



Policing Illicit Drugs in Nigeria: The Role of NGOs and Community on the Frontline

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the role played by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and communities in combating illicit drug activities highlighting their contributions to the broader drug control strategy in Nigeria. Despite extensive government efforts, the prevalence of illicit drug use and trafficking remains a significant challenge. This study explores the impact of NGOs and community-based initiatives on drug prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and advocacy. Through qualitative analysis, the research reveals the successes, challenges, and potential of these non-governmental efforts. The findings suggest that a more integrated approach, involving collaboration between NGOs, communities, and government agencies, could enhance the effectiveness of drug control in Nigeria. The study concludes with policy recommendations aimed at strengthening these partnerships to create a more sustainable and comprehensive response to the drug problem.

Keywords: Policing; Illicit Drugs; NGOs; Community; Nigeria

Introduction

“Nigeria faces a significant and growing problem with illicit drugs in terms of use and trafficking. As a major hub in the international drug trade, Nigeria serves as a transit point for narcotics flowing from South America to Europe and other parts of the world. In addition, the country is witnessing a rise in domestic drug consumption, with substances such as cannabis, cocaine, heroin, and synthetic drugs like tramadol becoming increasingly prevalent [1]. The impact of this drug crisis is felt across various levels of society, manifesting in public health challenges, increased crime rates, and social instability [2]. The Nigerian government has made concerted efforts to combat the drug menace through law enforcement and policy measures. The establishment of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in 1989 marked a significant step in this direction. The NDLEA has been tasked with coordinating and enforcing laws against drug trafficking and abuse, conducting drug-related investigations, and promoting public awareness about the dangers of drug use [3]. Despite these efforts, the persistence of the drug problem suggests that law enforcement alone is insufficient to address the

complexities of illicit drug activities. NGOs have been at the forefront of preventive education, advocacy, treatment, and rehabilitation services, often filling gaps left by governmental agencies. Meanwhile, community-led initiatives have demonstrated the potential to mobilise local resources, engage in surveillance, and provide support systems for those affected by drug use. These grassroots efforts are vital in creating a comprehensive approach to drug control, emphasizing prevention, harm reduction, and the reintegration of individuals into society. Recent scholarship reveals that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based initiatives are playing pivotal roles in preventive education, harm reduction, treatment, and reintegration programs, often filling critical gaps left by governmental interventions [4]. NGOs in Nigeria engage in a variety of activities focused on drug demand reduction (DDR). These include public awareness campaigns, school-based drug education, and youth outreach. Obot surveyed 45 organizations, noting that 84% were active in preventive education and 63% engaged in drug policy research. Their efforts are often underfunded and suffer from insufficient policy support. Still, NGOs persist in advocating for a public health approach to drug

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control, arguing for a shift away from punitive frameworks that dominate Nigerian drug policy. Nelson and Pates (2018) proposes community-level treatment models that involve NGOs and trained volunteers. They stress the need for localized treatment infrastructure, especially in underserved areas. By integrating treatment with educational and employment opportunities, these community programs can reduce recidivism and support sustainable recovery. Klantschnig critiques Nigerian law enforcement, pointing to centralized, bureaucratic interests and weak coordination as barriers to effective governance. Without systemic reforms, the impact of NGOs may remain limited despite their on-ground effectiveness [5].

Ekpenyong highlights the national security dimensions of drug trafficking in Nigeria, noting the country's strategic location as a transit hub for international narcotics. He highlights how community surveillance and intelligence gathering can aid enforcement agencies. Communities often serve as the first line of detection and support for individuals at risk. Nwannennaya and Abiodun identify socioeconomic drivers like unemployment, poverty, and corruption as major enablers of the drug trade. Their findings stress the importance of community-based economic empowerment initiatives, often spearheaded by NGOs, in addressing the root causes of drug abuse and trafficking [6]. Despite Nigeria's extensive efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking and abuse through governmental agencies such as the NDLEA, the country continues to face a growing drug crisis. This is evident not only in its role as a transit hub for international drug trafficking but also in the increasing prevalence of domestic drug use and production. While much attention has been given to law enforcement strategies and policy reforms at the national level, there remains a critical research gap concerning the contributions and challenges of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local communities in addressing the drug problem. These actors often serve as frontline responders, delivering preventive education, rehabilitation, and support services that government institutions are unable or unwilling to provide. However, their roles, effectiveness, and integration into national drug control frameworks remain underexplored. Understanding how NGOs and communities' function within Nigeria's anti-drug landscape is essential to developing more holistic, sustainable, and people-centered responses to the country's complex drug problem.

