



## **ILLICIT DRUG AND POLICING CHALLENGES: PUBLIC SAFETY IMPERATIVE**

**Paul-Mgbeafulike, V.S (Ph.D.)**

Department of Business Education  
Faculty of Technology and vocational Education  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State  
E-mail; [vs.paul-mgbeafulike@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:vs.paul-mgbeafulike@unizik.edu.ng)

**&**

**<sup>2</sup> Ikpeama Frednora Uchenna (Ph.D)**

Department of Business Education  
Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State  
E-mail; [fu.ikpeama@unizik.edu.ng](mailto:fu.ikpeama@unizik.edu.ng)

**&**

**Mohammed A. Auta (Ph.D.)**

Department of Industrial Technology Education  
Faculty of Technology and Vocational Education  
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State

**&**

**<sup>3</sup>Udogu Anthony N. (Ph.D.)**

Department of Criminology and Security Studies,  
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University,  
Igbariam, Anambra State  
[an.udogu@coou.edu.ng](mailto:an.udogu@coou.edu.ng)

### **ABSTRACT**

*The widespread incidence of illicit drug use and trafficking across various populations in society has been recognized as a critical source of threat to public safety. This research therefore investigated illicit drug and policing challenges: public safety imperative. Three specific objectives guided the study. The methods approach adopted for this research are based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Shamseer et al. 2015). The researchers noted that it is essential to develop or adopt a literature search strategy that includes keywords directly related to the selected variables being studied. This research adopted a two-step approach in selecting studies to be included. In the first step, the author carefully went over every title and abstract to find papers that might be pertinent. Should the inclusion requirements be met, titles and abstracts were considered for reviewing the full text. In the second step, the author looked closely at every study that showed potential to fit the criteria for inclusion; each study was examined separately and according to the specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. The data extraction technique adopted for the study involved carefully*



*extracting relevant information from the included research. For this study, data extraction was done manually. The information extracted consists of the name(s) of the author (s), the year of publication, the title of the study, population and sample size, the environment where the study was focused on, the tools for data collection and analysis and lastly the results arrived in the study. The findings from the reviewed primary data based on research objective one revealed that substance abuse affects 22.5% of youth in correctional facilities, with men being disproportionately affected. Female youths face health, social, and economic issues, leading to poor academic performance, low attendance, and increased vulnerability to exploitation. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended, among others that government should target intervention programs addressing the specific needs of adolescents in correctional facilities, focusing on mental health support, educational opportunities, and social services to reduce the impact of substance abuse effects and improve overall outcomes.*

**Keywords:** illicit drug; policing; challenges; public safety.

### **Introduction**

The widespread incidence of illicit drug use and trafficking across various populations in society has been recognized as a critical source of threat to public safety. Ramsey (2012) characterizes drugs as any substance or agent which can be chemical in nature and is consumed, ingested or inhaled for the reason of achieving excitement, enjoyment and comfort with the ability to bring about an observable change in the social, physiological or even the psychological functioning of the individual (s). The phenomenon of illicit drug use and trafficking has remained the most often investigated criminal cases handled by forensic science laboratories. Like marijuana or cocaine, illegal drugs can happen naturally; they can be made from naturally existing compounds, like heroin, or they can be completely synthetic, as most other prescription medicines and amphetamines are. Illicit drugs can be grouped into four main forms such as hallucinogens, opioids, stimulants and depressants. This grouping is based on the behavioural effect that the consumption of each illicit drug generates (Houck & Siegel, 2010).

Many times, international security studies depict drugs as a national security threat to underdeveloped nations. Evidence, however, indicates that even in advanced nations, the prevalence of illicit drug use is widespread and a contributor to crime and violence across society. Take, for instance, such developed countries like the United States of America, Germany, and the United Kingdom, which have long been coping with the spread of illegal drug usage and drug trafficking, which points to the global nature of the problem of illicit drugs (Swanstrom, 2007; Stephen, 2016). In the report presented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), it was noted that in 2018 alone, more than five percent of the earth's population, that is about 271 million people, within the age bracket of fifteen to sixty-four were implicated in illicit drug use (United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, 2019). By 2021, the global population of illegal drug users has risen to 296 million (UNODC, 2023).

