

## Faith-Based Approach in the Control of Substance Abuse: Interventional Perspective of Hisbah in Northern Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

Substance abuse has become a global problem which is being addressed as one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Target 3.5, and focused on the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, especially narcotic drug addiction, and hazardous alcohol use. In Nigeria, several efforts have been made by succeeding governments to reduce substance abuse through formal means. Still, the threat has persisted owing to the weak implementation of substance-related policies and laws. Despite this, there is little empirical research on faith-based informal mechanisms of reducing the threat.

This study, therefore, examines the roles of Hisbah (an Islamic police force in Northern Nigeria tasked with upholding Shari'a law) as an informal strategy for reducing substance abuse, as well as people's views of Hisbah's role in the prevention and control of substance use in Kano State, Nigeria. The study's theoretical grounding is in Emile Durkheim's Theory of Religion and Social Control. This exploratory study employed a qualitative approach in its methods of investigation. This study recruited a total of 24 participants. These participants were made up of two (2) executives of Hisbah, three (3) Hisbah Commandants, five (5) Hisbah field personnel, seven (7) offenders, and seven (7) members of the general public. The qualitative data obtained were analyzed using narrative technique and thematic approach with the aid of Atlas ti. software. Findings from the study indicated that religious organizations such as that of the Hisbah play a significant role in the fight against substance abuse. The study recommended that religious organizations should be co-opted into mainstream government policies in the fight against drug and substance use.

**Keywords:** *Hisbah, Substance abuse, Faith-based informal mechanism, social control, Religion.*

### INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's most recent World Drug Report (UNODC, 2022) estimated that 284 million

persons in the world between the ages of 15 and 64 took drugs in 2020, a 26 percent rise from ten years prior. Drug usage among young people has increased, with current rates in many nations being greater than those of the previous generation. People under 35 make up the bulk of those receiving treatment for drug use disorders in Africa and Latin America. According to the report, 11.2 million persons used injection medicines globally. Approximately half of these individuals had hepatitis C, 1.4 million had HIV, and 1.2 million had both (UNODC, 2022).

Researchers have tried to pinpoint elements that are linked to drug use and those that are defensive against drug use in light of the personal and societal costs of drug use (Terry-McElrath, 2011). According to a study by Edlund et al. (2010), religion is one of these factors that has been identified as having the greatest protective effects against drug use, keeping people from using drugs even when their living conditions are unstable. As a result, the effect of religion in preventing substance use is currently being studied by researchers and healthcare professionals.

Following Hirschi and Stark's (1969) study investigating the correlation between religiosity and juvenile delinquency, scientific scholarship has increasingly examined the association between religiosity and deviant behaviors. Worldwide, alcohol and drug abuse treatment and recovery programmes frequently incorporate religious practices and beliefs. Numerous

studies have demonstrated that religious practices and beliefs may deter substance misuse (Tuscaloosa, 2009; Brown, 2006; Bazargan et al., 2004). Religious convictions and actions are frequently seen as conventional, conforming habits that should lessen a person's propensity to engage in deviant behavior, particularly substance abuse (Tuscaloosa, 2009). The argument that religiosity is beneficial in the process of recovering from substance misuse was supported at the individual level by quantitative as well as qualitative studies (Brown, 2006; Bazargan et al., 2004). It is anticipated that adhering to these principles will result in less frequent drug and alcohol usage among religious adherents as the theological texts of most major global faiths forbid illicit drug and alcohol use (Miller, 1998). For example, the Bible forbids intoxication in both the Old and New Testaments (see Ecclesiastes 10:17, Romans 13:13, and 1 Timothy 3:3). Islam is more restrictive when it comes to drinking; for instance, Qur'an 2:219 addressed this when it stated that;

*"They ask you (O Muhammad SAW) concerning alcoholic drink and gambling. Say: In them is a great sin, and (some) benefit for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit.... discuss the negative effects of intoxicants and proscribes their use".*

One Islamic sub-group that has been established to curb the menace of substance abuse in any form is *Hisbah*. *Hisbah* is an Islamic police force in Northern Nigeria tasked with upholding Shari'a law. The word

“*hisbah*” in Arabic refers to deeds done for the benefit of others or in hopes of receiving recompense from God. In Islam, hadith and a collection of Qur’anic passages serve as the source of *hisbah*. Nonetheless, it was established in Nigeria to uphold Shari’a law by acting as Islamic police.

