



## Organized Crime, Poverty, and Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: A Sociological Perspective

Edet, Nse-Abasi Edighienyong<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

### \*Corresponding Author

**Edet, Nse-Abasi Edighienyong**

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The main thrust of this study is to investigate organized crime, poverty, and drug trafficking in Nigeria: A sociological perspective. The study avers that organized crime, poverty and drug trafficking has been identified over the years as not only a threat to national security in Nigeria, but also a serious social problem befalling contemporary society and globally threaten peace and unity. Regrettably, Nigeria was initially tagged as a drug-transit nation, gradually; that conception has changed in recent times, because of frantic and dogged effort by government at all levels to fight drug related activities to a standstill. The study argued that regardless of the counter efforts by NDLEA and other government agencies, sizeable amounts of drugs gain passage through the extensive seaports, airports and land borders in Nigeria on a daily basis. The objective of the study is to investigate the effects of rising organized crime, poverty, and drug trafficking on national security in Nigeria with focus on social problems and increasing damage of our national image globally. However, the study relied heavily on relevant theoretical and empirical literature from internet search engines, such as Google, journals, and text books, etc. The study adopted a quantitative research method. Functionalism Theory were explained and adopted as theoretical framework. The study reveals that the preponderance increases of organized crime, poverty, and drug trafficking in Nigeria is a veritable strong weapon for terrorism financing, social problems, corruption inducement, political instability and neglect to economic development. This has affected Nigeria international image and the negative effects are highly felt in the rising level of insecurity and drug related crimes in the country. Consequently, data for the study were generated using the secondary sources interpretative documents related to the organized crime, poverty, and drug trafficking in Nigeria. The study also identified a high level of institutional cum political corruption, poverty (unemployment) as among major contributing factors to the rising trends of organized crime, drug trafficking in Nigeria. Based on the discussion the study recommended among others: Urgent steps should be taken to increase capacity building and strengthening of Nigerian security agencies as well as good governance.

**Keywords:** Organized Crime, Poverty, Drug Trafficking, Nigeria.

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## INTRODUCTION

Organized crime, poverty, and drug trafficking has been identified as a threat to national security, and a serious social problem that seem to be interrelated especially in Nigeria and the world in general. Of recent, Nigeria was initially conceived as a drug-transit nation; gradually, that conception has

changed in recent times through the frantic and dogged efforts of government at all levels (Smyth & Kost, 2018). Drug trafficking and other related activities took paramount edge in Nigeria with the recurring inadequate maritime, border security and rising poverty (unemployment) rate which created a permissive environment for drug cartels to operate

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and find safe haven. Illicit drug trafficking is classified as one of the leading networks of organized crime and has been identified in Nigeria as a propellant that perpetuates crime, increase health risk, weakens the rule of law, induce crime and make conflicts more lethal. Illicit drug related to organized crime has transcended the barriers of traditional state territories creating grave concern to national security, causing societal unrest and picturing our country as a fail state.

However, drug trafficking is a major source of revenue for organized crime groups, many of whom are involved in other forms of serious crime such as firearms, modern slavery and immigration crime. Action against drug trafficking therefore has a much wider disruptive impact on organized criminal activity (National Crime Agency). There is a long-standing belief that organized crime, poverty, and drug trafficking go hand in hand (*pari passu*). But the constant news about celebrities or rich class involving in organized crime and drug trafficking is an example that our society is in trouble. It is obvious that individuals involved in crimes irrespective of their socio-economic status. Therefore, it is fallacious to jump into conclusion that those in poverty venture into organized crime and drug trafficking at a higher rate than those who are wealthier because of their economic situation. Drug lords form cartels and syndicates creating a complex web of operation, both locally and internationally. Behsat (2014), argued that drug trafficking is among the greatest non-traditional transnational security challenge affecting virtually all countries of the world, and Nigeria is no exception. He further argued that drug trafficking has advanced from being a mere criminal-justice issue to a national security agenda for many governments. Shelley (1995) in developing a multidimensional framework in analyzing international drug traffic, asserted that drug networks undermine rule of law, state legitimacy, instigate corruption, disrupt economic development, cause financial instability, and generate pervasive drug dependency and addictions that casts enormous societal costs (Shelley quoted in Behsat, 2014).

In another development, records have it that illicit drug became a worrisome problem in Nigeria in the early 1980s. Before then, illicit drug abuse and trafficking in Nigeria was relatively unknown. But it came to limelight in 1974 when Iyabo Olorunkoya, a Nigerian, was arrested and jailed in Britain for trying to smuggle Indian hemp into the United Kingdom, a case of which two top military officers were also implicated and were promptly sanctioned (Enahoro, 1985). Between 1984 and 1985, the celebrated Gloria Okon drug trafficking scandal and other cases involving Nigerians in various parts of the world brought Nigeria to the forefront as a major transit

country in the global trade in illicit drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and morphine (Yussuf, 2015). After then, drug trafficking and consumption has continued unabated such that it is not only affecting the socioeconomic and health of the country but denting her image in the international system.