The emergence of illicit drugs in Nigeria coincided with the return of Nigerian soldiers who went on foreign missions at the end of the Second World War. It is thought that these soldiers, having



served in various countries such as India and Burma, gained exposure to cannabis. On their return to Nigeria, they brought along seeds of cannabis sativa, which they later planted. The soldiers soon discovered that the Cannabis sativa seed recorded a greater growth rate in some areas of Nigeria, which increased the plant's farming (Chris, 2016). The problem of illicit drug activities is becoming more of a serious hazard to public safety in Nigeria. The most populous nation in Africa, Nigeria has been known as a hotspot for drug trafficking and usage, especially among young people (Jatau et al., 2021).

Over the years, Nigeria has continued to witness a surge in the cases of illicit drug use and trafficking, so much so that the NDLEA report of 2013 noted that the scope of illicit drug activities in the country is expanding to include not only consumption and trafficking but also production and exportation of illicit drugs. For instance, between 2010 and 2013, approximately 43% of the individuals arrested were attempting to smuggle drugs out of the country. During this period, the NDLEA uncovered six secret laboratories within Nigeria where illicit drugs are produced; the consequence of this growing capacity to make illicit drugs in Nigeria by some bad actors is that it increases access to illicit drugs, which can lead to a surge in the local consumption of illicit drugs (NDLEA, 2013). According to statistics from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), 2016), all states of Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), have significant rates of all kinds of illicit drug activities. Data suggest that in 2018, one in every seven Nigerians within the age range of fifteen and sixty-four had used illicit drugs other than tobacco and alcohol (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). In a more recent study, the prevalence of illicit drug usage in Nigeria among the youth population went as high as 20-40 per cent (Jatau et al., 2021). In another study, it was reported that marijuana/weed, cough syrup, marijuana/weed, cocaine, shisha, diazepam, cannabis, codeine, amphetamine, and heroin were the most widely drugs implicated in illicit drug activities in Nigeria (Idowu et al., 2023).

Studies have identified an array of reasons why people engage in illicit drug activities in Nigeria. Accordingly, Stein et al. (2016) and Okpataku (2015) in their respective studies noted that people use illegal drugs as a tool for aiding sleep or wakefulness, for pleasure and entertainment, the management of anxiety, coping with frustration due to peer influence, as an alternative to food and to boost their energy and morale. Other studies reported that inadequate parental supervision (Yusuf, 2011), the inclination to explore new experiences (Mohamed et al. 2021), the desire to achieve a state of intoxication, and the attempt to escape emotional difficulties stemming mostly from socioeconomic and sociocultural circumstances (Olanrewaju et al., 2022) all serve as a motivation for taking illicit drugs in Nigeria.

The phenomena of illicit drug activities have negative consequences for both the domestic and international security of a nation as well as the socioeconomic development of nations, irrespective of their level of development. As a result, there has been a worldwide effort to address the issue of illicit drug activities. The number of policies and institutional frameworks designed for tackling and controlling the issue of illegal drug activities at local, regional and international levels has witnessed a significant rise. Countries and other essential stakeholders are implementing it. These frameworks and documents have undergone various changes since the beginning of the 20th



century (Olajire, 2019). The United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 1961; the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in 1988, UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the 1912 Opium Convention in Hague are a few examples of the international frameworks put in place to checkmate and control illicit drug use across international borders (Olajire, 2019). The campaign against illegal drug usage and trafficking resulted in the 1989 founding of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Nigeria. Since its founding, the agency has seized vast quantities of illegal narcotics and also conducted major drug trafficking arrests. Particularly, available data shows that in 2019 alone, the agency successfully made a seizure of drugs to the tune of 612,547.89kg. When compared to the tune of drugs seized in the previous year, which is 163,684.44kg by the agency, it represents an increase of 274.22%, and this gives a better picture of the increasing prevalence and penetration of illicit drug activities across the various fibres of the Nigerian society. In the same year, the agency made 9,479 arrests and secured 1,120 convictions of individuals suspected of being involved in illicit drug activities (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

