

# Demographic Factors as Predictors of Psychoactive Substance Use and Violent crimes Among Youth in Some Selected Towns in Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth in Nasarawa State. The research employed the survey method and a Scale on Perception of Psychoactive Substance Effect and Violence (SOPPSEV) was used to elicit information from the participants in selected communities in two Local Governments, Lafia and Kokona Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State. There were 103 participants, 80 males and 23 females. A  $2 \times 2 \times 4$  design was used to analyse the data. The aim of the study was to investigate public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes. Hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics. The results revealed that there were generally positive public perception on psychoactive substance use and violent crime among youths. Test of hypothesis 1, however, revealed that there is a statistical significant positive influence between age and gender group on the perception of Psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth: age [ $\chi^2(1)=5.655$ ,  $P<0.05$ ] and gender [ $\chi^2(1)=4.682$ ,  $P<0.05$ ]. For hypothesis 2, religion and educational status difference were observed on the public perception of the Psychoactive substance use and violent crimes. The results revealed that  $F(1,99)=0.233$ ,  $P>0.05$ , such that mean scores for higher education ( $x=24.48$ ,  $SD=3.084$ ) and lower education ( $x=24.04$ ,  $SD=3.241$ ). The interaction effect was insignificant.  $F(1,99)=0.016$ ,  $P>0.05$ , thus indicating that religion and education do not have influence on the public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crime among youths. Hypothesis 3 was accepted with the following statistical outcome age thus ( $r=0.254$ ;  $P<0.05$ ), gender ( $r=0.180$ ;  $P<0.05$ ), religion affiliation ( $r=0.172$ ;  $P<0.05$ ), ethnic affiliation ( $r=0.015$ ;  $P>0.05$ ). The researcher, therefore, concluded that considering the wide spread of positive perception, there is a significant influence of public perception on the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth in Nasarawa State. The researcher recommends that concerted effort be made in the regulation on drug supply and consumption in Nigeria by Stake holders, Agencies such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC) among others. Communities should be empowered with culture fair behavioural change communication strategies that will enable members adopt indigenous models on drug abuse management and control. The harmful effects on the individual and the community should be made known to the young people. Community based intervention centres or programme should be established in all Local Government Areas for immediate response to those with high substance use dispositions to prevent incidences of violent crimes.

**Keywords:** Demographic factors; Psychoactive substance; Violent crimes

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The unrelenting cycle of violence in Nigeria is stocked to unprecedented uses of hard drugs because of evidence by the CNN (2009) and that most of the drug barons are dangerously

armed with machetes and pump action shot guns (CNN, 2009). A report by Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programmed (2011) on the perception of linkages between substance use and conflict has revealed that, in Plateau state violence between Muslim and Christian communities has been worsened by youths who have

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fought with one another while under the influence of substance.

In Borno, a common perception related to the role that substance use allegedly played in violence carried out by Jamaatullah Al Sunnah li da'awati wal jihad (JAS) commonly known as Boko Haram. Community members, law enforcement agencies, civil society groups and civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) members declared that JAS had targeted substance users for recruitment during its early days. Use of tramadol, an over-the counter painkiller related to morphine and other opiate was said to be rampant in JAS ranks, and was perceived by many interviewees to have played a role in enabling atrocities on both sides of the conflict. A number of respondents also claimed that tramadol use is common within the ranks of the (CJTF) including CJTF members themselves and that the substance is trafficked inside of camps for internally displaced persons (Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programmed, (2011)).

While this finding by NSRP (2011) cut across all the research states, it is nonetheless important to bear in mind that correlation does not equal causation. While drug use was perceived as contextually harmful in specific situation-aggravating violence between cult gang in Rivers, for example, it is likely that parties to these conflicts would have engaged in confrontation with one another even if dangerous chemical substance had not been present. Thus, it would be a mistake to imagine that the removal of dangerous chemical substance from the Nigeria streets would eliminate violence and conflict. However, the role that substance use plays in exacerbating conflicts by impairing the judgment of involved parties highlights the need to address the menace and to prevent violence or addressing social fragility. Radda stated that specific outreach to communities of substance use, for example, the provision of psychosocial services to those communities is likely to contribute to peace as well as public health [1-10].

