



PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF SUBSTANCE MISUSE ON INSECURITY IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This work investigated perceived effects of substance misuse on insecurity in Anambra State, Nigeria. Five theories were reviewed namely: Social Control Theory, Differential Association Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, Subcultural Theory, and Social Bond Theory. The Social Cognitive Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. The study which has three research questions adopted the mixed methods research design, using the multistage sampling procedure in the selection of 400 respondents. The questionnaire and In-Depth Interview (IDI) guide served as instruments for data collection. The quantitative data were coded and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Frequency tables were used to analyze, describe and present the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were transcribed manually and analyzed using thematic analysis. Peer pressure was found to be the major factor influencing substance misuse in Anambra State. Also, the problem of unknown gunmen was found to be the major form of crime in Anambra State. Based on the findings of the study, the work recommended that there should be an emphasis on education and awareness campaigns targeting young people about the dangers of substance misuse. The work further recommended that there should be community engagement initiatives to foster dialogue among stakeholders, including parents, educators, law enforcement officials, and healthcare providers, to create a supportive environment for prevention efforts.

KEYWORDS: community engagement, insecurity, substance misuse, unknown gunmen

INTRODUCTION

Substance misuse is a big social problem in Nigeria which affects almost every aspect of social life. The United Nations Office on Substances and Crime (UNODC, 2021) reported that in Nigeria, about 14.3 million people aged 15-64 years use hard substances. There is expected to be a surge in this number by 2030 (John, 2022). According to Martens (2022), each year, about 300,000 victims of violent assaults report that their attackers were under the influence of hard substances. He also reported that illicit substance misuse plays a role in over 32% of all murders.

There are three ways a person can take substances, which includes injection, inhalation, and ingestion. How the substance is delivered changes how substances affect our body, for example, the injection of substances directly into the bloodstream has an immediate effect, while ingestion has a delayed effect. But all misused substances affect the brain. They cause large amounts of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that helps regulate our emotions, motivation, and feelings of pleasure, to flood the brain and produce a "high." Eventually, substances can change how the brain works and interfere with a person's ability to make choices, leading to intense cravings and compulsive substance use. Over time, this behaviour can turn into a



substance dependency, or substance addiction, leading to personal and economic strangulation and complicated health issues. Victims may likely resort to crime to raise money to meet their substance illicit misuse habit (Gateway Foundation, 2022).

The National Institute on Substance misuse (2020) revealed that people who misuse substances often have one or more associated health issues, which could include lung or heart disease, stroke, cancer, or mental health conditions. They further revealed that tobacco smoke can cause many cancers, methamphetamine can cause severe dental problems, known as meth mouth, and opioids can lead to overdose and death. In addition, some substances, such as inhalants, may damage or destroy nerve cells, either in the brain or the peripheral nervous system. Similarly, the American Addiction Centers (2023) stated that substance and alcohol misuse affects nearly every part of the body from our heart to our bowels, negatively. They further clarified that substance misuse can lead to abnormal heart rates and heart attacks, and injecting substances can result in collapsed veins and infections in the heart valves. Some substances can also stop the bones from growing properly, while others result in severe muscle cramping and general weakness. Using substances over a long period will also eventually damage the kidneys and the liver (American Addiction Centers, 2023).

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (2017), suicide bombers and the Boko Haram Islamic jihadist group in Northeastern Nigeria usually take large quantities of opioids before carrying out their terror attacks. They further revealed that these substances are thought to be used to calm the would-be attackers. They also reported that the substances are stuffed into date nuts which are fed to children suicide bombers. Similarly, Marwa (2021) stated that bandits, kidnappers, and several other criminals usually perpetrate their criminal acts under the influence of hard substances. Moreover, a report by Arab News (2016) confirmed that terrorist organizations all over the world rely on substances and hallucinogens to recruit suicide bombers and fighters to their ranks and turn them into mass murder machines. The report further reveals that such substances are used by bombers to calm them down before carrying out such attacks, as such substances cause them to be mentally absent but still alert. It further stated that suicide bombers use stimulant substances, as well as psychotropic and narcotic substances before carrying out their terrorist attacks.