### **Theoretical Framework: Emile Durkheim’s Theory on Religion and Social Control**

Emile Durkheim’s work is regarded as one of the earliest and most thorough analysis of religion in society. The ideas of Durkheim on religion offer a more comprehensive perspective on religion as a helpful social governing force. Durkheim believed that people deliberately subscribed to fundamental sets of beliefs which essentially incorporated them into society or governed their choices and habits, encouraging pro-social behavior. For Durkheim, religion entails fundamental doctrines and practices connected to things deemed sacred. These rituals bind participants to the moral society that Durkheim describes as the Church. According to Durkheim, society’s members generate religion, which then develops into a phenomenon that is transcendental and exterior to society as a whole (Durkheim, 1951). Thus, he observed that designating material items in society as sacred or profane is a fundamental aspect of religion (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). The classification of objects from the tangible world as sacred helps society’s religious attitudes and beliefs to persist. Religious community members are continually aware of the difference that

exists between the sacred and profane, just as they are aware of the beliefs embodied in the sacred. People of religious communities are prevented from acting in ways or making decisions that profane the sacred by their conscious understanding of the difference between the two (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017).

According to Durkheim (1951), religious convictions strengthen social norms and practices, fostering social cohesion. Members of the group adhere to the norms and behaviors since they have been absorbed into the community, however, they also do so out of possible fear of stigmatization and punishment if they deviate from those behaviors and norms promoted by the group as a whole. This solidarity functions as a form of social control. As a result, Durkheim believed that religion gives people social control, coherence, and purpose as well as another avenue for interaction and gathering to uphold social standards (Durkheim, 1951).

According to Durkheim, one feature of religion that has frequently been utilized to support society is morality, a concept he described as the degree of social agreement on proper behavior. Penalties for people who violate social norms often serve as reinforcement for morality in society. According to Durkheim, morality is a social reality that can serve as a person’s guide in life (Desmond et al. 2011, Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). Thus, it was noted by Durkheim that human beings would become imprisoned by constantly growing insatiable passions (Ritzer & Stepnisky 2017) in the

absence of this morality. People would conduct themselves in a way that kept them connected to the community rather than kept them apart from it as a result of society's moral conscience.

Consequently, the religion and social control theory by Durkheim argued that religion, more than anything else, will prevent adherents of a religious doctrine from engaging in behavior that is regarded as deviant or immoral, since they have internalized ideas that perceive specific behavior as immoral. These people have a higher propensity to manage the behaviors that result from their religious convictions, ideas, rituals, and activities. They discover calm and a higher power over their activities as a result, a higher force (social control) that leads them in a moral direction, frequently without hesitation, and away from immoral behavior. In relation to this theory, *Hisbah* as a religious group can serve as a religious enforcement instrument for the control of deviant behavior in the form of substance use and drug abuse.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is an exploratory qualitative case study, designed to explore the experiences of *Hisbah* security outfit in Kano in their fight against substance use and abuse. The experiences of offenders are also explored. Kano is the capital city of Kano State in Northern Nigeria. After Lagos, its metropolitan population is the second largest in Nigeria. Kano city has a total area of 137 km<sup>2</sup> and six Local Government Areas (LGAs): Kano Municipal, Fagge,

Dala, Gwale, Tarauni, and Nassarawa, with a population of 2,163,225 according to the 2006 Nigeria Population Census. Kano, like most of Northern Nigeria, is dominated by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group. The city serves as the Kano Emirate's capital. Kano has long been the commercial heart of Northern Nigeria, as well as a center for peanut production and export. Kano is home to the Bayero University and a railway station, with trains to Lagos passing through Kaduna, as well as the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport. Kano has equal access to the seaports of Lagos and Port Harcourt because it is located north of the Kaduna rail junction.