In a similar vein, hard drugs identified in Nigeria include hemp, cocaine, heroin, tramadol, opioids, methamphetamine, and marijuana. Most of these drugs are either smoked, chewed, drank or eaten by addicts for its hallucinogenic and intoxicating effects. It is known by a number of slangs and names, including hemp, 'pot', 'grass', 'ganger', weed, 'igbo', 'wiwi', 'skunk', 'ikong ekpo', 'mkpuru mmiri, among others (Musbau, 2012; Usoro, Okediji, & Udoh, 2016; Okonkwo, 2022). While marijuana is seen as the most popular illegal drug used globally and in Nigeria. Nigeria is no more seen as a drug transit nation but also an ardent drug consumer nation. This has a grave consequence on the societal peace, Nigerian nation now and in the future. It is difficult or hard to believe or assume that someone without a job or who has little income can afford the expenses of drug trafficking. In some cases, drug trafficking can be the cause of poverty itself rather than the other way round. Thus, the connect between organized crime, poverty, drug trafficking is a more complex issue. Sociologically, it is a mistake to view most people involved in organized crime and drug trafficking as stemming from an individual's biological or psychological problems. Although, these problems play a role for some individual's involvement in organized crime and drug related matters, but all these issues as a whole stems to a large degree from the social environment and must be understood as a social problem, and not just an individual problem (Capistrano, 2019).

It is against this backdrop that this study deemed it pertinent to investigate how organized crime, poverty, drug trafficking has affected national security and increased the rate of social problems in Nigeria which invariably affects national development. This study is set to provide answers to the following questions: Is poverty a major contributing factor to organize crime and drug trafficking? Is peer influence and weak family background connected to organize crime and drug trafficking toady? To what extent has government at all levels collaborated with relevant agencies to fight against organize crime, poverty and drug trafficking? The recurrence of social problems and social instability, including attacks noticeable in different areas in our environment in recent times without a doubt has necessitated the aforementioned questions. The above questions and others will be sougheed in course of this research work.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to investigate organize crime, poverty, and drug trafficking in Nigeria: A sociological perspective.

The specific objectives were to:

- 1) Examine the impact of organize crime, poverty, and drug trafficking in Nigeria.
- 2) Identify the factors contributing to organize crime, poverty, and drug trafficking
- 3) Proffer solutions that will lead to reduction of organize crime, poverty, and drug trafficking in Nigeria.

### Conceptual Clarification

**Drug:** In understanding the concept drug trafficking, it is necessary to clarify the term drug before dovetailing into drug trafficking. Drug like every other word with traceable origin has the beauty of universal as well as specific or characteristics definitions. Be that as it may, the challenge in its definition lies in the accommodation of the diverse options available to scholars. A preliminary attempt can be made at this initial point, but that would simply be done by exploring what could be considered as its universal ambiance. Now, it could largely be logical to see it as substance that changes the way the brain and body functions, mentally, physically, or emotionally. Nevertheless, if viewed in its specific characteristics, it must then be understood that the phrase has lent itself to various definitions each of which would depend on the angle of perception that is either generic or specialized. In the generic sense, it has been noted that many scholars have proffered numerous definitions with each of them characterized by academic lineage. Therefore, what can be considered as generic views are to be found in the regular and universal dictionaries. For example, it has been defined as any chemical substance which when taken into the body or applied externally, has specific effect on its functioning. This view portends a combination of pharmaceutical and cosmetic characteristics and is somewhat close to what can be found in specialized scholarly materials. However, the limitation of this generic definition, as with all definitions of this genre, is its failure to take into account the fact that drug also exists in crude or botanical form and used on both man and animals. Again, it has been defined as any substance, other than food, intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of diseases in man or other animals

**Drug Trafficking:** In line with UNODC, Drug trafficking is a global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws. Drug trafficking in this study is conceived to include all those activities involving illicit production,

distribution and consumption of drugs prohibited by laws. International criminal networks, mainly from Latin America and Africa, that have some links with terrorism, are turning West Africa into a key global hub for the distribution, wholesaling, and production of illicit drugs. These groups represent an existential threat to democratic governance of already fragile states in the sub-region because they are using narco-corruption to stage coup d'état, hijack elections, and co-opt or buy political power. Besides a spike in drug-related crime, narcotics' trafficking is also fraying West Africa's traditional social fabric and creating a public health crisis, with hundreds of thousands of new drugs addicts. While the inflow of drug money may seem economically beneficial in West Africa in the short-term, investors will be less inclined to do business in the short-term if the sub-region is unstable. On the other hand, drug trafficking represents the most serious challenges to human security in the region since resource conflicts rocked several West Africa countries in the early 1990s. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), International aid to West Africa's "war on drug" is only in an initial stage; progress will have to be measured in decades or even generations, not years and also unfold in parallel with creating alternative sustainable livelihoods and addressing the longer-term challenges of human insecurity, poverty, and under development (OECD, 2014).

**Poverty:** According to Adebayo (2013), poverty is enemy of man and a multi-dimensional phenomenon that affects many aspects of human conditions ranging from the physical, moral to the psychological, and humiliates and dehumanizes its victim. It is a state of being deficient in money or means of basic subsistence such as safe water, sanitation, solid waste collection, healthcare, school and security. The World Bank (2003), described poverty as denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity, lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society, not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living and not having access to credit, insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and susceptibility to violence, and living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. The National Policy on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria (2009), list the attributes of poverty as follows: not having enough food to eat, poor nutrition, unfit housing, high rate of infant mortality, low life expectancy, inadequate health care, lack of productive assets, lack of economic infrastructure, etc.