Research Questions

What are the specific roles played by NGOs and community organisations in policing illicit drug use and trafficking in Nigeria?

Research Objectives

To identify the specific roles that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organisations play in the preventing illicit drug use and trafficking in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) in tackling illicit drug issues in Nigeria has grown increasingly important, especially as traditional law enforcement strategies continue to fall short. According to Obot (2004), NGOs have taken the lead in drug demand reduction (DDR), notably through preventive education, rehabilitation, and public health advocacy, particularly where government intervention is lacking. While the NDLEA, Nigeria's primary drug enforcement agency, focuses on interdiction and prosecution, this punitive approach has been criticized for neglecting the underlying social determinants of drug use [7]. Nelson and Pates (2018) argue that punitive policies have not translated into measurable reductions in drug use. They propose shifting to community-based treatment and harm reduction models that integrate NGOs and local health providers. Hashmi et al. found that CBOs in Zamfara State contributed significantly to education, health, and self-help projects, though their efforts were constrained by poor governmental and financial backing. Similarly, Omofonmwan and Odia observed that NGOs in Edo State led successful campaigns against child labor and drug abuse but faced sustainability challenges without government collaboration [8, 9]. The politicization and centralization of drug enforcement have further marginalized local actors. Klantschnig shows how bureaucratic and clientelist dynamics within Nigerian drug law enforcement limit collaborative and decentralized approaches. This centralized control stifles NGO involvement, despite their proximity to affected populations. Moreover, the ethical landscape of NGO work has come under scrutiny [5]. Okunade et al. emphasize the need for co-creation and ethical reciprocity between NGOs and host communities, especially in volatile regions like the Niger Delta [10]. Ethical lapses can undermine credibility and impact, even when programs are technically effective. From a public health perspective, Nelson, Obot, and Umoh advocate for a new institutional structure dedicated solely to DDR, arguing that the NDLEA's amalgamation of roles impairs its effectiveness [11]. This proposal aligns with the broader international movement towards integrated and non-punitive drug policies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the fragility of NGO-based services was starkly exposed. Nelson, Dumbili, and Odeigah report that utilization of community-based treatment services declined sharply, with female users disproportionately affected due to mobility restrictions and lack of alternative access points [12].

Furthermore, cultural, and institutional barriers continue to hinder NGO effectiveness. Okafor (2004) details how the elite-centric and urban-focused nature of many Nigerian NGOs disconnects them from rural communities most affected by drug abuse. This disconnect limits their ability to influence national policy or scale successful interventions.

A recurrent theme across literature is the disconnection between national policy frameworks and grassroots implementation. Ekpenyong asserts that Nigeria's role in global drug trafficking exacerbates domestic vulnerabilities, yet national responses remain reactive and fragmented. Similarly, Nwannennaya and Abiodun argue that porous borders, economic hardship, and corruption perpetuate trafficking, requiring a multisectoral response that engages civil society [6]. Anyebe points out a critical lack of mental health-focused NGOs in northern Nigeria, exacerbated by unsupportive government policies.

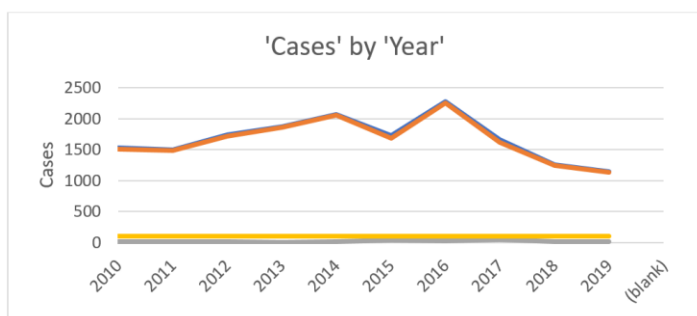


Figure 1: Graph showing the cases prosecuted 2010-2019.