Despite the efforts and success attained by Nigeria in its war against illicit drug use and trafficking, the problem continues to exist. A lot of factors have been identified that limit and hinder sustainable progress in the battle against illegal drug use; one of the several elements that limit and impede sustainable success in the campaign against illicit drug use is the weak rule of law that has evolved as a common trait for many nations in the developing economy (Mahmoud & Dabit, 2020). Furthermore, in the 2015 report by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Drug Control (IMC) in Nigeria, it was pointed out that the efforts put forward by law enforcement in Nigeria to control and regulate the use, sales and trafficking of illicit drugs in the county were constrained by a low level of technical and logical capacity to execute drug responses, Linked to this, was the restricted capabilities of law enforcement agents in most spheres of intelligence gathering and analysis. The report also noted that drug investigation tactics employed by the law enforcement agency in Nigeria were more of a reaction rather than preventive. More so, when the economic status and scale of involvement of arrested illicit drug offenders are brought into perspective, it can be observed that the drug interdiction actions in Nigeria were disproportionately orientated towards drug users, couriers to some extent low-level suppliers, with a very little attention/efforts made towards bringing mid-to- high-level drug offenders to book (Inter-Ministerial Committee on Drug Control, 2015). Given these, initiatives to stop the rising issue of illegal drug use and trafficking in Nigeria call for a general awareness of the frequency, usually linked drugs, usually involved population, sources of the drugs and the possible hazards they create to public safety (Jatau et al. 2021).

The media has served as the primary source of information on the problem of illicit drug use in Nigeria. However, in recent years, they have been appreciable research interest in the field, as manifested in the emergence of studies on the problem of illicit drugs in Nigeria. These studies not only provide light on the nature and supporting elements of growing illegal drug usage and trafficking in Nigeria. They also provide law enforcement, legislators, and policymakers with empirically verified methods for addressing illicit drug use. Summarizing and aggregating the results of these investigations will help provide better access to empirical evidence. At the time of this research, only one recent study (see Jatau et al. 2021) attempted to conduct a systematic



review. However, the survey by Jatau et al. (2021) primarily focused on summarizing the empirical evidence in epidemiological studies. Therefore, a more comprehensive review is needed to include broader categories of studies. This study, thus, aims to conduct a systematic review of the literature to summarize the findings in studies on the impact of illicit drugs, challenges confronting law enforcement agencies in preventing illicit drug activities and suggested effective techniques in combating illicit drug activities within the microscopic view of public safety.

### **Research Objectives**

This research investigates illicit drug and policing challenges: public safety imperative. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Investigate the impact of illegal drug use on public safety.
2. Examine the challenges confronting law enforcement agencies in preventing illicit drug activities.
3. Suggest effective techniques in combating illicit drug activities

### **Methods**

The methods approach adopted for this research are based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines (Shamseer et al. 2015).

### **Literature Search Strategy**

Researchers have noted that it is essential to develop or adopt a literature search strategy that includes keywords directly related to the selected variables being studied (Borbaski, Jackson and East, 2019). In line with this recommendation, the study identified the following keywords: "illicit drug", "illicit drug use", "illicit drug trafficking", "illicit drug impact", "control of illicit drug", "public safety", "challenges in illicit drug control" "Nigeria" The keywords were then combined using Boolean operators AND, OR and IN, and entered into the selected electronic database. The researcher also employed the reference chaining technique to identify studies relevant to the research from the reference lists of the included articles.

### **Study Selection**

This research adopted a two-step approach in selecting studies to be included. In the first step, the author carefully went over every title and abstract to find papers that might be pertinent. Should the inclusion requirements be met, titles and abstracts were considered for reviewing the full text. In the second step, the author looked closely at every study that showed potential to fit the criteria for inclusion; each study was examined separately and according to the specified inclusion and exclusion criteria below:

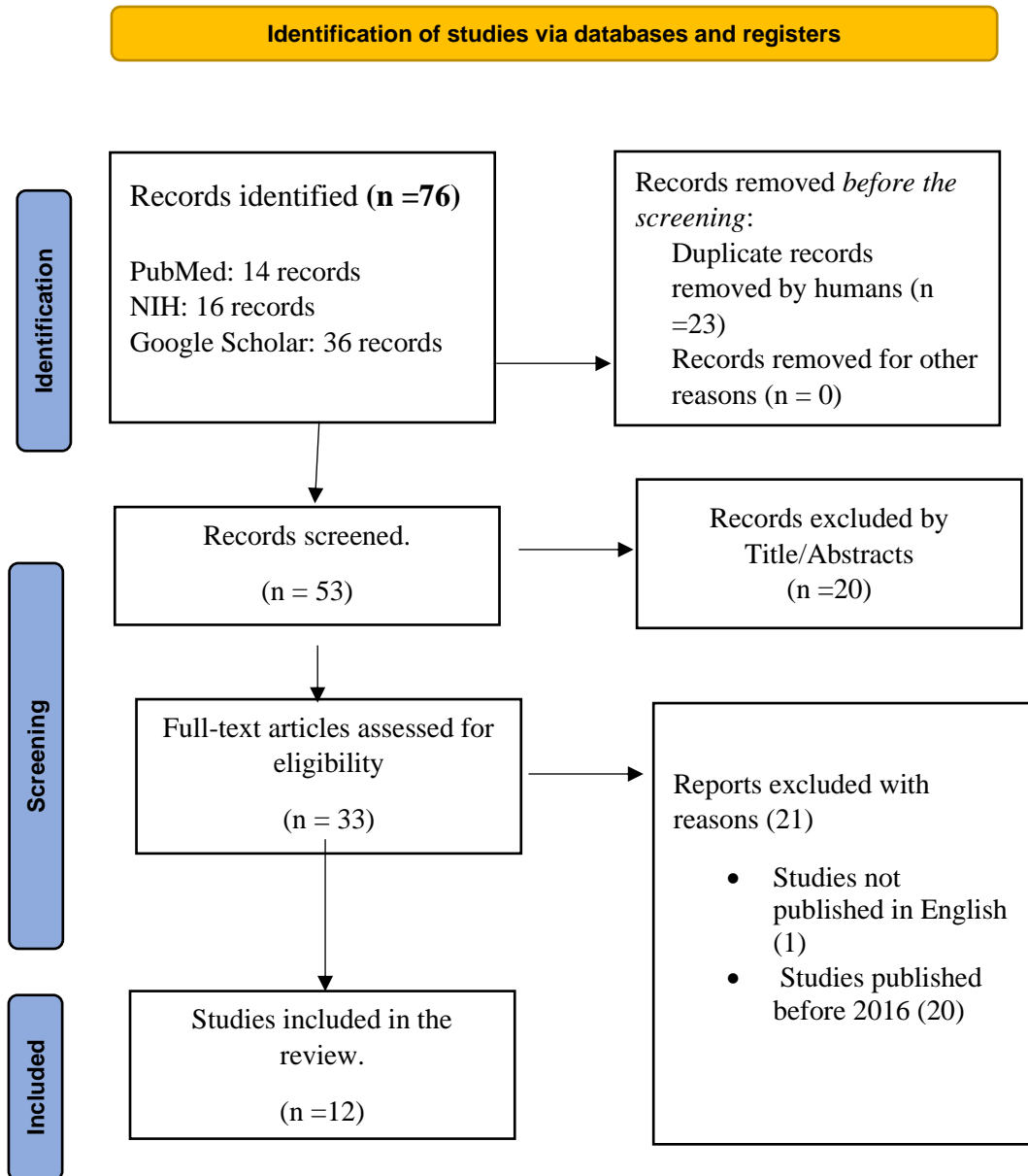
- Research releases spanning 2016-2024
- Studies must be published or translated into English
- The study must take place in Nigeria
- The study must measure such variables as illicit drug use, its impact, challenges to drug control, and strategies for the control of illegal drugs in Nigeria.
- Study must be full text
- The study must rely just on primary data.



- Opinion papers, literature reviews and systematic reviews are excluded from the study.
- The study must use a clear methodology.