**National Security:** The idea of national security was traditionally conceived to mean the preservation of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and internal stability through the coercive instruments of the state. Thus, security was perceived from the military-oriented paradigm. Buzan (1983), however argued that security issues extend to include politics, economy, society and ecology which is embedded within the scope of security studies. He further argued that the issue of security is better appreciated if analyzed holistically from international system level, the nation state level and individual level. Such a panoptic perspective of national security requires that the determinant of security does not limit itself to the coercive character of state power but a comprehensive national power with the latter being a composite of the many factors across all aspects of national life. The new conceptualization of security targets seven areas of human security which include economic security, political security, food security, health security, personal security, environmental security, and community security. In this regard, Phil Williams quoted in Behsat (2014), conceptualized organized crime and national security under four categories: threats against the territorial integrity; threats against the system of rules; threats against the institutions of the state and threat against the people in relations to their socio-cultural and economic wellbeing.

National security in this study therefore entails the composition of all the security interest of individuals, communities, political entities and institutions within a sovereign state. National security will be defined from the perspective of Ekpenyong (2016), as the situation of freedom from harmful threats to a given state which include freedom from unjustified coercion, internal subversion, and the erosion of the political, economic and social values, which are important for quality life wellbeing. A matter of national threat therefore entails a threat to any of the aforementioned. The threat of narcotic trafficking as regard transnational organized crime, drug abuse and misuse and its threats to human security constitute a threat to national security.

### **Review of Related Literature/Theoretical Framework**

#### **Drug Trafficking and Nigeria Experience**

The impact of organized crime and drug trafficking in Nigerian clime manifests itself in many ways, some of which may not ordinarily be visible due to the clandestine nature in which drugs find their way into the society and the opprobrium attached with the use of drug in Nigeria. Policies set out to address drug trafficking and abuse in Nigeria have proven to be ineffective and the teeming youth population are the major victims of this defective

measures. In addition to this is the fact that the policies in Nigeria which is set out to tackle drug abuse and its trafficking have an incommensurate attention on reactionary and punitive measures as against attention to public health interventions for drug addicts.

In recent times, some Nigerians have inconsequentially engaged in international drug trafficking and regrettably swerved the country into becoming an epicenter and a significant locus for "narco-transshipment" zone. It has also become a strategic warehouse and undercover for the formation of extremely commercial narco-trafficking networks that move illicit narcotics around the world. Illicit drug activities in Nigeria has transcended "transit designate" into becoming the locus for major drugs trafficking and consumption such as cocaine, heroin, marijuana and psychotropic substances to other part of the world. Moreover, the preponderance increase in seizures of illicit narcotic in Nigeria is direful and suggests the country's growing role as drug abuse nation, in other words, drug usage appears to be widespread within Nigeria. Nigeria is a key transit point for hard drugs aboard, from Latin American countries and Mexico to North America, East Asia and Europe (Rawlings, 2013, Nwannennaya and Abiodun, 2017).

#### **First Quarter of 2022 Drug Related Cases under Review**

As the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, intensifies the war against illicit drug trafficking and abuse across Nigeria, no less than six hundred and seventy-seven (677) traffickers have been convicted and sentenced to various jail terms between January, and March 2022, with a total of three thousand three hundred and fifty-nine (3,359) arrested and 65,915.891 kilograms of assorted drugs seized within the same period. Lagos has the highest figure of drug seizures with 22,192.62 kilograms of illicit substances received from parts of state, followed by the Murtala Muhammed International Airport MMIA, command, Ikeja, also in Lagos, with 8,979.869kg of drugs seized between January and March 2022, while Kano and Kaduna led the pack in the arrests of offenders with 194 arrests each within the same period.

Again, while a total of 257 hectares of cannabis farm were destroyed in forests across Ondo state, 14.869 hectares suffered same fate in Edo and a hectare destroyed in Bayelsa state within the same period. A further breakdown of the drugs seized within the first quarter of the year shown cannabis leading the table in January with 8,205.7509, followed by codeine -414.281kg, Okzepam - 192.459kg, Tramadol-135.067kg, Rophynol-43.062kg, and Cocaine-24.32kg. In February,

Cannabis also topped the list of seizures with 20,538.79kg, Codeine-1,848.052kg, Tramadol-540.354kg, Diazepam-173.041kg, Rophynol-80.261kg, Cocaine-15.727kg, Methamphetamine-6.207kg and Heroin 4.006kg. Cannabis also topped the list of seizures in March with 21,583.81kg,

followed by Tramadol-8,965.319kg, Codeine-417.207kg, Diazepam-57.755kg, Cocaine-45.082kg, Methamphetamine-7.527kg, Rophynol-6.34kg and Heroin-1.497kg, while appreciating the commitment of officer and men of the Agency for a commendable job.