Participants for this study were recruited through a purposive sampling technique. Thus, only *Hisbah* officials who have been in the security outfit for at least a year were recruited for the study. Additionally, substance use offenders and the general public were also recruited to be part of the study. In total, the study recruited 24 participants to be part of the study. Although the study had initially been designed to recruit 35 participants, saturation point was reached at the 24<sup>th</sup> participants. These participants were made up of two (2) executives of *Hisbah*, three (3) *Hisbah* Commandants, five (5) *Hisbah* field personnel, seven (7) offenders, and seven (7) members of the general public. Both members of the public and *Hisbah* operatives were purposely selected based on their knowledge of *Hisbah* security outfit.

In the course of data collection, two qualitative instruments namely; the In-

depth Interview (IDI) and Key Informant Interview (KII) were employed by the study. The instruments were designed based on the objectives of the study which included; (i) assessing the success level of *Hisbah* in the fight against substance use in Kano State (ii) people's perception of the role of *Hisbah* in combating substance abuse in Kano State (iii) modes of operations of *Hisbah* in the fight against substance abuse in Kano State (iv) major challenges the organization is facing with regards to its fight against substance use and abuse etc. The interviews were designed and conducted in Hausa language before it was translated into English language by an expert in both Hausa and English language. Each interview lasted approximately between 30-40 minutes. Each interview was recorded using a recording app contained in the interviewer's android mobile device. This was done with the permission of the participants. In addition to the primary method of data collection, important secondary data were collected from different Nigerian Newspapers. These Newspapers were very important in providing various cases of *Hisbah* operations and success across the country.

Data collected for this study was analyzed using the narrative technique and thematic approach with the aid of Atlas ti. software. This was done using the six steps and processes (Familiarization; coding; generating themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and writing up) of doing thematic content analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The Atlas.ti software was used to manage collected data

for thematic content analysis. The choice of the use of thematic content analysis was to enable the researcher to closely examine the collected data to identify common themes i.e., topics, ideas, and patterns of meanings that come up repeatedly from the interview. Transcripts from the interview were studied repeatedly by the researcher to generate comprehensive meanings of participants' narrations. Transcripts from individuals were given codes based the number they were interviewed (e.g. HIS 1, HIS 2 ..... HIS 20; OFD 1, OFD 2..... OFD 7..... PUB 1, PUB2 .....PUB7). Codes were grouped to form sub-themes while sub-themes were re-grouped to form major themes. Each sub-theme and major themes generated from the study was thoroughly discussed by the research team before its analysis and presentation.

Every research technique used in this study complies with Nigeria's national code of research ethics. Additionally, the research procedure complies with the equivalent ethical norms of the Helsinki 1964 Declaration and its subsequent amendments. Although no written ethical clearance was given to the researchers, verbal approval was obtained from the Kano State *Hisbah* Command before the commencement of the study. In addition, informed consent, confidentiality of data, anonymity, voluntary participation etc. were sought from all participants before the commencement of each interview session.

## RESULTS

### *Participants' Background Information;*

This study recruited a total of 24 participants. These participants were made up of two (2) executives of *Hisbah*, three (3) *Hisbah* Commandants, five (5) *Hisbah* field personnel, seven (7) offenders, and seven (7) members of the general public. The majority of the officers enlisted for this study were males (80%). Whereas the average age of the officers with the *Hisbah* board was 39.5 years, their average income per month was N11,000. They have also all worked for an average of 7.4 years. Another 80% of the *Hisbah* officers were married. Although they were all temporary staff, 70% of the officers had other jobs. Likewise, the percentage of offenders and members of the public recruited for the study were males (78.6%). While the average age of offenders and members of the public recruited for the study was 37.3 years, their average income per month was about N63,500. Approximately 42.8% of offenders and members of the public were self-employed, 28.6% were unemployed, and 28.6% were employed. Regarding their marital status, 57.1% of them were single, while 42.9% were married. Majority of them were Muslims (71.4%) and they have all lived in Kano for an average of 20.6 years. Additionally, about 60.7% of the total participants had SSCE qualifications.