The PRISMA flowchart below shows the result of the study process:

**Fig. 1 PRISMA flow chart describing the process of study selection**



### Data Extraction

The data extraction technique adopted for the study involved carefully extracting relevant information from the included research. For this study, data extraction was done manually. The



information extracted consists of the name(s) of the author (s), the year of publication, the title of the study, population and sample size, the environment where the study was focused on, the tools for data collection and analysis and lastly the results arrived in the study. The summary of the data extraction process is presented in the table below.

**Table 1. Data Extraction table**

Author/year	Population	Setting	Prevalence/commonly abused drugs	Impacts of illicit drug	Challenges	Techniques in combating illicit drug activities
Atilola, Ola and Abiri (2016).	Adolescents in five youth correctional facilities in Lagos, Nigeria, including Special Correctional Centre for Girls Idi-Araba, Special Correctional Centre for Boys Oregun, Correctional Centre for Senior Boys Isheri, Correctional Centre for Junior Boys Birrel, and Correctional Centre for Senior Girls Idi Araba.	Facilities for juvenile corrections in Lagos, Nigeria.	The lifetime prevalence of alcohol use (12.3%) and illicit drug usage (17.9%) was 22.5%. The prevalence rate was up to 35% higher in men.	Substance abuse affects 22.5% of youth in correctional facilities, complicating rehabilitation. Men are disproportionately affected, with prevalence rates reaching 35%, highlighting the need for targeted interventions.	Adolescent drug use problems are highly prevalent, over-represented in men, and significantly correlated with being homeless children.	Adolescents in correctional facilities can have their personalized treatment plans customized with alcohol and drug misuse screening and intervention based on global best practices and local circumstances.
Adegoke (2021).	Female youths in Northern Nigeria.	Two towns in Northern Nigeria, Kano and Kaduna	Codeine, tobacco, and marijuana are commonly abused.	Drug abuse among female youths leads to health issues, social and economic issues, and psychological effects exacerbated by increased vulnerability to exploitation and abuse.		
Amusa et al. (2020).	Students (both part-time and full-time) of Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State	Yaba College of Technology, Lagos State, Nigeria.	Drug misuse is prevalent among students, accounting for 76.2% of cases. Drugs used as a coping mechanism for stress, both intellectual and emotional, are frequently misused.	Drug misuse results in subpar academic performance, less focus in the classroom, low attendance, and a negative impact on required courses.	Lack of parental supervision, socioeconomic problems that cause personality disorders, and powerful peer and societal pressures are major obstacles.	Enabling guidance and counselling departments in schools to regularly educate students about the risks associated with drug use and to offer them emotional support to help them cope with both personal and academic obstacles.
Ngwu (2020).	Adults aged 18 years and above in Enugu-Ezike, Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. The study included 195 respondents (107 males and 88 females).	Enugu-Ezike, Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria	54.9% of respondents admitted to abusing marijuana	Drug abuse is associated with an increase in crime rates and contributes to family problems.	Negative perceptions of drug abuse despite high awareness and the need for effective public enlightenment and community education.	
Muhammad (2021).	Teenagers in Nigeria, especially those enrolled in high school.	Numerous Nigerian communities and students in secondary schools.	65% of secondary school students use drugs to have a good time.	Gang formation and armed robbery, as well as contribute to mental illness and involvement in cultism.	Adolescents continue drug use despite awareness of risks, transitioning from minor substances	Strategies to combat drug abuse, including preventive measures, education, and intervention programs, address