Oluwole et al (2018) asserted that the misuse of hard substances and substances has a direct linkage to the killings, robbery, and cult activities that have become the order of the day in different parts of Anambra state. Umejiaku et al (2023) also agreed that there is a clear nexus between substance misuse and the plethora of insecurity problems plaguing Anambra State, and Southeast Nigeria in general. They affirmed that kidnapping, terrorism, and the scourge of unknown gunmen that have been plaguing the state can be traced to the surge in the misuse of hard substances among youths. In the same vein, Eze et al (2021) agreed that the surge in the use of hard substances, especially methamphetamine is partly responsible for the avalanche of insecurity problems bedeviling the state. Despite the efforts of government and non-governmental agencies to curtail the increasing rate of substance misuse in order to mitigate its negative effects, the problem still persists. Agencies such as the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and other security have used its network to confiscate and arrest peddlers of illicit substances in Anambra State and beyond, yet there is no end in sight to the problems. Chukindi (2024) reported that each year, NDLEA confiscates close to 300 tons of illicit substances in Anambra State. It is against the above background and persisting problems, compounded by paucity of studies on the subject area, that this study examined the perceived effects of substance misuse on insecurity in Anambra State, Nigeria.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the perceived effects of substance misuse on insecurity in Anambra State?
2. To what extent does substance misuse influence insecurity in Anambra state?
3. What are the measures that can be put in place to curb substance misuse so as to reduce the level of insecurity in Anambra State?

BRIEF REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Conceptualizing Insecurity and its Manifestations in Nigeria

Adojo-Adebanjoko and Ugwuoke (2014) opined that insecurity is the state of being subject, in every respect, to terror, threat, risk, molestation, bullying, and harassment. Nigeria faces a multitude of security challenges that significantly threaten its stability and development. These security challenges which include terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, ethno-religious conflicts, etc. have been found to have strong link with illicit substance misuse. These not only endanger the lives of citizens but also have profound implications for the country's economy and social fabric. According to Aborisade, Ogunmefun and Tolulope (20022), insecurity is therefore a threat to country's development with far-reaching implications, especially when it is induced and sustained through substance misuse.

Situation of Substance Misuse at Global, African, and Nigeria Levels

According to the World Health Organization (2014), substance misuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit substances. Substance misuse has been a persistent global problem and according to the United Nations Office on Substances and Crime (2022), the legalization of substances like cannabis in different parts of the world has led to a spike in substance misuse. For instance, 5.6% of the global population aged 15–64 years misuse substances at least once in 2016 (Nawi et al, 2021). Similarly, the UNODC (2022) reported that around 284 million people aged 15-64 misused dangerous substances worldwide in 2020, which represents a 26% increase over the previous decade. Substance misuse rose by 22% between 2010 and 2019, which can be attributed partly to the increase in the world population. According to current forecasts, there will be an increase in the misuse of dangerous substance worldwide of 11% by 2030, with a notable increase of 40% in Africa due to its fast-expanding and youthful population. This would mean that by 2030, there will be 20 million illicit substance users in Nigeria, significantly complicating the nation's public health and security problems (John, 2022).