Obot called for urgent attention by all relevant bodies as cited by Nigeria Pilot paper. Therefore, the need for this paper cannot be over emphasized.

### Research questions

The research questions for the study are as follows:

- i. What is the relationship between demographic variables on psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youths in Nasarawa State?
- ii. What is the religion and educational status difference in the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth?

**Objectives of the Study:** The major objectives of this study are to specifically:

- i. Examine demographic variables as predictors of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth in Nasarawa State.
- ii. Examine the influence of religion and educational status difference on the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth in Nasarawa state.

**Hypotheses:** The following hypotheses were formulated and tested

- i. There will be a significant relationship between demographic variables as predictors of psychoactive substance use and violent crime among youth
- ii. There will be significant influence religion and educational status difference on the perception of psychoactive substance use

and violent crime among youth.

### The scope of the study

This research investigates demographic variables as predictors of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youths in some selected communities in Nasarawa state; Barkin Abdulahi (BAD) community in Lafia, and Bassa community in Kokona Local Government Areas. This study also explored National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) records over the period of 2012, 2013 and 2014 in the affected Local Government Areas. The rationale for choosing these areas was because of the high prevalence of violent crimes. The choice for NDLEA was because psychoactive substance related cases are mostly handled by the agency.

**Significance of the study:** It is hoped that the outcome of the study will:

- i. Provide current information on demographic variables as predictors of psychoactive substance use and violent crime among youths in Nasarawa State.
- ii. Be of great benefit to community leaders, government and youth organizations for attitude change strategy towards psychoactive substance use and violent crimes.

### Theoretical overview

Some relevant theories were reviewed in line with the topic

#### Personality theory

Personality theories attempted to attribute the cause of psychoactive drug use among young adolescents to personality traits and characteristics. Personality theories by Freud advocate that alcoholics and drug users are characterized by such personality traits as low tolerance level, frustration and suffering from the need for immediate gratification of impulse, poor impulse control and low coping capability or ego strength. The theory also holds that such individuals have a strong need to be emotionally dependent on others, to have an easy source of emotional gratification, pleasure seeking and an urgent need to secure immediate relief from emotional distress [11-20].

Furthermore, family instability, absence of maternal warmth, ambivalence feelings about dependency and conflict resulting from poor parental modeling were presumed to be responsible for these feelings. Because of this, the individual finds it difficult to handle reality. So is either alcohol or other psychoactive drugs such as amphetamines which are made available that produces all those euphoria, inflates their age and modifies reality so that drinking or smoking do not have to worry about dealing with reality anymore says McCord and McCord. Beyond the effect of personality traits such as low tolerance level, frustration and suffering from the need to secure immediate gratification of impulse, etc; personality theory also provides strong explanation in relation to the cause of psychoactive drug use resulting from other factors such as family instability, absence of maternal warmth, etc.

A personality disorder is an enduring pattern of inner experience, of seeing the world and relating to others in a manner that markedly deviates from cultural expectations, and includes, and results in problematic and habitual behaviours that are pervasive and inflexible [21-30].

#### Psychoanalytic theory of violent crime

The issue of human violence is also a major topic within the

academic discipline of psychology. It is sufficed to note that Freud thought that human behavior including violent behaviors was a product of unconscious forces operating within a person's mind. Freud also felt that early childhood experiences had a profound impact on youth and adult behavior. Youth who experienced or heard of substance abuse and violent crime connection are likely to develop positive or negative perception towards psychoactive substance.

Psychoactive substance use also makes one unconscious, therefore, out of unconscious, aggression can result which Freud and criminal behavior Freud referred to as displaced aggression as cited by Englander and Bartol.

Psychoanalytic theory viewed the cause of alcoholism and other psychoactive drug use as cited by Williams as relating to fixation from the inability to successfully pass from one psychosexual state of development to another in infancy and childhood. According to this theory, if a child is unable to make a successful transition from one stage of psychosexual development to another, his personality becomes fixated and for the rest of his life he will continue to manifest immature characteristics of that stage. Some people who successfully developed the successful phases when subjected to stress, regress to an earlier infantile level of handling stress. Other scholars in the school of psychoanalysis view psychoactive drug use as fundamentally suicidal, trying to destroy 'bad depriving mothers' with which they have identified. Yet others like Williams claim that drug users are defending themselves (defense mechanism) against underlying depression by drinking themselves to oblivion [31-50].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Behavioral theory

Behavioral theory believes that substance abuse as well as violence is learned. People are not born with substance abuse, but learn from their social environment. Observing how someone abuse drugs and become aggressive can also trigger violent in the individual. Studies have also found that people who lives in violent communities learn to model the aggressive behavior of their neighbors.