This gap is particularly concerning given the rising mental health burden linked to drug abuse in conflict-affected areas. The literature highlights a consensus on the indispensable role of NGOs and communities in Nigeria's drug control efforts. However, their contributions are hindered by policy exclusion, funding constraints, ethical dilemmas, and structural disconnects with governmental institutions. Nigeria's strategic location, coupled with its porous borders, has made it a significant player in the global drug trade. These substances are not only trafficked but also locally produced, adding a new dimension to the drug problem in Nigeria (Otu, 2020). The social and economic impacts of illicit drug use are profound. Drug abuse has been linked to a range of social problems, including increased crime rates, particularly violent crimes, and theft. Moreover, drug addiction contributes to the breakdown of families, loss of productivity, and a rise in health-related issues, including the spread of HIV/AIDS due to needle sharing among drug users. The Nigerian government's response to the drug problem has primarily focused on law enforcement and punitive measures. The NDLEA, as the central agency responsible for drug control, has made significant strides in drug seizures, arrests, and the prosecution of drug offenders to demonstrate the

dilemma it faces in combating drug menace [3]. This is captured in a table below from 2010-2019. (Tables 1, 2), (Figure 1).

Table shows various types of drugs seized and quantities between 2010-2019, which represent the efforts of government of the years. Table 2 Figure 1 shows the number of cases won, lost/struck out, and the success rate of drug prosecution from 2010 to 2019. The chart above shows the number of drug cases, the number of cases won, the number of cases lost or struck out, and the success rate of those cases for ten years. In 2010, there were 1,526 cases, of which 1,509 were won, resulting in a success rate of 98.89%. This success rate increased slightly over the next two years, with 1,491 cases won out of 1,501 cases in 2011, and 1,718 cases won out of 1,736 in 2012. The success rate peaked at 99.67% in 2013, with 1,865 cases won out of 1,871 cases. The success rate dropped slightly in 2014, with 2,054 cases won out of 2,070. However, the limitations of these efforts are evident. The emphasis on punitive measures has often overshadowed the need for prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. Many drug users are criminalized rather than receiving the support they need to overcome addiction [13]. This approach has led to overcrowded prisons and a cycle of reoffending, as individuals are released without access to rehabilitation services. The absence of necessary resources can undermine community involvement and diminish the ability of Law Enforcement Agencies and community members to meet expectations and address local needs. This challenge aligns with findings from the National Secretariat for Safety and Security (1999), which identified the lack of basic resources, such as transportation, finance, and equipment, as a major obstacle to the effectiveness of NGOs and drug officers in reducing the drug crime. For Law Enforcement Agencies officers, inadequate resources compromise their essential policing tasks, while for community members, it limits their capacity to contribute meaningfully to NGOs activities. Furthermore, the NDLEA and other law enforcement agencies face numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, poor working environment, and limited resources. These issues hinder the effectiveness of drug control efforts, particularly in rural areas where the drug trade is often most prevalent. The lack of coordination between different government agencies and the absence of a comprehensive national drug policy have also contributed to the persistence of the drug problem in Nigeria [14].

Materials and Methods

Philosophical Assumptions

In qualitative research, the philosophical assumptions guide the research process, influencing how the researcher views the world, the research participants, and the nature of reality itself. This study on policing illicit drugs in Nigeria, with a focus on the role of

NGOs and community groups, is grounded in a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism posits that reality is not objective and fixed but rather is constructed by individuals based on their experiences and interactions with the world [15]. This perspective is particularly relevant for this study as it seeks to understand the experiences and perceptions of various stakeholders NGOs, community members, and law enforcement officers who are actively engaged in combating drug-related issues in Nigeria. The constructivist paradigm supports the idea that multiple realities

exist, as each participant brings their unique perspective to the issue. In this context, the study aims to uncover these multiple realities by exploring how different stakeholders perceive the challenges and successes of drug policing and how these perceptions influence their actions and interactions. By acknowledging the subjective nature of reality, this research approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complex social dynamics involved in drug control efforts in Nigeria [16].