### *Success Level of the Hisbah in Combating Substance Abuse in Kano*

According to the responses from participants during this study, *Hisbah* has recorded a substantial level of success in combating substance abuse in Kano

despite the high rates of substance abuse in the state. The participants noted that the abuse of substances is quite high in Kano, and it is most prevalent among the youths in Sabon-Gari who abuse hard substances like tramadol, codeine, cannabis, Roche, and marijuana. However, the activities of *Hisbah* have significantly reduced the abuse of drugs in Kano. For instance, a participant stated that;

*The rate of the use of drugs among residents of Kano is significantly high, the area where the most use of drugs is recorded is in Sabon Gari in Kano, and the Youths are the categories of people mainly involved in the act. The substance most abused in the state is tramadol, but so far, we have recorded an encouraging number of successes (34-year-old Hisbah Commandant).*

In a similar assertion, a field officer buttressed the earlier point by noting that;

*The rate of drug use in Kano state is most prevalent in Sabon Gari, and the youths are the main perpetrators in the stated area. So far, we've recorded a significant level of success in curbing the abuse of drugs in Sabon Gari. Tramadol, Roche, Codeine, and other syrups are some of the most used drugs in the area (37-year-old Hisbah Field Officer).*

A 25-year-old offender also averred thus;

*The Hisbah's work in the state is very effective and they are more professional in conducting and handling offenders than other agencies. So far, I appreciate their work as their counselling has greatly*

*helped me. Although I do not know the exact amount of people who have been prosecuted, I do know that the number of drug addicts prosecuted, counselled, or handed over to the appropriate authorities by Hisbah is substantial.*

From the data gathered, one may suggest that *Hisbah* has the potential to curb the rate of

drug abuse in the state. A substantial number of people have been prosecuted, counselled off drugs, and handed to the right authorities via the activities of *Hisbah*. This shows that the success level of the *Hisbah* in combating substance abuse in Kano is high. Table 1 further captures some of the successes that have been recorded by *Hisbah* as reported by various newspapers.

**Table 1: Documented Hisbah Activities in Northern Nigeria**

Month/ Year of report	Report	Reasons	State	Source
November 8, 2020	Destroyed 1,975,000 bottles of beer worth over N200 million	Consumption of alcohol and all other intoxicants can distort the mental ca- pability of a person and is forbidden in Islam	Kano	Bello, B. Van- guard News. <a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/11/hisbah-destroys-over-n200-million-beers-in-kano/">https:// www.vanguardngr. com/2020/11/hisbah- destroys-over-n200- million-beers-in-kano/</a>
February 2, 2021	Confiscated 260 crates of alcoholic drinks from hotels and nightclubs	Part of the effort to enforce the Sharia Islamic code	Bauchi	Agency Report. Premium times. <a href="https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-east/440057-hisbah-confiscates-260-crates-of-alcoholic-drinks-in-bauchi.html">https:// www.premiumtimesng. com/regional/north- east/440057-hisbah- confiscates-260-crates- of-alcoholic-drinks-in- bauchi.html</a>
23 Septem- ber 2019	Destroyed 196,400 bottles of alcoholic drinks worth over N50 mil- lion in the state	Part of the effort to enforce the Sharia Islamic code	Kano	Adewale, M. The Guardian. <a href="https://guardian.ng/news/kano-hisbah-destroys-196400-bottles-of-alcohol-drinks/">https:// guardian.ng/news/ kano-hisbah-destroys- 196400-bottles-of- alcohol-drinks/</a>