**Table 1: Total Number of Drug Cases by Geo-Political Zones, 2010-2016**

Zone	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
North-East	606	765	1,017	824	1,017
North-Central	1,230	1,323	1,416	1,605	1,494
North-West	2,185	2,288	2,261	2,205	2,353
South-East	960	1,155	1,136	979	802
South-South	1,480	1,371	1,314	1,380	1,303
South-West	1,591	1,941	1,682	1,785	1,288
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,052</b>	<b>8,843</b>	<b>8,826</b>	<b>8,778</b>	<b>8,257</b>

**Sources:** National Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved from [https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries\[search\]=crime](https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries[search]=crime)

From the table above, between the year 2012 and 2017, northwest stands out as the highest region with rising number of drug abusers, this is closely followed by southwest and northcentral then south-south and southeast in the bottom ladder. Also, 2015 witnessed high drug related cases with over 8,778 cases. From the table below also, Kano, Katsina,

Kaduna, Bauchi, Plateau, Jigawa, Rivers, Ogun, Oyo, Anambra, Edo, Akwa-Ibom have increased arrest of drug related crime and drug induced crime in 2016. Also, drug is mostly transported by air as the number of arrested cases in airport especially MMIA Lagos airport, land borders is another widely used route by drug traffickers.

**Table 2: Number of Drug Related Arrested Suspects by State, Special Area Command and Sex, 2012-2016**

State	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Abia	163	19	182	209	15	224	207	12	219	178	21	199
Adamawa	184	2	186	126	4	130	197	2	199	212	3	215
Akwa Ibom	287	52	339	353	48	401	238	45	283	204	39	243
Anambra	375	45	420	354	41	395	303	28	331	249	23	272
Bauchi	221	0	221	471	0	471	372	10	382	311	10	321
Bayelsa	249	0	249	177	0	177	123	18	141	167	48	215
Benue	107	9	116	116	10	126	182	18	200	125	10	135
Borno	108	0	108	75	0	75	56	3	59	58	0	58
Cross River	93	6	99	28	4	32	163	20	183	76	12	88
Delta	167	35	202	186	47	233	96	26	122	163	30	193
Ebonyi	200	37	237	145	19	164	154	22	176	101	11	112
Edo	205	56	261	164	56	220	223	80	303	219	50	269
Ekiti	282	28	310	183	7	190	183	22	205	81	11	92
Enugu	160	13	173	151	20	171	144	19	163	104	8	112
Gombe	108	7	115	166	1	167	86	0	86	87	3	90
Imo	125	13	138	176	0	176	110	21	131	90	7	97
Jigawa	164	4	168	190	6	196	114	2	116	275	4	279
Kaduna	371	13	384	346	0	346	230	15	245	290	29	319
Kano	567	0	567	503	0	503	658	11	669	736	8	744
Katsina	596	18	614	587	22	609	530	9	539	562	0	562
Kebbi	197	1	198	198	11	209	151	10	161	78	5	83
Kogi	209	16	225	155	17	172	129	9	138	221	8	229
Kwara	149	15	164	83	8	91	141	20	161	148	15	163
Lagos	490	0	490	413	21	434	230	21	251	217	5	222
Nassarawa	48	2	50	207	8	215	75	2	77	44	3	47
Niger	143	0	143	68	0	68	262	2	264	227	3	230
Ogun	220	17	237	194	23	217	222	20	242	235	25	260
Ondo	86	6	92	54	4	58	139	12	151	136	15	151
Osun	252	0	252	184	7	191	175	19	194	82	6	88
Oyo	401	0	401	350	0	350	225	12	237	278	21	299
Plateau	302	16	318	283	14	297	323	20	343	386	18	404

State	2013			2014			2015			2016		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Rivers	190	23	<b>213</b>	200	32	<b>232</b>	230	31	<b>261</b>	255	36	<b>291</b>
Sokoto	183	2	<b>185</b>	161	4	<b>165</b>	215	7	<b>222</b>	214	3	<b>217</b>
Taraba	78	0	<b>78</b>	77	0	<b>77</b>	249	11	<b>260</b>	239	6	<b>245</b>
Yobe	56	1	<b>57</b>	88	9	<b>97</b>	41	0	<b>41</b>	88	0	<b>88</b>
Zamfara	158	13	<b>171</b>	228	4	<b>232</b>	208	2	<b>210</b>	143	4	<b>147</b>
Fct	258	27	<b>285</b>	411	14	<b>425</b>	457	21	<b>478</b>	261	7	<b>268</b>
Siu (HQ Lagos)	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	16	3	<b>19</b>	11	1	<b>12</b>
Jtf (HQ Lagos)	11	1	<b>12</b>	21	2	<b>23</b>	7	1	<b>8</b>	13	0	<b>13</b>
Dogi (Hqlagos)	20	1	<b>21</b>	24	0	<b>24</b>	31	3	<b>34</b>	24	3	<b>27</b>
Airports												
Mmia-Lagos	82	11	<b>93</b>	118	11	<b>129</b>	145	22	<b>167</b>	61	15	<b>76</b>
Naia-Abuja	17	5	<b>22</b>	21	1	<b>22</b>	36	0	<b>36</b>	16	2	<b>18</b>
Phia-Port Harcourt	0	1	<b>1</b>	3	0	<b>3</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
Makia-Kano	1	0	<b>1</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>	2	0	<b>2</b>	2	0	<b>2</b>
Aiia-Enugu	5	0	<b>5</b>	6	0	<b>6</b>	17	1	<b>18</b>	9	1	<b>10</b>
Seaports												
Wharf-Lagos	7	0	<b>7</b>	12	0	<b>12</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>	6	0	<b>6</b>
Tincan Lagos	1	0	<b>1</b>	2	0	<b>2</b>	1	0	<b>1</b>			<b>0</b>
Onne-Rivers	7	0	<b>7</b>	15	1	<b>16</b>	6	0	<b>6</b>	4	0	<b>4</b>
Border Posts												
Seme-Lagos	17	4	<b>21</b>	27	1	<b>28</b>	35	3	<b>38</b>	31	8	<b>39</b>
Idiroko-Ogun	4	0	<b>4</b>	3	0	<b>3</b>	5	0	<b>5</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>
Ciatf	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	0	0	<b>0</b>	3	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,324</b>	<b>519</b>	<b>8843</b>	<b>8,313</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>8805</b>	<b>8,143</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>8778</b>	<b>7,720</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>8257</b>