Table 1: Analysis of the Statistics of Drug Arrest and Seizure, 2010-2019.

Year	Cannabis	Cocaine	Heroin	Others	Total
2010	174,661.59	706.43	202.08	2,550.62	178,120.72
2011	191,847.91	410.81	39.75	2,985.45	195,283.92
2012	228,794.13	131.89	211.03	3,905.45	233,042.50
2013	205,373	290.2	24.53	134,280.38	339,968.11
2014	53,878,194.52	226.04	56.45	7562.49	53,886,039.50
2015	871,480.32	260.47	30.09	31,442.86	903,213.74
2016	187,394	305.17	66.28	79,600.69	267,366.14
2017	191,084.19	92.26	85.36	117,114.20	308,376.01
2018	273,249.08.	124.86	59.62	44,331.29	317,764.85
2019	602,654.49	113	23.89	10,112.10	612,903.48
TOTAL	56,531,484.15	2661.1	799.08	433,885.53	57,242,078.97

Table 2: Analysis of the number of Cases Prosecuted for 2010-2019.

Year	Cases	Won	Lost/struck out	Success Rate
2010	1,526	1,509	17	98.89
2011	1,501	1,491	10	99.33
2012	1,736	1,718	18	98.96
2013	1,871	1,865	6	99.67
2014	2,070	2,054	16	99.22
2015	1,731	1,690	41	97.63
2016	2,278	2,256	22	99.03
2017	1,666	1,621	45	97.3
2018	1259	1249	10	99.21
2019	1,143	1,130	13	98.86

Research Setting

This study was conducted in Calabar, the capital city of Cross River State, Nigeria. Calabar was chosen due to its strategic location in southern Nigeria, its active community-based civil society sector, and the documented prevalence of drug abuse and trafficking issues in the area. The presence of a variety of local NGOs and community organizations engaged in social development and

public health initiatives provided a rich context for qualitative investigation.

Study Design

This study utilized a qualitative research framework, which aligns with interpretive and non-positivist paradigms. Qualitative research is well-suited to explore complex social phenomena through detailed, context-rich narratives. As described by Bryman (1988), qualitative methods emphasize understanding how

individuals interpret their social world, making them ideal for assessing the important roles of NGOs and communities in drug control efforts in Nigeria. The case study design involves the collection and analysis of multiple sources of data, including interviews, documents, and observations. This triangulation of data sources enhances the validity of the findings by allowing the researcher to cross-check information and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study [17]. Additionally, the case study design is flexible, allowing the researcher to adapt the research process as new insights emerge, which is essential in a field as dynamic and multifaceted as drug control [18].

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Sampling was conducted using purposive techniques. According to Pollock (2009), sampling involves selecting units from a population for study. This research targeted individuals who were directly involved in drug control activities including NGO workers, community leaders, and local law enforcement officials. A total of 20 participants were selected based on their expertise, relevance to the study objectives, and availability. It includes: (1) NGO representatives: Individuals working in organizations involved in drug control efforts, particularly those focusing on harm reduction, rehabilitation, and advocacy. (2) Community leaders: Members of the community who are actively engaged in local drug control initiatives, public awareness campaigns. (3) Law enforcement officers: (3) Drug users and rehabilitated individuals: The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where data collection continued until no new themes or insights emerged from the interviews.

Data Collection Techniques

The study employed both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and informant guides were designed to elicit comprehensive insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Secondary data were obtained from relevant academic literature, NGO reports, and policy documents to supplement and contextualize the primary data. The semi-structured format allowed participants to share their experiences in their own words, providing rich qualitative data [19]. Document analysis provided additional context and corroborated the information gathered through interviews and focus groups. It also helped identify the official narratives and policies guiding drug control efforts in Nigeria, allowing for a comparison with the lived experiences of the participants [20].

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave their voluntary consent to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before their participation in the study [21]. The confidentiality of participants was strictly maintained throughout the research process. Participants' identities were anonymized in all transcripts, reports, and publications, and any identifying information was removed to protect their privacy. Data was securely stored, and only the researcher has access to the raw data [22]. Participants were encouraged to speak freely without fear of reprisal. The researcher was also prepared to provide information on support services for participants who might be affected by the discussions and that participants' rights, and well-being were adequately protected [15].