However, behavioral model also known as the social learning theory by Bandura generally agreed that at least some of the many varieties of problems of drinking, smoking and sniffing of substances such as marijuana, cocaine etc are acquired and maintained at least through known and veritable mechanisms of learning.

Youth violence which for the purpose of this thesis includes physical victimization, physical aggression and attitudes towards gun is a significant social and public health problem by Herrenkoll which is perceived to have connection with psychoactive use.

### Research design

The study adopted a survey approach that was examined by a  $2 \times 2$  factorial design. The choice for survey is to give the participants the opportunity to respond freely and to discuss freely their perception on psychoactive substance use and violent crimes in most honest and open manner.

### Participants

Participants were selected from designated communities in two Local Government Areas. Barkin Abdullahi (BAD) in Lafia Local Government and Bassa community in Kokona Local government Area. Every fifth person in the membership list of the community development organization was selected for their broad-based

representation of the socio-demography interest of the communities [51-70].

### Instruments

The researcher developed an instrument called Scale on Psychoactive Substance Effect and Violent (SOPPSEV) for this study. The instrument was validated through pilot study after expert's face validity was done by the supervisor using 20 Postgraduate Students and 20 academic Staff of Faculty of Social Sciences Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Cronbach alpha reliability value for 20 PG students is .88 with the  $x=(2.86, df=14)$  cronbach alfa reliability value is 0.814 with the  $x$  of 2.33,  $df=14$  for the academic staff. For the entire instrument, the inter item correlation was 0.814. Section one of the instrument dwells on demography variables [71-80].

### Procedure

Two communities were selected in two towns of Lafia and Kokona Local Government Areas for the study. In these towns, one community that experienced ethnic and communal violence and another that has been relatively stable respectively. In these communities, Community Development Association with a good mix of adult male, female and youth membership identified for the study. In doing so, their membership registers were obtained from which participants for the study were selected through systematic random sampling. Permission to conduct the study was obtained through a formal letter from the Department of psychology through the thesis Supervisor to the respective community leaders who in turn granted access to leadership of the identified community development association. Thereafter, informed consent to participate was obtained from these leaders, the objective and procedure of the study were explained to them in detail. They were also requested the permission to use the organization registers for the selection of participants [81-90].

**Technique for data analysis:** The analysis was done using a Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The descriptive statistics used were frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations to provide a descriptive and explanation for the demographic variables of the participants in the study. The data were further analyzed with inferential statistics to test the significance or otherwise of the hypotheses [91-100].

### Ethical consideration

The following ethical considerations were observed.

- i. The study ensured that proper institutional permission was obtained to conduct the study through community leadership, police command of Lafia, Nasarawa state and the authorities of NDLEA, Lafia command.
- ii. Informed consent was obtained from the participants with assurances of confidentiality and no harm.

## RESULTS

### Data presentation and analysis

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of the characteristics of 103 participants (67 males and 36 females) whose age ranges between 16 to 60 years with a mean age of 26.38. Their age was further categorized as 16-25 years ( $N=62, 60.2\%$ ) and 26 years above ( $N=41, 39.8\%$ ). Education was categorized between tertiary ( $N=25, 24.3\%$ ) and secondary ( $N=78, 75.7\%$ ). Marital status on the other hand was cauterized between married ( $N=38, 36.9\%$ ) and single ( $N=65, 63.1\%$ ). For Religion affiliation we have Islam ( $N=11,$

10.7%) and Christianity (N=92, 89.3%) and ethnic affiliation as Eggon (N=88, 85.4%) and others (N=15, 14.6). The differences among gender could be attributed to the fact that the society perceives psychoactive substance use and violent crimes as men affairs. The younger age, those in secondary school and single have higher perception based on their percentages. For Christianity and Eggon extraction, the differences were due to their dominance in the study areas, while Islam and other tribes are the minority who many of them vacate the areas during the crises [101-135].