					to harder ones as they age, and societal challenges in controlling or curbing drug abuse.	the underlying causes and effects of the issue.
Okoye and Nwaka-Nwandu (2019).	Undergraduate students	Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.	Codeine, cigarettes, Alcohol, Indian hemp (marijuana), and other harmful drugs	Cultism, robbery, prostitution, poor academic performance, and thuggery		Implementing anti-drug policies, conducting seminars, and distributing educational materials to raise awareness about drug abuse, fostering a drug-free environment, and educating parents and students.
Onah (2023).	Undergraduate students	University of Lagos, Nigeria.	Alcohol and recreational drugs	The decline in academic performance, increased likelihood of depression, severe episodes of depression, and potentially suicidal tendencies in student well-being and social behaviors.		Implement anti-drug education across all school levels, organize awareness campaigns, develop rehabilitation networks, ensure government action, and provide early diagnosis, treatment, and counselling for students with mental health and substance abuse problems.
Obadeji et al. (2020).	Senior secondary school students	Ado-Ekiti, southwestern Nigeria	The current prevalence of substance use is 11.7%, with the most abused substances being alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drugs.	The risk of psychological distress is higher in individuals with a history of substance use, lack of direct parental care, and a significant association with parental substance use and male gender.	Adolescent substance use is prevalent, leading to increased psychological distress, with risk factors including parental care lack and gender differences in prevalence and associated risks.	Importance of drug education, parental involvement, mental health services, and community programs in preventing substance abuse and promoting mental health among adolescents and their families.
Idowu et al. (2018).	Secondary school students	Public secondary schools in Ogbomoso North LGA, Oyo State, Nigeria	21.7% of students have consumed alcoholic drinks, with 26.3% meeting substance abuse criteria. Tramadol and alcohol are the most commonly used drugs.	Students often utilized substances to enhance their academic performance, often due to a lack of formal education on drug abuse.	Students with higher substance abuse prevalence, misconceptions about substance use, and insufficient school-based drug education programs are at higher risk due to a lack of awareness and education.	Expand drug education programs in secondary schools, increase the frequency and scope of sessions, develop monitoring systems, and involve parents and community leaders in awareness campaigns.
Umukoro et al. (2021).	Secondary school students	Sapele town, Delta State, Nigeria.	Alcohol (13.97%), Tramadol (10.79%), and Rohypnol (3.81%).	Substance abuse among adolescents may negatively impact their academic	Peer pressure significantly influences substance abuse,	Implementation of drug abuse education in school curricula, use media



				performance and social behaviors due to its psychological impact on depression and confidence boosters.	while limited awareness and lack of formal education in schools contribute to the need for comprehensive drug abuse education.	for awareness campaigns, foster peer education, and develop support systems for students dealing with depression and substance abuse.
Olanrewaju et al. (2022).	Undergraduate students aged 15 to 29 years	Southwestern, Nigeria.	Alcohol (61.5%), Cigarettes (54.5%), codeine-containing syrup, tramadol, and cannabis	Psychological and socioeconomic impacts		.
Kanmodi (2020).	Students of the School of Health Technology	Jega LGA, Kebbi State, Nigeria	Drug use, excluding medical reasons, is 17.8%, with prescription drug abuse at 14.2%, non-prescribed drug abuse at 17.7%, and polydrug use at 19.3%.	Health and socio-economic consequences		Implement social interventions, awareness programs, counselling, and policy development to curb drug abuse, increase awareness, support students, and enforce prevention policies within institutions.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Impact of illicit drug use on public safety

The findings from the reviewed primary data based on research objective one revealed that substance abuse affects 22.5% of youth in correctional facilities, with men being disproportionately affected. Female youths face health, social, and economic issues, leading to poor academic performance, low attendance, and increased vulnerability to exploitation. Drug misuse also increases crime rates, family problems, and mental illness. Students often use substances to boost academic performance due to a lack of education on drug abuse. These psychological and socioeconomic impacts are significant and require targeted interventions. The finding is in line with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) that high levels of drug use among adolescents and young adults increase risks for mental health, physical health problems, unemployment, and relationship failure. More so, harmful substance use often exacerbates socioeconomic challenges and can lead to a cycle of substance abuse (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018). The increased use of drugs, especially opioids, among individuals aged 40 and older is contributing to increased drug-related mortality and health complications, including many physical and mental illnesses, as claimed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018). In a similar direction, Nawi, Ismail and Ibrahim (2021) corroborated the findings of this study, noting that illicit drug use among children results in behavioural and psychiatric problems, expanded substance abuse threat, and impaired emotional law, perpetuating a socio-financial drawback cycle. The finding is also supported by Caldeira et al. (2008), Grant et al. (2012), and Hall (2009), that poor academic achievement among students, executive and cognitive deficits, the use of other illegal substances, an increased risk of respiratory problems, physical harm, and driving while under the influence of drugs are some of the negative effects of cannabis use as an example of illicit drug.