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is an iterative process that involves organizing, coding, and interpreting the data to identify patterns, themes, and insights. For this study, the data analysis followed the thematic analysis approach, which is well-suited for identifying and analyzing patterns within qualitative data [23]. The first step in the analysis process was transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews. The researcher then thoroughly reviewed the transcripts to familiarize themselves with the data, noting initial impressions and potential themes. The next step involved coding the data, which entailed identifying and labelling relevant pieces of text that corresponded to specific themes or categories. An open coding approach was used initially, allowing the researcher to generate codes based on the data without being constrained by preconceived categories [24]. As the analysis progressed, these codes were refined and organized into broader themes that captured the key issues related to the role of NGOs and community groups in drug policing. Once the coding was complete, the researcher grouped the codes into overarching themes that represented the major findings of the study. These themes were developed through an iterative process of reviewing and refining the codes, ensuring that they accurately reflected the participants' experiences and the research question [15]. The last step in the analysis involved interpreting the themes and synthesizing the findings to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. This process involved connecting the themes to the broader literature on drug control and the role of NGOs, as well as considering the implications of the findings for policy and practice [17].

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings from interviews with participants and integrates with secondary evidence. The thematic discussion provides insights into NGO roles, community involvement, and challenges in drug control. NGOs have taken the lead in community-based drug prevention programs. As one respondent stated, "Our NGO focuses on educating young people about the risks of drug abuse. We believe prevention is better than cure, and so far, our efforts have made a significant impact in schools and communities" (Participant 1, NGO Representative). These efforts align with findings by Adelekan & Ndom, who noted a measurable reduction in drug use in communities where sustained prevention campaigns were implemented [25]. Similarly, Omadjohwoefe argues that preventive strategies rooted in education are more sustainable than punitive approaches [26]. This highlights the critical need to institutionalize education-driven prevention models in drug policy.

NGOs also manage rehabilitation centers offering comprehensive care. One respondent observed, "our rehabilitation centre has helped many individuals recover from addiction. We do not just focus on detoxification; we provide holistic support that addresses the psychological and social aspects of addiction" (Participant 12, Rehabilitation Officer). The importance of such services is reinforced by Adelekan who emphasized the need for rehabilitation programs to include vocational training and psychological support. Additionally, some Participant who were former drug user, affirmed. "The support I received from the NGO was life changing. They helped me overcome my addiction and provided me with the skills I needed to start afresh." These narratives underscore the transformative impact of rehabilitation, particularly when rooted in community support.

Community-led policing initiatives have emerged as effective grassroots mechanisms for curbing drug-related offenses. One community leader noted, "we have taken it upon ourselves to keep our community drug-free. We collaborate with the law enforcement officer to report any suspicious activities, and this collaboration has helped reduce drug-related crimes" (Participant 4, Community Leader). Alemika and Chukwuma affirm the effectiveness of such collaborations, especially in areas where conventional law enforcement struggles to maintain a consistent presence. These community initiatives not only improve surveillance but also foster trust between residents and law enforcement, as echoed by a Participant. "The success of our drug policing efforts is largely due to the cooperation we receive from the community. They trust us because they know we are working together to protect their neighbourhoods" (Participant 5, Law Enforcement Officer).

Beyond formal rehabilitation, community support plays a pivotal role in the reintegration of former drug users. A former user shared. "The support I received from my community was crucial in my

recovery. They accepted me back and helped me find a job, which gave me a sense of purpose" (Participant 6, Former Drug User). This reflects Oluwabamide and Umoh's findings, which highlight that community-based support systems, including employment opportunities and mentorship, are instrumental in reducing relapse rates [27]. However, stigma remains a major challenge, an advocacy officer, stressed, "we are working hard to change people's perceptions of former drug users. They deserve a second chance, and we are doing everything we can to support their reintegration. Public awareness campaigns have proven useful in reshaping societal attitudes and promoting inclusion. (participant 8) A consistent challenge faced by NGOs is the scarcity of sustainable funding. As one NGO director noted, "our biggest challenge is funding. We have many programmes that we want to implement, but without adequate funding, it is difficult to reach as many people as we would like" (Participant 9, NGO Director). This issue is also highlighted by Ojomo et al., who report that donor funding is often unpredictable, leaving critical programs vulnerable to disruption. Despite this, some organizations have innovated by forging partnerships with private and international donors [28].