Source: National Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved from [https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries\[search\]=crime](https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary?queries[search]=crime)

### International Legal Framework for Drug Control

It is necessary we consider the above sub-heading in this work. The clear evidence of documentary nature is that hard and illicit drugs related issues are of universal concern. No country can lay claim to role being isolated from the menace of use, abuse, trade, and trafficking of hard illicit drugs. This is principally the reason for the global concern. The historical global efforts on drugs cannot be successfully or comprehensively broached without touching on the leading role of the United States of America. Therefore, its founding role in this regard must be acknowledged. It was the United States of America's singlehanded initiative in 1990 through the convening of the International Conference on Opium in Shanghai that has blossomed into a fortified, sustained and sustainable direction within the comity of nations as it relates to drug. A second conference was held at The Hague in 1911. It was this conference that led to the first International Opium Convention of 1912. As stated above, the earliest convention was in 1912, that is, International

Opium Convention, followed by agreement concerning the Manufacture of, Internal Trade in and Use of Prepared Opium was signed in 1925. This agreement further strengthened international efforts to regulate the production and distribution of opium and its derivatives (United Nations, 1925).

### Government Policy Actions towards Tackling Illicit Drug Trafficking in Nigeria

#### ➤ Legal Framework and Security Provisioning

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) established in 1989 is the main government agency bestowed with the primary function narcotics control. It is empowered to eliminate any activities involving the production, manufacturing, processing, trafficking, transacting, and transporting of hard drugs. Other agency created to as a sister agency for intelligence surveillance and functions include the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigeria Immigration Service, the Standard Organization of Nigeria, the Federal

Ministry of Health, the Federal Ministry of Education and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.

As a matter of fact, these agencies carry out different surveillance functions and information and knowledge base sharing through research, analysis, rehabilitation and prosecution of offenders, such activities include: the National Drug Use Survey, National Drug Threat Assessment, National Survey to quantify and estimate the needs for controlled psychotropic substances and precursors for medical and scientific purposes and Nigerian Epidemiological Network on Drug Use (UNODC, n.d.). Furthermore, The National Drug Control Master Plan is a medium-term framework advanced for drug trafficking and control in Nigeria. The 2015-2019 master plan is a key strategy document on drugs that promotes balanced and evidence-based response to drug control in Nigeria was also developed and implemented. It is not to be ignored anyway that the NDLEA has made some concerted results in tackling drug trafficking in Nigeria. For instance, the then chairman of NDLEA Abdallah Muhammed revealed that the agency seized a total of 56.75 billion kg of drugs and arrested 85,058 persons for drug and drug-related offences, secured convictions in 16,937 cases over the last 10 years (Eboh and Owoh, 2019). Abdallah also stated that in line with the NDLEA act part III, the properties and assets of these drug traffickers were confiscated. He further claimed that NDLEA had engaged in "drug demand reduction programme" which was anchored on anti-drug sensitization, treatment and rehabilitation (Eboh and Owoh, 2019).

However, in spite of the counter narcotic efforts by NDLEA, sizeable number of narcotics still scale through the Nigeria's borders because they are poorly man and patrolled with poor technological gadgets and more regrettably, there is inadequate intelligence sharing, collaboration and cooperation from the relevant competing security agencies that are bedeviled with corruption (Rawlings, 2013). Furthermore, an assessment of the National Drug Control Master Plan revealed that much emphasis is on "supply suppression" such as arrest and punishment of drug offenders when compared to "demand reduction" activities such as advocacy, awareness creation, treatment and rehabilitation of drug dependents. Corroborating these findings, the Youth Initiative for Drug Research, Information, Support and Education in Nigeria (the Youth RISE Nigeria, 2015), in their report revealed that an assessment of law enforcement agent's strategy in tackling drug trafficking showed two major indicators which are: the discovery and seizure of illicit drugs and the arrest and prosecution of drug offenders. Of the two indicators, arrest and prosecution of drug offenders (mainly drug users) is more pronounced than arrest of high-level drug

syndicates. Corroborating further, they revealed that one of the main problems identified by the officers were understaffing and underfunding. The Youth Rise Nigeria however argued that Nigeria drug control strategy is a reactive one to both internal and external pressures rather than being a proactive tool (Youth Rise Nigeria, 2015). In other words, there are less systemic efforts on advocacy and rehabilitation of drug users as well as proactive measures on tackling illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria.