**Table 1:** Frequency and percentages of the characteristics of participants.

Variables		Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	67	65
	Female	36	35
	Total	103	100%
Age	16-25 years	62	60.2
	26 Above	41	39.8
	Total	103	100%
Education	Tertiary	25	24.3
	Secondary	78	75.7
	Total	103	100%
Marital status	Married	38	36.9
	Single	65	63.1
	Total	103	100%
Religion affiliation	Islam	11	10.7
	Christianity	92	89.3
	Total	103	100%
Ethnic affiliation	Eggon	88	85.4
	Others	15	14.6
	Total	103	100%

**Data analysis and results**

This section presents the analysis and results of the hypotheses tested.

**Hypothesis 1:** Hypothesis 1 stated that, there will be a significant influence of age and gender on the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crime. This hypothesis was tested using chi-square.

Table 2 provides the description of the public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes according to age and gender. It shows that 39 (37.9%) of persons aged between 16 and 25 years indicated negative perception while 23(22.3%) indicated positive perception of psychoactive substances and violent crime while about 41(39.8%) youth with 26 years above, of which 25(24.8%) indicated positive perceptions and 16(15.5%) indicated negative perception on psychoactive substances relationship with violent crime. Regarding gender, 41(39.8%) of males indicated negative perception while 26 (25.2%) indicated positive perception for females. 22(21.4%) indicated positive perception, while 14(13.6%) indicated negative perception of psychoactive substances and violent crime. The test of hypothesis revealed a significant influence of age [ $\chi^2(1)=5.655, P<0.05$ ] and gender [ $\chi^2(1)=4.682, P<0.05$ ] in the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youths in Nasarawa State. In other words, the hypothesis was confirmed.

**Table 2:** Shows the summary of perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crime according to age and gender.

Variables	Public perception		df	Total	$\chi^2$	Sig.	
	Negative	Positive					
Age	Young (16-25 years)	39(37.9)	23(22.3)	1	62(60.2)	5.655	0.017
	Old (26 Above)	16(15.5)	25(24.3)	1	41(39.8)		
	Total	55(53.4)	48(46.6)		103(100)		
Gender	Male	41(39.8)	26(25.2)	1	67(65.0)	4.682	0.03
	Female	14(13.6)	22(21.4)	1	36(35.0)		
	Total	55(53.4)	48(46.6)		103(100)		

For religion affiliation, Islam and higher education table 3 shows the mean of 24.33 and SD 2.08, while those with lower education have the mean of 23.63 and SD 3.06. This result shows that high level of education has almost similar types of perception (24.33>23.63). For Christianity, higher education has the mean of 24.50 and lowers 24.09 and the mean of 3.23 and 3.27 respectively. The result for Christianity shows that both levels of education had similar perceptions of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes thus (24.50>24.09). Generally speaking, religious affiliation and perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes shows that both Christian and Muslim hold similar perceptions on psychoactive substance use and violent crimes. The total score for both higher and lower education indicates similarity with the means of 24.48 and 24.04 for lower education respectively.

**Table 3:** Mean and standard deviation scores of perception of relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes based on religion and education.

Religion affiliation	Education	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Islam	Higher education	24.33	2.082	3
	Lower education	23.63	3.068	8
	Total	23.82	2.75	11
Christianity	Higher education	24.5	3.233	22
	Lower education	24.09	3.278	70
	Total	24.18	3.255	92
Total	Higher education	24.48	3.084	25
	Lower education	24.04	3.241	78
	Total	24.15	3.194	103

**Hypothesis 2:** Hypothesis 2 stated that, there is a significant religious and educational status difference on the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crime among youths. This hypothesis was tested using (2-way univariate ANOVA).

Table 4 shows the influence of education on the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youths. Religion and education as main effects did not jointly have any significant effects on the dependent’s perceptions of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes. Effect for religious affiliation was not significant, thus  $F(76)=0.073, P>0.05$ .

**Table 4:** Summary result of two -way ANOVA showing the influence of religion and education on perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes.