Participant 10, a programs manager, shared, "we have been fortunate to receive support from international organizations, which has allowed us to scale up our efforts and impact more communities. These collaborative models demonstrate that resource diversification can enhance organizational resilience. Stigma and discrimination continue to hinder the rehabilitation and reintegration of drug users in Nigerian society. Participant 11, a social worker, emphasized, "we need to break the stigma associated with drug use. Addiction is a disease, and people need support to overcome it, not judgment."

This perspective is consistent with Oluwabamide and Umoh, who argue that societal rejection of former users contributes to social isolation and relapse [27]. Efforts by NGOs and community leaders to challenge these narratives are crucial. Awareness campaigns, support groups, and public dialogues have been used effectively to reframe addiction as a public health issue rather than a moral failing. Despite challenges, stakeholders recognize significant opportunities for enhanced collaboration. "Collaboration is key to tackling the drug issue. We need to work together, NGOs, communities, and the government, to create a coordinated and effective response," stated Participant 12, a community leader. This sentiment reflects findings by Adelekan and Ndom who emphasized the importance of multi-sectoral strategies in drug control. Coordinated action ensures resource optimization and consistent messaging, which are vital for long-term success. Integrated platforms for dialogue and strategy between civil society, law enforcement, and public health agencies can ensure more holistic approaches.

Synthesis of Findings

The synthesis of both primary and secondary data stresses a key theme: while NGOs and community actors are the frontline in drug control efforts, they remain excluded from formal policy-making processes and under-supported by institutional mechanisms. This gap between practice and policy has profound implications for the country's ability to manage its growing drug problem.

First, the consistent accounts from participants about their work in education, rehabilitation, and harm reduction are echoed in the literature, reinforcing their indispensability. Obot and Saad et al. demonstrate that community-based models not only improve access to treatment but also increase compliance and outcomes due to cultural familiarity and trust [4,29].

Second, the need for decentralization is critical. Nelson et al. argue that the centralization of both supply and demand control within NDLEA has diluted the agency's effectiveness, especially in areas needing tailored public health responses [11]. Supporting this, Klantschnig and Rotimi reveal that bureaucratic control has historically stifled innovation and community engagement [5].

Third, the integration of gender-sensitive frameworks is severely lacking. Nelson and Rasheed et al. (2016) expose how existing systems neglect female-specific vulnerabilities, such as stigmatization and lack of female-specific rehabilitation centers [30]. Participants' testimonies confirm that these gaps exacerbate exclusion and reduce treatment uptake among women. Furthermore, ethical engagement and participatory planning emerged as central to sustainable impact. As emphasized by Olasupo & Olusegun, ethical partnerships build legitimacy and foster collective action [31]. Ehikhamenor (2001) supports this, demonstrating that trust and ethical transparency significantly boosts NGO impact during crises. Lastly, both primary and secondary data converge on the demand for improved funding and international-local alignment. Out and Klein (1999) critique overreliance on foreign policy models and donor frameworks that may not align with local needs. This mismatch often leaves community-led initiatives under-resourced and fragmented [32-37].

Conclusion

The study has looked at resilient of national drug strategy in Nigeria which requires restructuring to meaningfully integrate NGOs and community-led responses. This includes funding, rehabilitation mandates, incorporation of gender-sensitive and the establishment of collaborative platforms for sustained local-national dialogue. It also looks at the battle against illicit drug use and trafficking as a multifaceted challenge that requires the concerted efforts of various stakeholders, including the government, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and community groups. This study has highlighted the

critical role that NGOs and communities play on the frontline of this battle. Their contributions, particularly in the areas of prevention, advocacy, rehabilitation, and community policing, are indispensable to the overall drug control efforts in the country. NGOs have demonstrated a strong commitment to reducing the prevalence of drug abuse through educational campaigns, advocacy for policy reforms, and the provision of rehabilitation services. Their efforts have significantly impacted individuals and communities, particularly in high-risk areas where drug use is prevalent. However, their effectiveness is often hampered by challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of infrastructure, and societal stigma.