#### ➤ **Trans Border Cooperation in Tackling Drug Trafficking**

Nigeria has engaged in multilateral and bilateral cooperation in its effort to tackle illicit drug trafficking. As a member of United Nations, Nigeria ratified the agreement on United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) which is a body set out for intelligent sharing and prevention of crime and drug related cases around the world. Also, Nigeria as a member of African Union ratified the African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017) which was launched in January 2013 as a comprehensive strategic framework to guide drug policy development in the continent, enabling member states to invigorate national, regional and international cooperation aimed at countering illicit drugs over a five-year period. AUPA has the primary function of countering drug trafficking and other related challenges to human security through supporting member states and Regional Economic Communities to reduce the recurrence of illicit trafficking and supply reduction in accordance with the rule of law and fundamental human right principles. In addition, as a member of Economic Community of West African States, Nigeria also adopted the ECOWAS Drug Action Plan (2016-2020) which was ratified by ECOWAS Ministers of Justice and Interior on September 5, 2016. The plan is aimed at addressing Illicit Drug Trafficking and Organized Crimes in the West African region. Although West African Member States have made important achievements in the implementation of past 2008-2014 Action Plan (such as taking intelligence-based actions and improving border security, smashing organized crimes such as money laundering), drug use continues to claim the lives of the productive segment of our citizens (ECOWAS, 2016).

Furthermore, to tackle drug trafficking and activities of organized crime cartels operating in Nigeria and Ghana, a coordinated intelligence-led counter-narcotics operations targeting the transshipment of hard substances were undertaken in both countries, supported by the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime and funded by the European Union under two projects, namely: 'CRIMJUST' and 'Response to Drugs and Organized Crime in Nigeria'. This joint operation was conducted between the Drug

enforcement agencies in Ghana, namely Narcotics Control Board (NACOB), Ghana Police Service-Drug Law Enforcement Unit (DLEU) and Nigeria's National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). The operation involved two periods of activities over the past 2 months, with a complete period of fifteen days, code-named 'Operation Eagle'. This operation resulted in the arrest of 22 suspects, the seizure of substantial quantities of drugs, namely: 15.7kg cocaine, 9.21kg heroin, 8.17kg methamphetamines, 596.338kg cannabis, 4kg of khat, 267 tramadol pills (225 mg) and \$22,000 USD cash (UNODC, n.d.).

### **Factors that have Encouraged Illicit Drug Trafficking and Consumption in Nigeria**

The factors spurring illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria is implicated on human insecurity which comprises of economic, health, personal, community, political, environmental and food security. When these seven security variables are threatened, people tend to look for other diverse ways of survival both legitimate and illegitimate means and this also threatens traditional security of the nation.

#### **➤ Poverty and Illicit Drug Trafficking:**

Unabated poverty rate has been identified as one major factor encouraging and exacerbating the spread of crime in the world and Nigeria in particular. Poverty and economic hardship for West African youths have enabled drug traffickers take advantage of the situations to recruit many discontent people (African Center for Strategic Studies, 2017). Various studies have shown the sustained Boko-Haram terror attacks, farmers - herders' conflicts, kidnapping, banditry and organized crimes such as illicit drug trafficking and human trafficking is being sustained through recruitment of poor people who struggle by any means to survive. According to the World Poverty Clock, Nigeria had about 87 million people living in extreme poverty.

#### **➤ Corruption and Illicit Drug Trafficking - "Narco-Corruption":**

Corruption and narcotic trafficking have a reciprocally reinforcing relationship. According to the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (2013), the wealth and power of some drug trafficking enterprises can exceed that of local governments, enabling the traffickers to obtain protection from law enforcement, compromise the justice institutions, and corrupt security professionals. Regrettably, the Nigerian state has been described as a "fantastically corrupt nation". The famous slogan that "officials are no longer termed corrupt rather corruption is now official" has dented Nigeria's image in the international community. The problem associated with Nigerian security personnel and public officials such as NDLEA and customs services as being compromised at the border have made the case of

combating drug trafficking complicated. Moreover, the way justice is administered in Nigeria sometimes encourages the growth of trade in illicit drugs in the country.