According to the National Center for Substance misuse Statistics (2023), 50 percent of people aged 12 and above have used illicit substances at least once in the USA. Fentaw et al (2022) revealed that in Sub-Saharan Africa, 41.6% of people use hard substances, with Central Africa having the highest percentage at 55.5%. They further revealed that substance misuse is more prominent in males than females. The UNODC (2021) reported that in Nigeria, about 14.3 million people aged 15-64 years misuse hard and illicit substances. The rate of substance misuse seems to be alarmingly high in the state (Ujumadu, 2021). According to a report by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (2019), 14.4% of Anambra residents aged 15-64 years misuse psychoactive substances. Also, National Bureau of Statistics (2022) reported that 12.2% of Anambra youths aged 15-24 years misuse cannabis. The report further indicated that commonly misused substances include cannabis (44.6%), alcohol (23.4%), tramadol (14.5%), codeine (10.3%) and cocaine (4.2%). The report also indicated that for those aged 15-24 years who misuse illicit substances, 34.6% are male, 23.1% are female; for people aged 25-34 years, 27.5% are male, 19.2% are female and for people aged 35-44 years, 20.5% are male, while 14.1% are female.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Social Cognitive Theory and the Sub-Cultural theory have been adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. The choice of these theories is informed by their aptness in explaining why and how people misuse substances, and how they form sub-cultures where they learn other criminal behaviours which are the major source of insecurity. The stance of Social Cognitive Theory on observational learning and reproduction of observed behaviour explains the reason behind substance misuse and other criminal behaviours, while the proposition of Sub-cultural Theory on how people are socialized into subcultures that encourage substance misuse and other criminal activities, clarifies how substance users could further delve into other forms of crime that stirs insecurity in the society. Substance misuse does not exist in a vacuum. It is a behaviour that is usually learned from peers through observation. People observe how their peers take hard substances, and their effect on them (including their propensity to induce aggressive and criminal tendencies). They may then decide to reproduce that behaviour by taking hard substances themselves with the intention of being high and having the boldness and courage to carry out certain criminal activities which may breach society's security.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopted the mixed methods approach of data collection which entails a combination of quantitative and qualitative approach in data collection and presentation. A sample size of 400 was mathematically derived for this study. The sample size was determined statistically using the Taro Yamane formula. A questionnaire schedule was used to collect the quantitative data, while the In-Depth Interview (IDI) was used to collect the qualitative data. The quantitative data collected from the field was processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 25. However, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution tables and simple percentages. The data was also presented using tables and charts. On the other hand, the qualitative data collected through IDI was analyzed thematically. This involved first transcribing the interviews, and thereafter reading the interview notes and transcripts to gain an overview of the body and context of the data collected. Subsequently, the variables and ideas in the data were coded and organized under distinct themes. Each theme was discussed and necessary illustrative quotes were extracted to support and elucidate the quantitative data.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were administered by the researcher. Only 363 (90.75%) of the questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. The analysis for this study was consequently done with the 363 correctly filled and done questionnaire.

Socio-Demographic Data of Respondents

This sub-section deals with the socio-demographic data of respondents like gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, religious affiliation, occupation and place of residence as presented in table 1 below.


Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their socio-demographic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percent
GENDER		
Male	172	47.4
Female	191	52.6
Total	363	100
AGE		
18-27	196	54.0
28-37	75	20.7
38-47	46	12.7
48-57	21	5.8
58-67	21	5.8
68 years and above	4	1.1
Total	363	100
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	235	64.7
Married	112	30.9
Divorced/Separated	1	0.3
Widowed	15	4.1
Total	363	100
EDUCATION		
No formal education	6	1.7
FSLC	11	3.0
SSCE/GCE	180	49.6
OND/NCE	27	7.4
Bachelor's degree/HND	114	31.4
Postgraduate degree	25	6.9
Total	363	100
RELIGION		
African Traditional Religion	13	3.6
Christianity	341	93.9
Islam	7	1.9
Atheism	2	0.6
Total	363	100
OCCUPATION		
Unemployed	10	2.7
Student	69	19.0
Self-employed	44	12.1
Civil servant	76	21.0
Business	92	25.3
Farmer	72	19.9
Total	363	100
RESIDENCE		
Rural area	123	33.9
Urban area	240	66.1
Total	363	100

Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 show that 52.6% of the respondents were females, while 47.4% were males. In terms of the age distribution of the respondents, majority of the respondents (54%) were aged 18-27 years while 1.1% were aged 68 years and above. On the marital status of the respondents, 64.7% were single while 0.3% were divorced/separated. For level of education, 49.6% of the respondents had SSCE/GCE as their highest educational qualification as at the time of the study while 1.7% of the respondents had no formal education. In terms of religious affiliation, 93.9% of the respondents were Christians while 0.6% of the respondents were atheists. In terms of occupation, 25.3% of the respondents are business people, 19% are students, 12.1% are self-employed, 19.9% are farmers, while 2.7% of the respondents were unemployed. What about others occupations that are also very significant? Finally, 66.1% of the respondents reside in an urban area, while 33.9% reside in a rural area.



Analysis of Research Questions

This sub-section contains the analysis of data and interpretation of findings with regards to the research questions and objectives of the study.

Research Question 1: What are the perceived effects of substance misuse on insecurity in Anambra State?

Table 2: Respondents' views on if substance abuse has any effect on insecurity

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	325	89.5
No	38	10.5
Total	363	100.0

Field survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 2 reveals a significant consensus among respondents regarding the relationship between substance abuse and insecurity. With an overwhelming 89.5% of participants affirming that substance abuse does indeed have an effect on insecurity, it is evident that this issue is perceived as a critical factor influencing personal and societal safety. Conversely, only 10.5% of respondents disagreed with the notion that substance abuse affects insecurity. An IDI participant corroborated this finding.