According to Skinner et al. (2011) that agreed on the finding of this study that students who regularly use cannabis for a longer period may also be more likely to experience psychotic symptoms. U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center (2010) also agreed with the finding of this study that the impact of drug abuse is numerous, causing long-term psychological and physical damage to the addict and negatively impacting their relationships with family, co-workers, and many other individuals. Overdose and other drug-related illnesses lead to the untimely death of many users (U.S. Department of Justice, National Drug Intelligence Center, 2010). Jatau et al. (2021) agreed with the finding of this study that despite existing laws and policies in Nigeria, the high burden of drug abuse poses significant social health challenges with high crime rates, health problems and community well-being, including damage. Office of National Drug Control Policy (2004–2009) reported in a study that high numbers of drug-impaired drivers are responsible for accidents and fatalities. A large percentage of drivers test positive for illegal drugs, and this corroborated the findings of this study. Office of National Drug Control Policy (2004–2009) also reported that acute health results are glaring from the excessive extent of emergency branch visits associated with drug misuse, including serious incidents concerning pills like cocaine and heroin. Additionally, drug use is pervasive within the criminal justice system, with many arrestees and inmates testing effective for illicit pills, indicating a strong hyperlink between drug use and criminal activity (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2004–2009).

### **Challenges confronting law enforcement agencies in preventing illicit drug activities**

The findings from the reviewed primary data based on research objective two revealed that adolescent drug use is prevalent, over-represented in men, and linked to homelessness. Factors such as lack of parental supervision, socioeconomic issues, and peer pressure contribute to the problem. Substance abuse impacts health, social, and economic aspects, leading to negative personal relationships, employment, and crime involvement. Effective social interventions are needed to address this issue. Negative perceptions of drug abuse and societal challenges such as poverty, corruption, and ineffective data collection from appropriate authorities hinder efforts to curb it. The finding is in line with Nwannennaya and Abiodun (2017) that poor data collection, insecurity, bribery and corruption, poverty, incivility and porous borders stand as cogs in the laudable efforts to curb illicit drug use. Akomolede and Adetifa (2021) supported the finding, noting that law enforcement agencies face a lack of cooperation in data collection and analysis mechanisms to collect, analyze and disseminate information on drugs, and this is another deficiency in many countries in the fight against illicit drug trafficking the drug trade remains a global hydra-headed monster. Saxe et al. (2011) also supported the finding of this study that law enforcement agency faces challenges in targeting drug use due to its prevalence in disadvantaged communities and its uneven distribution. More so, allocating resources between high-visibility and less visible drug problems is challenging for law enforcement agencies' interventions, as noted by Saxe et al. (2011). In supporting this, Dandurand (2023) asserted that disruptive methods (law enforcement actions, regulatory intervention, and community intervention) often fail to produce lasting results and can sometimes have negative consequences for public health (that is, aggressive law enforcement, for example, can push drug markets underground, leading to more dangerous substances or unsafe practices), safety (that is: disruptive strategies can escalate violence or create conflict between law enforcement and the public, potentially increasing crime rates and threatening



public safety) and community relations (that is: strict enforcement and legal practices can undermine trust between communities and authorities, reducing cooperation and increasing tensions). Akomolede and Adetifa (2021) agreed with the finding of this study, asserting that new technologies similarly reduce law enforcement efforts as drug traffickers use the global Internet to facilitate and manipulate the movement of illegal goods while avoiding tactics, and so does the work. Effective law enforcement is often challenged by the inability of the drug policing organization to adapt rapidly to the growing technological aspects of the drug trade, as noted by Akomolede and Adetifa (2021).