Never the less, this is because, when a powerful drug lord, top politicians, or relations of top politicians are caught in illicit drug cases, the issue is sometimes not made to come to public at all, let alone to be prosecuted. In instances where such cases go public, the courts through the judicial systems bend the law to either free such culprits or reduce their sentence significantly to some short time (Awudu, 2016). A lot of corrupt-miscreants feel that money can be exchanged for freedom in Nigeria. The corrupt system proves this line of thought. There are several cases of delayed prosecution of high-profile individuals especially those who are loyal to the ruling class and on the other hand, ease and speedy confiscation and prosecution of perceived opponents of the state or the ruling class. In a situation where state is unable to regulate its political elites such that they do not adhere to the statutory provisions and procedural rule of law, such state cannot administer social justice. This is because in a situation that public office holders or agencies conspire with some persons whose conduct they should regulate, social justices would be manipulated, subverted, and state bureaucratic structures will become an instrument to enhance power base and national interests, goals and aspirations is sacrificed at the altar of personal aggrandizement. The corruption perception index (2018), ranked Nigeria 144th out of 180 countries with an index point of 27 against 100 making it below average and one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

#### **Rising Insecurity and Ineffective Border Control:**

Nigeria as a sovereign state has exhibited poor and ineffectiveness in the management of its territory integrity. There exist many ungoverned spaces which drug trafficker have taken advantage of; worst is that these ungoverned spaces have advanced internal lawlessness with persistent violent conflicts arising from the various interest groups in the state. The porosity of the national border is such that there is the free entry and exists of people and goods due to lose border control system. Gail (2005) pointed out that the vast porous land borders, seaports, and corruption among officials of the government provide an ideal environment and haven for drug traffickers. Nigeria has an immense expanse of unprotected, unenclosed and porous land borders with their neighbouring countries, Benin, Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

Rawlings (2013) revealed that most of the smuggled contrabands goods pass through various points of entry and with only a few occasionally being



confiscated. Most of the smugglings are conducted in the hinterlands that are remote and obscure where easy accessibility of law enforcement officers is difficult. Insecurity in Nigeria spans from Niger Delta militancy, oil bunkering, armed robbery and kidnapping in the south to Boko Haram insurgency, herdsmen attacks and armed banditry in the north. Insecurity in Nigeria has been sustained through politicization of security. The Global Terrorism Index Rankings in 2017, ranked Nigeria first in Africa and 3rd globally. In addition, the country was ranked 149th out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index in 2017. The gross effects of insecurity in Nigeria have resulted to loss of life and properties, growing population of internally displaced persons, food insecurity.

Illegal drug and human traffickers have taken advantage of the socioeconomic effects of insecurity in Nigeria. The number of illegal migrants and cases of drug and human trafficking has increased exponentially since the wake of insurgency in Nigeria. Nigeria is no more just a transit nation for drug traffickers, these traffickers have now engaged in the cultivation and processing and transshipment of narcotics across borders. In the wake of aftereffect of the 9/11 attack, McCarthy (2003), revealed that the international community has shifted focus on analyzing the synergy between narcotic trafficking and terrorism which was revealed to have been simultaneously rising. People involved in narco-terrorism are trying very hard to systematize, legalize and strengthen the state. The drug syndicates have also been trying to make themselves a part of the community by sponsoring various social activities like sports, hospitals, schools etc. These drug lords are trying to create a parallel government in every country that they operate. Unfortunately, in many countries these drug lords are extremely powerful and have a strong influence in their respective countries. The drug lords are able to provide monetary as well as other resources needed to mount electoral campaigns. They have at their disposal an efficient, readymade organization and infrastructure for providing campaign support (McCarthy, 2003). They are also capable of influencing local leaders who are dependent upon the underworld. Many a time, these elements also control the press. Organized crime is often employed for large scale electoral malpractices such as booth-capturing and rigging.

#### ➤ **Financial Inducement and Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome:**

Drug trafficking is perceived as the fastest network of money-making ventures in the world, this evidence can be corroborated by the net worth of verified drug barons in the society. The demand for illicit drugs globally is always on the rise and this resulted to perception that drug trafficking is a

multibillion-dollar business. A March 2014 CNN global report revealed that the Mexican drug cartels alone made between \$19 and \$29 billion dollars in sales per year. This huge amount means that people are willing to take maximum risks to perpetuate their drug trade (Nwannennaya and Abiodun, 2017). The UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2013 reports that the wealth and power of some drug trafficking enterprises can in most instances exceeds that of some third world country's GDP. The value of the illicit drug market is highly difficult to estimate. Narco traffickers are high ranking crime cartels who controls a sizable network of people involved in the illegal deal. As such, estimating their net worth in terms of figures are often difficult to bring to justice as most of their illicit financial transaction are clandestine in nature. The financial prowess of drug lords gives impetus for ease network of operations, recruitment and transshipment worldwide. Forbes magazine in 1989 for example, declared the Mexican drug lord, Escobar as the seventh-richest man in the world, with an estimated net worth of US\$25 billion. A publication of the United Nations in 1998, "Economic and Social Consequences of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking" reported that it is estimated that illicit drug traffickers makes between US\$100 billion to more than US\$1,000 billion a year. While most literature put their estimated figure between \$300 billion and \$500 billion a year. It is this perceived financial gain that people engage in illicit drug trafficking. Other factors inducing drug abuse in Nigeria include: peer pressure, addiction, sexual involvement.

#### **Theoretical Framework**

For the purpose of this research work, we choose the Functionalist Theory to serve as a guide in understanding the task incumbent on the Nigerian security agencies in collaborating with other agencies to fight organize crime and drug trafficking to protect social unrest, national security, and redeem the image of Nigeria state globally.