When we talk about hard drugs and young people, it's really concerning to see how this issue can spiral out of control. Many young individuals might start using drugs thinking it's just a way to have fun or escape their problems. But what often happens is that these substances can lead them down a dark path. It's not just about the drugs themselves; it's the whole lifestyle that comes with them. When someone gets hooked on drugs, they may begin to change in ways that are alarming, not just for themselves but for everyone around them. For instance, when young people become addicted, they might start engaging in criminal activities to support their habits. This could mean stealing from friends or family, breaking into homes, or even getting involved with gangs. These actions don't just affect the individual; they create a ripple effect throughout the community. People start feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods because they know there are individuals who might resort to crime out of desperation for their next fix. It creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity that can be really hard to shake off (Male 42 years, Civil Servant, Awka South).

According to another IDI participant:

When someone gets hooked on substances like *igboo* or *mkpurummiri*, it doesn't just change their life; it often leads to a ripple effect that touches everyone around them. For starters, many people who struggle with addiction may find themselves in desperate situations where they feel they have no choice but to commit crimes to support their habit. This could be anything from stealing to more serious offenses. It's heartbreaking because these actions can create a cycle of crime that makes neighborhoods feel unsafe. Moreover, the presence of hard drugs in a community can lead to an increase in violence. Drug trafficking is often accompanied by gang activity and territorial disputes, which can escalate into violent confrontations. You might see this in areas where drug dealers are fighting for control over a market or trying to protect their territory from rivals.



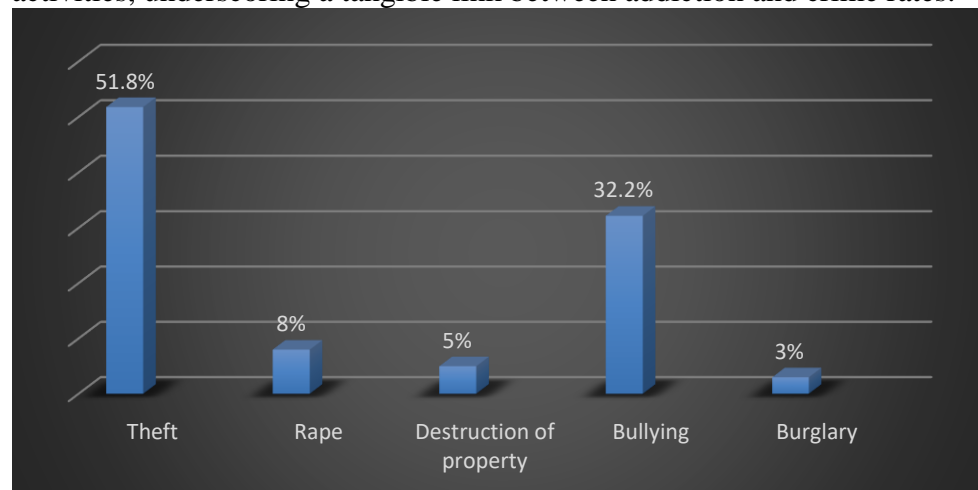
This kind of violence not only puts those involved at risk but also innocent bystanders who just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity that can linger long after the immediate threat has passed (Male, 37 years, Vigilante, Nnewi).

Table 3: Respondents' views on how substance misuse gives rise to insecurity

Responses	Frequency	Percent
It numbs people's sense of reasoning	292	80.4
It gives people a sense of invincibility	18	5.0
It out rightly pushes people into committing crimes	53	14.6
Total	363	100.0

Field survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 3 reveals significant insights into respondents' perceptions of how substance misuse contributes to feelings of insecurity within society. A striking 80.4% of respondents believe that substance misuse primarily numbs individuals' sense of reasoning, suggesting that the impairment of cognitive functions leads to poor decision-making and a lack of awareness regarding personal and societal risks. This overwhelming majority indicates a consensus on the detrimental effects of substances on mental faculties, which could result in increased vulnerability to various forms of insecurity, including personal safety and community stability. In contrast, only 5% of respondents perceive substance misuse as providing a sense of invincibility, which may reflect a minority viewpoint that highlights the paradoxical nature of addiction—where some individuals might feel empowered or fearless while under the influence, ultimately leading to reckless behavior that exacerbates insecurity. Furthermore, 14.6% acknowledge that substance misuse directly pushes individuals toward criminal activities, underscoring a tangible link between addiction and crime rates.