10/02/2022	Destroyed nearly four million bottles of beer		Kano	France 24. <a href="https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220210-nigeria-islamic-police-destroy-nearly-4-mn-beers">https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220210-nigeria-islamic-police-destroy-nearly-4-mn-beers</a>
Feb 18, 2021	Destroyed 3,000 bottles of alcohol	The move was in line with the command's efforts to check immoral acts and social vices in the society	Jigawa	Sahara Reporters. <a href="http://saharareporters.com/2021/02/18/hisbah-destroys-3-000-bottles-alcohol-jigawa">http://saharareporters.com/2021/02/18/hisbah-destroys-3-000-bottles-alcohol-jigawa</a>
September 8, 2021	Confiscated two vehicles with 5,760 cartons of beer	Selling and drinking Alcohol is against Islam	Kano	Sahara Reporters. <a href="http://saharareporters.com/2021/09/08/islamic-police-hisbah-seizes-two-vehicles-5760-cartons-beer-kano">http://saharareporters.com/2021/09/08/islamic-police-hisbah-seizes-two-vehicles-5760-cartons-beer-kano</a>
25th January 2022	Confiscated 1,906 bottles of alcohol	consumption of alcohol was prohibited among Muslim faithful in the state	Jigawa	Bahir, N. PM News. <a href="https://pmnewsnigeria.com/2022/01/25/jigawa-hisbah-confiscates-1906-bottles-of-alcohol/">https://pmnewsnigeria.com/2022/01/25/jigawa-hisbah-confiscates-1906-bottles-of-alcohol/</a>
May 17, 2021	Arrested 6, confiscates 453 bottles of beer	the consumption and sale of alcohol are prohibited for residents, most especially where the Sharia law is in practice	Jigawa	<a href="https://www.icirnigeria.org/hisbah-arrests-6-confiscates-453-bottles-of-beer/">Lukman Abolade, https://www.icirnigeria.org/hisbah-arrests-6-confiscates-453-bottles-of-beer/</a>
September 26, 2019	Man lands in Hisbah's net with 96 bottles of alcohol	contravention of the law banning the sale and consumption of intoxicants in the state	Zamfara	Vanguard. <a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/09/man-lands-in-hisbahs-net-with-96-bottles-of-alcohol-in-zamfara/">https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/09/man-lands-in-hisbahs-net-with-96-bottles-of-alcohol-in-zamfara/</a>



March 12, 2022	Seizes two hundred cartons of alcohol	Run contrary to the laws of Kebbi state which banned the sale and consumption of alcohol in all parts of the state	Kebbi	Aliyu, H. Vanguard. <a href="https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/03/kebbi-hisbah-seizes-cartons-of-beer/">https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/03/kebbi-hisbah-seizes-cartons-of-beer/</a>
April 08, 2022	Confiscates 1,426 Bottles of Alcoholic Beverages, seized a 25-liter jerrican of local beer, popularly called “burukutu”, and arrested 15 during a raid on beer parlors	Alcohol was prohibited in the state	Jigawa	Sahara Reporters. <a href="https://saharareporters.com/2022/04/07/jigawa-islamic-police-hisbah-confiscates-1426-bottles-alcoholic-beverages-arrest-15">https://saharareporters.com/2022/04/07/jigawa-islamic-police-hisbah-confiscates-1426-bottles-alcoholic-beverages-arrest-15</a>

### People’s perception of the role of the Hisbah in combating substance abuse

Results from the data collected during fieldwork suggest that, the general public supports the activities of *Hisbah*. Participants asserted that *Hisbah* is very effective in carrying out its duties and also very professional. The perception of participants is captured below:

*The public and religious organizations are in full support of our work and they always encourage us, pray for us, and create awareness for us (35-year-old Hisbah Officer).*

*Hisbah receives 100% support from the public because they are doing God’s work and also contribute to society positively by taking drug addicts and peddlers off the*

*streets of Kano (24-year-old member of the public).*

*The people of Kano fully support Hisbah, including us, the offenders. They carry out their duties professionally and they are very friendly when handling us. They give counsel and help us to stop substance abuse. In comparison to other prosecuting agencies, Hisbah is more effective (20-year-old Offender).*

The responses of participants generally indicate that the work of *Hisbah* in combating substance abuse in Kano state is fully supported by the public. The public recognizes their work and supports them. According to the participants, the public considers *Hisbah*’s work more effective than other prosecuting agencies. The public

perceives Hisbah's activities as God's work and a positive contribution to society. Therefore, they enjoy the community's goodwill.

