from illegal chemist stores, drug cartel, government approved chemist stores, and friends and relatives.

The work of Purser (2023) on trends in the source of prescription drugs for misuse between 2015 and 2019 supported the study's findings. Purser posited that drug offenders obtained their supplies from drug dealers or strangers, family members, and friends. The works of et al. (2021) equally supported the findings of the study. They posited that drug abusers obtained their drugs from pharmacies/patent medicine shops, open drug markets, drug hawkers, fellow drug abusers, friends, and drug pushers. In a related development, the study identified poverty, peer pressure, availability of money, experimentation, family background, availability of drugs and frustration as some of the causes of drug abuse. The findings of the study are also in tandem with the works of Olatude (2000) and Akunyili (2003); cited in Okafor (2020). They observed that the desire to fit in with a social group; age mates, urge for self-administration of drug; and varying degree of parental deprivation make some persons to abuse drugs in the society. Pourallahvirdi *et al*, (2016), Fatima (2017) and Bassey and Aniekpeno (2021) works also supported the findings of the study. Both argued that curiosity, peer pressure, desire to feel high, and the availability of drugs are some of the main causes why some young people abused drugs. A study conducted by Gunda and Mbwirire (2020) on the causes of drug abuse in secondary schools in Zimbabwe, revealed that peer pressure, family problems, experimentation and exposure were the major causes of drug abuse by young people in schools, thus, giving credence to the findings of the study.

The study shows negative influence of drug misuse on crimes like rape, terrorism, banditry, domestic violence and prostitution, theft/burglary, illegal use of firearms, political thuggery and murder among others. Pertinently, works of several scholars supported these findings. For example, Richard and Scott (2017) posited that there is a connection between drugs and crime when a drug user has a strong desire to use drugs but lacks the finances to do so; in such cases, crimes like theft, robbery, and burglary may likely occur. Again, the availability and abuse of drugs are directly correlated with an increase in criminal activities like robberies, kidnapping, traffic accidents, militancy, health issues, broken homes, domestic violence, low productivity, loss of job, and antisocial acts like stealing, burglary, absenteeism, battering, and rape among other crimes (Johnson, 2013; Ahmed and Dabit, 2020).

It is important to note that some criminals are unable to act independently without using drugs. Drug trafficking brings significant wealth. A global currency is used to purchase or convert money, transfer it to financial centers, and then send it electronically all over the world. This leads to the crime of money laundering. Additionally, new or inexperienced users of a substance may quickly display violent tendencies, mood swings, and other extreme emotions depending on the substance (Alvarado, 2021). The works of Kamlesh and Soma (2012) also supported the findings of the study wherein they asserted that drug abuse poses a serious threat to every nation through dilapidated health, increasing crime, stifling productivity, severing relationships, eroding social and moral values, and impeding society's overall advancement. The findings of the aforementioned scholars underscore the negative effects of drug abuse on criminal activities in the society.

CONCLUSION

The influence of drug abuse on criminal activities in Kuje Area Council of Abuja is undeniable and multifaceted. The research has gained insights into the complex interplay between substance abuse and criminal behaviour. It has shed light on the socio-economic, cultural, and psychological factors contributing to this phenomenon. The prevalence of drug abuse in Kuje Area Council underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions aimed at prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. The nexus between drug abuse and criminality perpetuates a cycle of violence, property crime, and community unrest. Offenders often engage in various illicit activities, including drug trafficking, burglary, robbery, and violent crimes. Regrettably, these acts pose significant challenges for law enforcement agencies and necessitates a comprehensive method that combines enforcement with avoidance and management strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gleaning from the foregoing, it is recommended that the Nigeria National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) should consider and adopt as follows:

(a) Continue to organize community-based prevention programmes in Kuje Area Council of Abuja and other parts of the country. The programme would be aimed at sensitizing the minds of the residents on the dangers associated with drug abuse and the need to promote a healthy lifestyle.

(b) Provide means for treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals under pressure with substance abuse disorders. This could involve the establishment of specialized treatment centres, providing counselling services for both individuals and their families.

(c) Strengthen personnel efforts of the agency to combat drug trafficking and related criminal activities, while also advocating for criminal justice reform initiatives that prioritize rehabilitation over punitive measures for non-violent drug offenders.

(d) Foster collaboration among various government agencies, non-profit organizations, community leaders, and other stakeholders to develop holistic approaches to addressing drug abuse and its associated impacts on criminal activities.

NOTES

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OKPUVWIE EJUVWEYERE JONATHAN works with the Directorate of Naval Provost, Special Investigation Bureau, Naval Headquarters, Area 7, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria. He holds a Master's Degree in Geoinformation Technology from the African Regional Institute for Geoinformation Science and Technology, Ile-Ife in collaboration with the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria. His research interest is on Crime, Hydrography, Remote Sensing/Geographic Information Science, Geopolitics, Social Issues and Drugs.

EGIDI, STEPHEN ACHUEN affiliates with the Department of Sociology, University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. He hails from Bekwarra LGA of Cross River State, Nigeria. He holds a PhD in Demography from the University of Calabar, Nigeria. His interest is in academic and development Sector.