Field survey, 2024

Figure 1: Respondents' views on the crime substance misuse could lead people to committing

The data presented in figure 1 reflects respondents' perceptions regarding the potential link between substance misuse and various types of criminal behaviour. The data shows that 51.8% of the respondents indicated that substance misuse could lead individuals to commit theft. This finding suggests a strong association in public perception between substance abuse and property crimes. In contrast, 3% of the respondents opted for burglary. According to an IDI participant:



When someone is addicted to drugs or alcohol, their primary focus often shifts to getting their next fix. This obsession can overshadow everything else in their life, including relationships, jobs, and even their own health. So, when they find themselves in a situation where they don't have enough money to buy the substances they crave, desperation can set in. That's when some individuals might resort to theft as a way to fund their addiction. It's not just about wanting to get high or drunk; it's about needing that substance to function. Many addicts experience withdrawal symptoms that can be incredibly uncomfortable or even painful. This physical dependence creates a sense of urgency that can push someone to do things they normally wouldn't consider. They might steal from friends or family members because they feel like they have no other choice. It's heartbreaking because these actions often lead to a cycle of guilt and shame that only compounds the problem. Moreover, there's also the social aspect of addiction that plays into this behavior. When someone becomes entrenched in substance abuse, they may start hanging out with others who are also struggling with similar issues. This environment can normalize theft as a means of survival within that community. It becomes almost expected behavior among peers who are all trying to feed their addictions. The stigma surrounding addiction often isolates individuals further, making them feel like they have no one to turn to for help except through these desperate measures (Female, 24 years, Student, Awka South).

Table 4: Respondents' views on whether they have been involved in any criminal activity as a result of substance misuse

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	67	18.5
No	296	81.5
Total	363	100.0

Field survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 4 reveals respondents' perceptions regarding their involvement in criminal activities as a consequence of substance misuse. The results indicate that 18.5% of respondents acknowledged having engaged in criminal behaviour linked to their substance use, while a significant majority, 81.5%, reported no such involvement. This disparity between the two groups offers critical insights into the relationship between substance misuse and criminal activity. This does not necessarily mean that substance abuse does not lead to crime, however, people may be unwilling to admit that they had engaged in criminal acts after misusing substance.

Table 5: Respondents' views on if they were arrested as a result of their involvement in criminal activity

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	22.4
No	52	77.6
Total	67	100.0

Field survey, 2024



The data presented in Table 5 reveals significant insights into the perceptions of respondents regarding their involvement in criminal activity and subsequent arrests. The responses indicate that 22.4% of individuals indicated that they were arrested as a result of their engagement in criminal activities, while a substantial majority, 77.6%, asserted that they were not arrested for such reasons.

Research Question 2: To what extent does substance misuse influence insecurity in Anambra state?

Table 6: Respondents' views on the extent to which substance misuse influences insecurity in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Its influence on insecurity is highly significant	315	86.8
Its influence on insecurity is moderate	18	5.0
Its influence on insecurity is insignificant	25	6.9
It has no influence on insecurity at all	5	1.4
Total	363	100.0

Field survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 6 reveals a striking consensus among respondents regarding the relationship between substance misuse and insecurity in Anambra State, with an overwhelming 86.8% indicating that they perceive the influence of substance misuse on insecurity as highly significant. This suggests a strong belief within the community that substance abuse is a critical factor contributing to various forms of insecurity, which may include increased crime rates, violence, and social unrest. Only a small fraction of respondents, 5% view this influence as moderate, while an even smaller percentage, 6.9%, consider it insignificant. A mere 1.4% asserts that substance misuse has no impact on insecurity at all. The data indicates that the overwhelming majority of individuals recognize a direct correlation between substance misuse and heightened insecurity levels

Table 7: Respondents' views on whether they have witnessed any incidents of violence or crime that were related to substance misuse

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Yes	142	39.1
No	221	60.9
Total	363	100.0

Field survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 7 indicates that a significant portion of respondents, specifically 39.1%, reported having witnessed incidents of violence or crime related to substance misuse, while a larger majority, 60.9%, indicated that they had not observed such occurrences. This disparity suggests that while a notable minority has experienced or observed the intersection of substance misuse with violent or criminal behavior, the majority have not encountered these issues directly.