The Functionalism Theory was founded to be most appropriate as it focuses on the functions performed by institutions or units to ensure systems survival (Macionis & Gerber, 2010). It emphasizes that components and sub-components of a system must work in tandem to ensure the overall well-being and survival of the whole system. The narrative of the theory brings to force that the society has component institutions like security agencies, education institutions, the judiciary (criminal justice system) and the family that work together for the survival or stability of the whole. The major proponents of this theory are Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer and Talcott Parsons in 1874 and 1937 respectively (Macionis & Gerber, 2010). Spencer's version of the theory holds that a society is a complex system whose

various parts works together to produce stability (Harper, 2010). The main thrust of the theory is that a system, working together, would depend on an efficient legal instrument to hold the various units together in order to maintain standards and achieve set goals. From this position, Spencer asserted that a society is made up of small units that are interdependent but bonded by common law. This means that each unit must perform its task well, as expected by law, for the attainment of overall societal goals.

He likened the society to the human body, consisting of many parts, which work together for the survival of the entire body. The control of crimes and activities is primarily vested in some law enforcement and security services which derived their powers to function from the relevant law of the land. The Nigeria Custom Services controls the flow of goods into, and out of the country while the Nigeria Immigration Service is responsible for enforcing immigration law of Nigeria. The structure responsible for the performance of the function of political socialization are the various agents of political socialization-family, schools, religious, political party, pressure group, etc. (Ofoeze, 2001). These structures are responsible to inculcating values of creativity and innovation, discipline, honesty, patriotism, and the need for achievement among individuals in the society. Application of the theory to the work, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) keeps it eye on trafficking and consumption of hard drugs, whereas National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) checks the importation of counterfeit drugs. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is the agency that fights economic and financial crimes while National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking of Person (NAPTIP) combats human trafficking. The establishment of these organizations, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN) are respectively provided for in certain legislative Acts and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) (CFRN 1999) (as amended).

Section 217 (2) of CFRN 1999 (as amended) tasks the NFN which serves as a National Guard with the defense of Nigeria against external attack and maintaining her territorial integrity. It also places the responsibility of securing Nigeria's land and sea borders as well as her air space from violation (CFRN 1999), The Armed Forces of Nigeria is equally to act in aid of evil authority, whenever the Police Force is stretched beyond its limit. Drawing from the above logic, this re-echoed the fact that the various security agencies which are the component institution of the society (complex system) must perform its task or function effectively well as expected by law, for the

attainment of the overall security of the nation, and the national security will wear a new look and get better. Therefore, the study associates the social problems and security challenge in this country today to structurally weakness.

## CONCLUSION

This study has dealt with the concept of organized crime, poverty, and drug trafficking in Nigeria: A sociological perspective. It thus noted that, the national security challenges and social problems of Nigeria state presently cannot be delinked from the above concepts. The study argued that organized crime, poverty and drug trafficking has resulted to global insecurity causing enormous economic, political and social consequences to the Nigerian state in particular. West Africa is a transit route for drug traffickers. Therefore, this study concludes that, the national security challenges presently is a total reflection of the weakness of various security agencies vested with the power and authority to fight organized crime, drug trafficking in Nigeria. However, over the years, West Africa and Nigeria in particular is no more just a transshipment route but one of the centers of drug producers and drug consumption. The increase in the production of drugs in West Africa and the diversification of trafficking methods used by transnational criminal groups has enormous negative impact on security in Nigeria. Nigeria ranks high number three in global terrorism index and number 147<sup>th</sup> in global peace index. The study also revealed that there is a rising incidence of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking is corresponding to the rising number of drug related crimes. This has exacerbated the nature of insecurity of the Nigerian state. This is compounded by the fact that drug control agencies are more reactive than proactive in tackling illicit drug activities in Nigeria.

The study therefore recommends as follows:

- To strengthen the Nigerian security agencies, charged with tackling organized crime, drug trafficking. This can be done through capacity building, financial empowerment, training and retraining of personnel, and the use of advanced detection equipment.
- Recruitment of youths is urgently needed. Quality jobs should be provided to people in order to help them get out of poverty-stricken areas where drug and crimes are common.
- Frequent information sharing and management among Nigerian security agencies. This is because, narco-trafficking have its foundation laid on organized crime (a network syndicates operating nationally and across borders) which in turn exacerbates insecurity in Nigeria.

- Strengthen partnerships with international law enforcement agencies to share intelligence and best practices. This will help in tackling cross-border drug trafficking and organized crime networks.
- The government should implement judicial reforms to ensure swift and fair trials for those involved in organized crime and drug trafficking. This can act as a deterrent and ensure that justice is served promptly.
- Parents need to keep a close eye on who their children are hanging out with to protect them from bad peer influence.
- Increase the number of rehabilitation centers across the country, especially in areas with high rates of drug abuse and crime, thereby opening access to more individuals in need of help for their addiction. A public-private partnership model can help to bridge this gap.
- Another important point is that the government should ensure sensitization and education of Nigerians on harmful effects of drug abuse. Reintegration of drug addicts into the society through proper health diagnosis.

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