### **Modes of operations of Hisbah in the fight against substance abuse in the State**

The modes of operations of the Hisbah as stated by participants depend on the gravity of the offence of the culprit. Results show that first- and second-time offenders are only counselled and advised by the board, while drug addicts and peddlers are handed over to the Nigerian Drug and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). Findings also indicated that Hisbah does not detain culprits, instead, they charge them to Sharia courts to determine their punishment and carry out the verdict of the judge. During an interview with a 35-year-old Hisbah officer, he noted that:

*Our mode of punishing offenders varies depending on the offender. First and second-time offenders are mostly counselled, while serious drug peddlers are handed over to NDLEA. The court we often charge our culprits to is the Sharia court, they are never charged to the conventional court.*

Another participant, a 34-year-old offender further affirmed this position when he opined:

*Hisbah does not keep offenders in custody. They only counsel and advise us if it's our first or second time being caught doing drugs. They treat us nicely and carry out their duties professionally. Hisbah only counsels and advises offenders. They do not*

*detain or charge culprits in conventional courts. All offenders are tried in the Sharia court and handed over to the NDLEA if necessary.*

The participant's responses show that Hisbah's modes of operation in the fight against substance abuse in Kano state is informed by the severity of the offender's crime. Hisbah does not charge offenders to the conventional court. Instead, they are tried in the Sharia court, counselled, and cautioned if they are first- or second-time offenders. Repeat offenders and drug peddlers are handed over to the NDLEA.

### **Major challenges the organization is facing concerning its fight against substance use and abuse**

The participants highlighted some major challenges Hisbah faces in their fight against substance abuse in Kano state. These challenges as stated by participants include; financial challenges, political interference, limited human and material resources, and restricted power in carrying out their duties.

A 39-year-old Hisbah executive averred that;

*The major challenges the organization is facing concerning its fight against substance abuse include; lack of funds to properly carry out our duties, and interference of politicians when we try to do our job, this happens when the culprit is in any way connected to them. We lack manpower and our power is restricted, hence we often feel limited. There is also a serious problem with logistics.*

This statement implies that the major challenges the Hisbah board faces regarding their fight against substance abuse are lack of budgetary support for the optimal running of the organization, interference of politicians which hinders their duties, limited human resources and material resources, and the strict restrictions on their power which limit their activities and fight against drug and substance abuse in Kano State.

### **Major reactions from those whose substance has been Destroyed or Confiscated.**

With regards to the reactions gotten from those whose substances have been destroyed or confiscated, the participants affirmed that many offenders have tried to bribe the Hisbah officers to escape the consequences of their actions, but the officers always turn them down according to the results from the data collected. The positions of the participants are captured in the statements below;

Although we do not collect bribes, there have been numerous attempts by those whose drugs were confiscated to bribe us (41-year-old Hisbah Field Officer).

A few persons resort to bribery when their drugs are confiscated, but we never accept it as it is against our principles (38-year-old Hisbah Field Officer)

### **Non-state actors that directly or indirectly support the fight against substance use and abuse.**

Findings from this study show that several non-state actors support the Hisbah. They get support from NGOs, Religious Organizations, philanthropic individuals,

and other prosecution agencies like the Police and National Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (NDLEA). Participants listed the creation of awareness via seminars, collaboration, and donations as the forms of support Hisbah has received from the aforementioned bodies. One of the participants had this to share:

*The government and its agencies support our work; we have never had a clash with them. We get support from NGOs, Religious organizations support us by praying for us, organizing seminars, and creating awareness for us. Philanthropic individuals support us by donating money and stationery to us. The Government and other prosecution agencies often collaborate with us to show their support (44-years-old Hisbah Officer)*

*We have gotten support from different NGOs, they organize seminars and trainings to support us. Religious organizations also show support by advising, preaching about, and creating awareness for us. Other government agencies support us by collaborating with us and philanthropic individuals render material and non-material support. (43-year-old Hisbah Officer).*

*We've had support from NGOs and Religious groups in the form of awareness campaigns, seminars, and training to fight the abuse of drugs in the state. Some individuals have also supported this cause through material and non-material donations. Government law enforcement agencies have also been supporting us by collaborating with us when there's a need to (34-year-old Hisbah*

Officer).