The implications of these findings are numerous; for instance, they may reflect varying levels of exposure to environments where substance misuse is prevalent or differing perceptions of what constitutes violence or crime associated with such misuse. According to an IDI participant:

I remember being at this party not too long ago, and there was this guy who started smoking something that looked pretty sketchy. At first, everything seemed fine; we were all just hanging out, having a good time. But then, after he took a few hits, it was like a switch flipped in him. He went from being chill to completely out of control. It was honestly kind of scary to watch. Suddenly, he started breaking bottles, just smashing them on the ground without any care for what he was doing or who might get hurt. It felt like the atmosphere shifted instantly; people went from laughing and dancing to scrambling to get away from him. You could see the fear in everyone's eyes as they tried to figure out how to handle the situation. Some people tried talking to him, hoping he would calm down, but it didn't work at all. Instead, he just got more aggressive and erratic (Male, 36 years, Civil Servant, Nnewi South).

Research Question 3: What measures can be put in place to curb substance misuse so as to reduce the level of insecurity in Anambra state?

Table 8: Respondents' views on measures the government can adopt to curb substance misuse in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Law enforcement agencies should be empowered to clamp down on sellers	45	12.4
Sellers and users of hard substances should be sentenced to a long jail term when arrested	36	9.9
The sale of certain products like alcohol and cigarettes should be regulated	117	32.2
Strict laws should be enforced against substance misuse	20	5.5
Sensitization campaigns should be carried out to enlighten youths about the dangers of substance misuse	145	39.9
Total	363	100.0

Field survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 8 reflects the respondents' views on various government measures to combat substance misuse in Anambra State, revealing a clear prioritization of public awareness and education over punitive actions. The highest percentage, 39.9%, advocates for sensitization campaigns aimed at enlightening youths about the dangers of substance misuse, indicating a strong belief in prevention through education as a critical strategy. This suggests that the community recognizes the importance of addressing the root causes of substance misuse rather than solely focusing on punitive measures. Following this, 32.2% of respondents support regulating the sale of certain products like alcohol and cigarettes, which aligns with public health perspectives that advocate for controlling access to substances that can lead to misuse.



In contrast, only 12.4% believe that empowering law enforcement agencies to clamp down on sellers is an effective measure, while even fewer (9.9%) support long jail terms for sellers and users of hard substances upon arrest, highlighting a potential skepticism regarding the effectiveness of punitive approaches in curbing substance abuse. Lastly, only 5.5% endorse strict laws against substance misuse, suggesting that there may be a general consensus that legal repercussions alone are insufficient without accompanying educational initiatives and regulatory measures. According to an IDI participant:

Many young people are exposed to various substances at a very early age, whether it's through peer pressure, social media, or even just curiosity. I believe that there should definitely be sensitization and awareness programmes aimed specifically at educating young people about the dangers of substance misuse. These programmes can play a crucial role in shaping their understanding and attitudes towards drugs and alcohol. First off, these awareness programmes need to be engaging and relatable. Young people often tune out when they feel like they're being lectured or talked down to. Instead, we should focus on creating interactive sessions where they can express themselves and share their experiences. This could include workshops, discussions, and even creative outlets like art or music that allow them to explore the topic in a way that resonates with them (Male, 33 years, Web Developer, Awka South).

However, another IDI participant had a different opinion:

I really believe that arresting and jailing these young people can serve as a strong deterrent for others. Just look around at what's happening in our communities. Drug use among young people is not just a personal issue; it affects families, schools, and neighborhoods. When youths see their peers getting away with using drugs without any repercussions, they might think it's not such a big deal. But if they know there are real risks involved, like getting arrested and facing jail time, they might think twice before picking up that first joint or trying pills. It's all about creating an environment where drug use is clearly seen as unacceptable. Also, let's not forget about the message this sends to society as a whole. If we start treating drug abuse lightly among youths, it could lead to more significant problems down the line. We want to raise awareness about the dangers of drugs and make sure everyone understands that there are serious implications for those choices. By enforcing laws against drug use among young people, we're also reinforcing community standards and values (Male, 62 years, Community Leader, Ayamelum).