Source	Type III sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Corrected model	5.288	3	1.763	0.169	0.917

Intercept	17991.18	1	17991.18	1720.019	0
Religious affiliation	0.76	1	0.76	0.073	0.788
Educational status	2.433	1	2.433	0.233	0.631
Religious affiliation educational status	0.167	1	0.167	0.016	0.9
Error	1035.527	99	10.46		
Total	61091	103			
Corrected Total	1040.816	102			

## Summary of results

The major findings of the study were summarized as follows:

- i. There is a significant influence of age and gender on the public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crime among youths in Nasarawa state.
- ii. There are no significant religious and educational status differences on the public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youths in Nasarawa state.
- iii. Religion has partial influence on the public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youths in Nasarawa state.

## DISCUSSION

From the findings above, it was revealed that demographic factors such as age, gender have strong relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes. This means that there is a wide spread consensus in Nasarawa state that psychoactive substance use is significantly implicated in violent crimes among youth in Nasarawa state considering the age factor in the perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youths. Religion and educational status show a partial relationship. The overwhelming evidence that more individual observed the positive relationship than negative relationship across all the age group signifies a high awareness level on the influence of drugs on violent crimes. Participants must have had direct experience in most cases with people who were under the influence of drugs and committed violent crimes. This study confirms to a greater extent report in psychiatry literature and behavior or public health which mentioned drugs as risk factor for crime. This finding is in line with the work of Gold and Tullis also of Martin who opine that marijuana and other psychoactive substance are the most widely used illicit drug today by youths of different ages and has been used for centuries for its mood-altering effects psychoactive substances produces an altered state of consciousness characterized by mild euphoria, relaxation, perceptual alterations including time distortion, enhancement of ordinary sensory experiences, impairment of short-term memory, and impairment of motor skills and reaction time as Gold and Tullis also as cited in Martin. Also, in line with the work of Obot on public perception of psychoactive substances in Nigeria which revealed that menace cut across all youthful ages, gender and religion group.

The gender factor appeared to have significant in defining public perception of the relationship between substance use and violent crime in the areas covered by the study apparently because of the

wide experience in the community study of violent over time and possibly the exposure of key actor to psychoactive substance use. This agrees with Sahmsa who reported that women are just as likely as men to perceive the influence of psychoactive substances and violent crime.

Other hypothesis states that, there will be significant religion and educational status difference on the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crime among youth. Educational status and religion did not differentiate the participant either on the research problem. This is possible because educational attainment exposes more people to the harm of psychoactive substance use and their positive role in violent crimes among others. Religion people irrespective of their affiliation decry the use of psychoactive substance as unhealthy. Very much like the work of Obot which revealed that religious tenets prohibit the use of substances. For example, in Nigeria, Muslims and Christians alike preach against the use of anything that intoxicates (alcohol, cigarette, cocaine, and hem among others) which are considered evil and sometimes the offenders suffer social sanction. But still some religion adherent therefore perceives psychoactive substance as evil while some consider it a normal exercise.

## SUMMARY

This research studied public perception of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes. In so doing, it anticipated three major objectives namely: to examine age and gender influence on the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth in Nasarawa state; to examine the influence of religion and educational status difference on the perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth in Nasarawa state. Thirdly to determine how age, gender, ethnic and religion affiliation have predictive influence on public perception of psychoactive substance use and violent crimes among youth.

## CONCLUSION

The study hereby concludes that because of the visible role of residence of Nasarawa in Bassa and BAD communities who have experience violent conflict and crimes over the period of five years have developed the perception that psychoactive substance use has significant influence on the spate of violent crimes reported in the area. The type of perception people develop of these psychoactive substance use and violent crimes depends on one's age, gender, and ethnic and religion affiliation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are hereby made in line with the outcome of the study.

- i. The outcome of this study calls for concerted efforts in the regulation of drug supply and consumption in Nigeria by stake holders, agencies such as NDLEA and NAFDAC among others considering the wide spread positive percent of the relationship between psychoactive substance use and violent crime in the area covered by the study.
- ii. Peace and conflict resolution effort in violent prone areas should also include drug abuse education and counseling services for attitudinal change.
- iii. Communities should be empowered with culture fair behaviour change communication strategies that will enable members adopt indigenous models on drug abuse management and control.

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