Community involvement in drug policing has also proven to be a crucial factor in curbing drug-related activities. Community policing initiatives and support for the reintegration of former drug users have contributed to reducing the social and economic impacts of drug abuse. The collaboration between communities and law enforcement agencies has fostered trust and improved the overall effectiveness of drug control measures. Despite these successes, significant challenges remain. The limited resources available to NGOs and community groups, coupled with the pervasive stigma surrounding drug addiction, continue to pose significant barriers to progress. Additionally, the lack of comprehensive government support and coordination among stakeholders often leads to fragmented and inefficient responses to the drug problem. There is a clear need for increased collaboration between all stakeholders involved in drug control efforts in Nigeria. The government must play a more proactive role in supporting NGOs and communities, particularly in terms of funding and policy development. Moreover, addressing the stigma associated with drug addiction is crucial to ensuring that former drug users can successfully reintegrate into society and lead productive lives. While the challenges are significant, the role of NGOs and communities in policing illicit drugs in Nigeria cannot be overstated. Their continued involvement and support are essential to the success of drug control efforts in the country. By strengthening partnerships, improving resource allocation, and addressing societal stigma, Nigeria can make significant strides in combating the scourge of illicit drugs and ensuring a healthier, safer future for all its citizens. The findings of this research have practical implications for policymaking. By identifying the strengths and challenges of NGO and community involvement, the study can inform policies that support and enhance these efforts, leading to a more integrated and effective approach to drug control. This research contributes to the academic literature on drug control, particularly in the context of developing countries like Nigeria, where the interplay between state and non-state actors is crucial to addressing complex social issues.

Recommendations

This study recommends the followings to enhanced drug control efforts in Nigeria

1. The Nigerian government should increase financial and logistical support for NGOs and community groups involved in drug control efforts. This support should include funding for prevention programmes, rehabilitation centres, and community policing initiatives.
2. There is a need for comprehensive policy reforms that prioritize public health approaches to drug addiction over punitive measures. This includes the decriminalization of drug use, the implementation of harm reduction strategies, and the development of policies that support the reintegration of former drug users into society.
3. NGOs and community groups should be provided with the necessary training and resources to enhance their capacity to deliver effective drug prevention and rehabilitation programs. This includes training in counselling, community policing, and advocacy.
4. Greater collaboration between NGOs, community groups, law enforcement agencies, and the government is essential for a coordinated and effective response to the drug problem. This includes the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms for information sharing, joint planning, and coordinated action.
5. Continuous research and data collection are essential to understanding the evolving nature of drug abuse and trafficking in Nigeria. This will enable stakeholders to develop evidence-based strategies and monitor the effectiveness of existing interventions.

Limitations of the Study: While this study provides valuable insights into the role of NGOs and communities in policing illicit drugs in Nigeria, it is important to acknowledge its limitations

1. The study was limited to Calabar in Cross River States as well as the NGOs and community groups within the State in Nigeria. The findings may not be generalizable to all States in Nigeria, or all organizations involved in drug control.
2. The data collected were primarily qualitative, based on interviews, and document analysis. While this approach provides rich, detailed information, it may not capture the full extent of the issues being studied. Quantitative data could complement these findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.
3. The study was conducted with limited resources, which may have affected the depth and breadth of the research. Additional resources could have allowed for a more extensive study,

including a larger sample size and the inclusion of more diverse perspectives.

Future research should consider the following areas

1. Future studies should aim to include a broader geographic scope to capture regional variations in the role of NGOs and communities in drug control across Nigeria.
2. Incorporating quantitative data, such as surveys and statistical analysis, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of NGOs and community efforts on drug control outcomes.
3. Comparative studies that examine the role of NGOs and communities in drug control in different countries or regions could provide useful lessons for Nigeria and highlight best practices that can be adapted to the Nigerian context.

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