The responses from the participants indicate that the Hisbah board has gotten support from NGOs, Religious Organizations, philanthropic individuals, and other prosecution agencies. According to participants, the NGOs support by making non-material and material donations to the organization. Religious bodies organize seminars to create awareness for the Hisbah, and they also pray for them to show their support. Philanthropic individuals also donate as a form of financial support, while other prosecution agencies support by collaborating with the board, as most times the Board hand-over serious offenders to these persecuting agencies like the Police and NDLEA.

## DISCUSSION

This study examined the potential of adopting *Hisbah* as an informal substance abuse control strategy in Northern Nigeria. The success of the Hisbah in combating substance abuse in Kano was also explored. Results from this study revealed that the Hisbah has contributed greatly to the fight against substance abuse in Kano, despite the high rates of substance abuse in the state. The Hisbah has managed to wean a significant number of drug addicts and peddlers off the streets. This outcome concurs with the works of Hadaway et al (1984) which assert that religion still has its place on prevention and control of alcohol and drug use as well as moderating the enabling attitudes towards drug use.

Also, Wallace and Bachman (1991) inferred

that religion has been identified as having a protective effect against substance use, including the youth. In Kano State alone, reports indicated that Hisbah as a state arrested about 133 delinquent children in 2009 (Abdullah 2010). This shows that the religious organization (*Hisbah*) plays a significant role and has recorded successes in the fight against substance abuse. There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, people who believe in a higher power may be less likely to become addicted because they adhere to a faith system. Secondly, the area where this study was conducted is mainly affiliated with the Islamic religion, hence the offenders are mostly Muslims who are already familiar with the Sharia law. Therefore, this factor may have assisted the Officers in carrying out their duties more effectively. However, there is a need for further assessment to determine other plausible reasons to explain this observation.

Another important finding from this survey indicated that people perceive the work of Hisbah as God's work with a positive contribution to the well-being of society. In comparison to other prosecution agencies, the Hisbah is considered more effective by the people of Kano. Hence, the Hisbah enjoys the goodwill of the public. However, these results contrast those of Ashiru (2015) who inferred that the public does not support the Hisbah because they are used to criminal activities and are also involved in them. The reason for this contrast may not be clear although these studies were conducted in two locations, Kano and Sokoto

respectively. Also, while the former focused on investigating the role of the Hisbah in substance abuse control in Kano, the latter was an evaluation of the role of Hisbah in crime control in Goronyo local government. Some studies have also acknowledged the Hisbah's ways of operation, describing them as cordial, proactive, pro-people, prompt, reformative, reconciliatory, and transparent (Adamu, 2008; Suberu, 2009; Galadima & Mahadi, 2013).

Additionally, the modes of operations of Hisbah in the fight against substance abuse in Kano state were also investigated. Findings showed that the Hisbah's operations mirror other security agencies. They deal with drug offenders and peddlers by prosecuting them in the Sharia court. Unlike other security agencies, the Hisbah determines the gravity of the offence to issue verdicts on different offences. First and second-time offenders are counselled, cautioned and released while persons with substance use disorders and peddlers are referred to the NDLEA. The *Hisbah* does not have custodial services for its offenders. In comparison to a study by Rosenthal (2015), the Qur'an decrees that drinking is against the law and is sinful. Additionally, Rosenthal claimed that Muhammad ordered forty lashes for anyone found intoxicated (al-Zarkashi, Zahr al-Arish). Our findings, however, are consistent with Galanter's assertion that "faith-based organizations play a crucial role in lowering the incidence of drug use around the globe through counselling and rehabilitation programmes. Church leaders provide a crucial counselling role in society,

which is important for drug use prevention, therapy, and offering a secure environment for substance users to interact (Galanter, 2002).