### **Effective techniques in combating illicit drug activities**

The findings from the reviewed primary data based on research objective three revealed that adolescents in correctional facilities can receive personalized treatment plans for alcohol and drug misuse based on global best practices and local circumstances. Parents, religious institutions, and the government should actively participate in initiatives to prevent and mitigate drug misuse among young girls. Schools should educate students about drug risks and provide emotional support. Stakeholders should develop strategies such as raising public awareness, promoting neighborhood education, promoting therapy, and conducting studies on drug usage risks. Anti-drug policies, awareness campaigns, rehabilitation networks, and early diagnosis, treatment, and counselling are essential for preventing substance abuse and promoting mental health among adolescents. Jatau et al. (2021) corroborated the findings of this study by engaging community members, schools, and religious organizations in educational campaigns and support programs to raise awareness and reduce substance abuse among at-risk youth. Strengthen law enforcement efforts to combat drug trafficking and ensure strong regulation and control of drugs and drug transportation routes to prevent abuse and illicit trafficking, as noted by Jatau et al. (2021). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) supported the finding of this study, asserting that educational programs were implemented in schools and the community to raise awareness of the dangers of drug use and provide skills to resist peer pressure. Also, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) noted that engaging communities, religious groups and governments are some of the techniques to combat substance abuse and provide support to people at risk. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) also agreed with the findings of this study by noting that developing specialized treatment programs for adolescents and older adults, addressing their unique needs and underlying issues, could help fight drug abuse. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018) also advised increased support for those involved in the supply of drugs, strategies and opportunities to prevent their involvement in drug trafficking and production. Nawi, Ismail and Ibrahim (2021) and Saxe et al. (2011) supported the finding of this study that drug abuse can be combated by implementing interventions to combat impulsivity, emotional regulation, and addictive behaviours. Nawi, Ismail, Ibrahim (2021), and Saxe et al. (2011) also noted that strengthening parental involvement and education and addressing cognitive impairment are also techniques. Also, supporting families with substance abuse members, increasing school participation, and promoting healthy lifestyles can help control drug abuse (Nawi, Ismail & Ibrahim, 2021; Saxe et al., 2011). Developing community programs, encouraging positive peer interactions, and emphasizing religious and moral beliefs against drug use (Nawi, Ismail & Ibrahim, 2021; Saxe et al., 2011). Nwannennaya and Abiodun (2017) also corroborated the finding



of this study that law enforcement agencies should play a vital role in promoting a drug-free state and society, and there is a need for strong guidance/education, stringent laws and good governance and wisdom a, appropriateness to solve the problem.

### **Gaps Identified in the Included Literature**

Concerning the primary studies reviewed, some of the studies included in this work did not investigate security agencies' challenges in combating illicit drugs. Also, most of the studies did not explore possible strategies or techniques that could be employed to combat illegal drug activities.

### **Recommendations**

Concerning the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should target intervention programs addressing the specific needs of adolescents in correctional facilities, focusing on mental health support, educational opportunities, and social services to reduce the impact of substance abuse effects and improve overall outcomes.
2. The government should strengthen school-based drug prevention programs through comprehensive social interventions that address parental care, socioeconomic factors, and peer pressure to manage adolescent drug use by incorporating better management.
3. The government should develop a tailored treatment program for youth in correctional facilities that integrates global best practices with local contexts, supported by the collaborative efforts of parents, religious institutions, schools, and government participants.

### **Limitation of the Study**

This work was limited to the use of existing literature and primary data. The reviews were based on a systematic narration of primary data conducted in Nigeria. This implies that primary studies conducted outside Nigeria were not included. This made it hard for the researcher not to include primary studies carried out in other countries. Also, the search for relevant studies was based only on interest objectives. More so, the primary studies review was evaluated to determine the quality of such materials' serials.

### **Conclusion**

Illicit drug use has impacted negatively on the lives of youths, which has caused some youths to be in prisons across Nigeria. Illegal drug use significantly affects public safety by contributing to crime, health issues, and social disorder. This study has shown that illicit drug use has caused youths to be in correctional facilities, with men disproportionately affected. Females face health, social, and economic issues, exploitation, crime, family problems, and mental illness. Adolescent drug use is prevalent, over-represented in men, and linked to homelessness. The challenges facing illicit users include lack of parental supervision, socioeconomic issues, and peer pressure. Negative perceptions hinder efforts, and school-based programs are crucial. Effective social interventions are needed. Studies reviewed suggested personalized treatment plans for adolescents in correctional facilities for alcohol and drug misuse, involving global best practices and local



circumstances. Initiatives from parents, religious institutions, the government, schools, and stakeholders are crucial for preventing substance abuse and promoting mental health.

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