Table 9: Respondents views on measures that can be adopted by NGOs to curb drug misuse in Anambra State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
They should carry out awareness campaigns on the dangers of substance misuse	167	46.0
They could act as whistleblowers reporting the location of substance sellers to the government	143	39.4
They should provide centers for the rehabilitation of substance addicts	34	9.4
They should engage youth through recreational activities	19	5.2
Total	363	100.0

Field survey, 2024



The data presented in Table 16 reflects the opinions of respondents regarding various measures that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can adopt to address the issue of drug misuse in Anambra State. The responses indicate a clear prioritization among the suggested interventions, with awareness campaigns being viewed as the most effective strategy. It shows that **46%** of the respondents indicated that NGOs should focus on carrying out awareness campaigns about the dangers of substance misuse. This suggests a strong recognition among the community of the importance of education and information dissemination in preventing drug abuse. In contrast, **5.2% of the respondents opined that**, engaging youth through recreational activities is a measure to curb drug misuse.

DISCUSSIONS

The study found that substance misuse has profound influence on insecurity in Anambra State. This finding aligns with the finding of Olikau and Ikezue (2021). Substance misuse has been identified as a significant factor influencing crime and insecurity across various societies. Research indicates that individuals who misuse substances are more likely to engage in criminal activities, either as a direct result of their substance use or as a means to support their addiction. For instance, the American Addiction Centers (2023) highlighted that substance misuse can lead to increased rates of violent crime, property crime, and other forms of delinquency. This correlation is particularly evident in cases where individuals resort to illegal activities to fund their drug habits or when intoxication leads to impaired judgment and aggressive behaviors. Moreover, the impact of substance misuse extends beyond individual offenders; it affects communities at large by contributing to an environment of insecurity (Oluwole et al, 2018). According to Ujumadu (2021), neighbourhoods with high rates of substance misuse often experience elevated levels of violence and disorder. They argued that the presence of drugs in a community can foster an atmosphere of fear and instability, leading residents to feel unsafe in their own environments. This sense of insecurity can perpetuate cycles of crime as community members may take measures into their own hands or become involved in retaliatory violence. Additionally, the economic implications of substance misuse cannot be overlooked. Umejiaku et al (2023) found that drug-related crimes impose significant costs on society through law enforcement expenditures, healthcare costs for treating addiction and related health issues, and lost productivity due to incarceration or untreated addiction.

Sensitization campaigns and awareness programmes were found to be the most effective strategies for curbing substance misuse in Anambra State. This finding aligns with the finding of Oliaku and Ikezue (2023). Sensitization campaigns and awareness programmes play a pivotal role in curbing substance misuse, as they address the underlying issues of knowledge, perception, and behaviour surrounding drug use (Odogwu, 2023). These initiatives are designed to educate individuals about the risks associated with substance misuse, promote healthy lifestyle choices, and foster an environment that discourages drug abuse (Oluwole et al, 2018). The effectiveness of these campaigns is rooted in their ability to reach diverse populations through tailored messaging that resonates with specific demographics. For instance, youth-targeted programs often utilize social media platforms to engage adolescents where they are most active, while community-based initiatives may employ local leaders to disseminate information in culturally relevant ways (Sinha et al, 2021). Awareness programmes often incorporate personal stories from recovering addicts or affected families, which can humanize the statistics and create emotional connections that resonate more deeply than abstract data alone. Moreover, sensitization campaigns frequently emphasize the importance of support systems in preventing substance misuse (Udoh, 2015). They encourage open discussions about mental health and substance use within families and communities, thereby reducing stigma and promoting a culture of understanding rather than judgment.



Additionally, these campaigns often collaborate with schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to create a comprehensive network of support that reinforces positive behaviours (Sokoto, 2021).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There should be community engagement initiatives can foster dialogue among stakeholders, including parents, educators, law enforcement officials, and healthcare providers, to create a supportive environment for prevention efforts.
2. The government should regulate the sale of prescription drugs that have the tendency of being misused by people.
3. Law enforcement agencies should be equipped and supported in their fight against insecurity and substance misuse in Anambra State.
4. Rehabilitation programmes for those already affected by substance misuse must be prioritized. Establishing accessible treatment facilities that provide counseling and medical assistance can help individuals recover from addiction while reducing their likelihood of engaging in criminal activities. Law enforcement agencies should also focus on disrupting drug trafficking operations through intelligence-led policing strategies while ensuring that they do not infringe upon human rights during their operations.
5. Engaging youth through recreational activities is a strategic approach that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can adopt to prevent substance misuse and involvement in criminal activities.

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