The results also corroborate those of previous studies by several researchers who described the operations of Hisbah as being cordial, proactive, pro-people, prompt, reformative, reconciliatory, and transparent (Adamu, 2008; Suberu, 2009; Galadima & Mahadi, 2013). The reason for the contrast between this study and that of Rosenthal (2015) may be attributed to several reasons. One of the key reasons points to the limitations on the powers of the Hisbah in Kano. Although the officers follow the Sharia law as guided by the Quran, they have to adhere to the constitutional law which directs them to hand over serious offenders to the appropriate law enforcement agencies. Therefore, they cannot mete out physical punishments to offenders as the law prohibits them from doing such.

The study also revealed that lack of finances for the smooth running of the organization, political interference, limited human and material resources to run the organization and restrictions on their activities constitute the key challenges faced by the Hisbah in their fight against drug and substance abuse in Kano State. Similarly, Bello (2015) stated that shortage of personnel and expenditure, lack of modern communication systems, lack of adequate finances, lack of public support and inadequate collaboration framework with the police were the main challenges being faced by Hisbah in Goronyo local

government, Zamfara. There is a lack of recognition as a government agency because of the limited funding.

Furthermore, findings indicate that most offenders resort to bribing Hisbah officers when their substances are destroyed or confiscated, but their offers are always turned down. This finding, however, is inconsistent with earlier research that suggested that alcohol and hard drug dealers frequently claimed that Hisbah's actions towards them were unconstitutional. As a result, in 2008, they wrote a petition to the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) objecting to Hisbah's actions (Radda et al, 2011). There are several possible explanations for disagreements in this outcome, but the most significant may be the time frame of this research. A lot of restructuring and training of officers may have taken place in the Hisbah board between the years 2008 to 2022, hence the differences in the responses.

Finally, it appears that many groups and organizations support the Hisbah. According to our results, NGOs and philanthropic individuals support the Hisbah through material and non-material donations. The religious bodies also show their support by organizing seminars to create awareness about. These results are in line with Kabugi's work, which deduced that some opportunities for faith-based organizations to prevent substance abuse were addressed in several newspapers. These possibilities include running mentorship programmes, providing rehabilitation services, engaging the community, raising public awareness

etc. To advance moral ideals in society, faith-based organizations have planned seminars and conferences for both youth and adults in public spaces like churches. This is important for preventing substance abuse (Kabugi, 2019). Likewise, according to Bello (2015), Hisbah has a good relationship with other law enforcement agencies, and without them, Hisbah could not achieve its aims and discharge its duties effectively. Such agencies include; the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Traffic workers, Road safety, Civil defense, the Police, the Army, Customs etc. The results of this study may be explained by the fact that drug/substance abuse is a social problem. This means that members of the society are collectively affected by it. Therefore, different organizations and individuals see the need to contribute their quota to curb substance abuse.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from this study, the following conclusion has been made; firstly, although the use of substances is still high in the state, the activities of Hisbah have the potential to reduce the abuse of drugs in Kano. Furthermore, the public acknowledges the work of the Hisbah in combating substance abuse in Kano state. The public perceived that Hisbah's work is was more effective compared to other prosecuting agencies. Additionally, the mode of operation and prosecution by Hisbah depends on the gravity of the offence. Thus, while some minor offenses are dealt with through counselling the offenders, others are charged in Sharia courts. Major challenges encountered by

Hisbah in the fight against substance use include; financial challenges, political interference, limited human and material resources, and restricted power in carrying out their duties. Apart from the Government, Hisbah gets support from NGOs, religious organizations, philanthropic individuals, and other prosecution agencies.

Based on the conclusion, the study recommended that firstly the government should consider partnering with different religious organizations in the fight against substance use and abuse. These religious organizations possess certain physical and

emotional strategies they can use in reaching out to members of their congregation to stop the use of drugs. Secondly, the role of Hisbah as a strategy to fight crime in the northern region states of Nigeria should be well conveyed to the public, as most people see it as a medium of only enforcing Sharia law in the north. Finally, there is a need to strengthen synergy between the official security apparatus of the state and that of Hisbah. This will ensure that the organization does not conflict with the established laws and policies of the government in crime prevention.

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