

## Exploring the Substance Abuse Problem in a Police Academy in Nigeria: Implications for its Cadets and Authority

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### ABSTRACT

There is an illicit drug/substance abuse problem in Nigeria, especially among youths. This morphed when cadets of the Nigeria Police Academy were arrested by the drug law enforcement agency for having illicit drugs. This spurred our study's objectives. Using an interpretative phenomenological approach, police cadets identified, through snowball sampling technique, to be involved in illicit drug/substance abuse were interviewed on causes of drug/substance abuse among cadets; accessibility to illicit drugs; perceptions on the effectiveness of punitive measures; effects on academic performance, police training, and interpersonal relationship. Findings are discussed in line with extant literature and inferences indicate the important need for a robust drug/substance use screening exercise for entrants into the Academy. Advocacy is made for the engagement of preventive measures which focus more on dissuading this behaviour through counselling and educational enlightenment initiatives.

**Keywords:** Illicit drug/substance abuse, illicit drug/substance accessibility, academic performance, police training, interpersonal relationship, qualitative study, police cadets

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### INTRODUCTION

There appears to be a drug problem among law enforcement personnel, and police officers are not excluded from the web of illicit drug and substance abuse (Miller & Galvin, 2016). Substance and drug abuse is not a malady confined to a particular part of the world, it transverse the globe (United Nations, 2019).

Consequently, the physical and mental health implications of illicit drug and substance abuse have been enumerated (Degenhardt & Hall, 2012; Degenhardt et al., 2013). In terms of preventive and punitive measures against this vice, the police population does support the initiation and implementation of stronger laws to curb and punish drug-related offences (Jorgensen, 2018). This suggests an intolerant disposition towards the

societal menace, and rightly so, from police officers. But, research on illicit drug and substance abuse that focuses on would-be police officers or police cadets in training is scant. Considerably, studies on drug and substance abuse have centered on student samples from conventional tertiary and secondary educational institutions (e.g. Makanjuola et al., 2014; Masese, 2020; Musyoka et al., 2020; Okoro & Lahai, 2021; Yi et al., 2017); in addition to these, fresh knowledge on the subject matter can be provided using a different population comprising of law enforcement cadets.

In the year 2021, the Nigeria Police Academy (an institution that provides middle-level manpower for the Nigeria police force) dismissed at least four of its cadets who were arrested by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) after being implicated in illicit drug dealings (Ngbokai, 2020; The Citizen, November 6, 2020; The Nigerian Voice, November 6, 2020). This incident portrayed an unusual, yet, worrisome dimension to the illicit drug/substance abuse problem plaguing Nigeria, especially among youths. The Academy's authority played its penal role having discharged the erring cadets, but there is a cogent need for an exploratory investigation of the illicit drug and substance abuse conundrum among the police cadet population. This will provide the gateway towards initiating effective preventive measures against this blight by designated authorities.

In addition, despite the regulations set up by the management of police

training institutions, some police cadets still abuse drugs and engage in illicit drug trafficking. Meanwhile, none of the previous studies on drug abuse (e.g. Anumoye, 1980; Ebie, 1987; Obot, 1989, 1990, & 1992) have addressed how cadets in particular have access to drugs within the academy despite all the control measures put in place by the management of the academy. This remains a gap that needs to be filled. Therefore, a study with a focus on the causes of illicit drug/substance abuse, the accessibility of these drugs/substances to cadets, the perceived effectiveness of disciplinary sanctions, implications on academic attainment, police training, and interpersonal relationship among the cadets, becomes crucial. Not only will findings equip relevant agencies with ample knowledge to tame the scourge, but policymakers and stakeholders will also see the need to hasten and initiate promised robust drug/substance addiction screening exercises for would-be police officers. These are the goals of this study.

Substantively, a large chunk of literature on illicit substance/drug abuse is presented in qualitative inquiry methods. Nichter et al. (2004) highlighted the positive impact qualitative techniques could bring to the study of drug misuse and abuse. Accordingly, this study's method employs a qualitative paradigm to answer its questions. There is a plethora of both qualitative and quantitative studies that have addressed factors that predispose or cause individuals to experiment with or abuse illicit substances and drugs (e.g. Boys et al., 2001; Jadidi & Nakhaee, 2014;

Spooner, 1999). Broadly, the theoretical explanations offered for the etiology of illicit drugs and substances abuse could fall under three perspectives viz: social control (Hirschi, 1969; Nagazawa et al., 2000), social learning (Akers, 1985, 1998) and intrapersonal factors such as sensation seeking behaviours (Newcomb & Earleywine, 1996; Pokhrel et al., 2010; Roberti, 2004). In addition, reward system and impulsivity processes have been accounted for as potent drivers in the initiation, maintenance, and relapse of illicit substances and drug abuse (de Wit & Richards, 2004).

The initiation of substance or drug abuse has been indicated to start at an early age, with its onset usually at adolescence or early adulthood (Nahvizadeh et al., 2014; Onifade et al., 2014; Poudel & Gautam, 2017). Furthermore, the role of peer influence in the initiation of drug and substance abuse among adolescents has been depicted to be highly significant (Caday, 2017). This is especially true among young individuals vulnerable to peer pressure (Trucco et al., 2011) and those seeking peer-nominated recognition (Tucker et al., 2011). In general, the ease of access to and obtain illicit drugs and substances is a contributory factor to their abuse (Ngure et al., 2019; Tam & Foo, 2012). Users who actively search for these substances and drugs have access to them within a short period (Hadland et al., 2012), and the supposed invisibility of these illegal drugs and substances is not an indicator that they are not there and being peddled (Saxe et al., 2001). Among samples from three Nigerian universities, Onifade et al. (2014) reported that access

to most illicit psychoactive drugs and substances is difficult. Conversely, Ikoh et al. (2019) suggested that easy access to drugs and substances among other factors further the practice of illicit drug use and substance abuse among a sample of Nigerian youths.

Literature suggests that reducing illicit drug or substance abuse among students yields improvement in academic achievement (King et al., 2006) and Kendler et al. (2018) pointed out that there exists a causal relationship between substance abuse and academic achievement. For instance, Dankano and Garba (2017) reported that drug abuse resulted in poor performance in the examination and subsequent dropout among secondary school students in north-eastern Nigeria; a similar finding was reported by Akanbi et al. (2015) among colleges of education students in north-central Nigeria. Bugbee et al. (2019) observed better emotional academic engagement and academic self-efficacy- which are precursors to academic achievement- among senior high school students who have never used drugs or substances compared to their colleagues who had used them at one time or the other. Apart from these, drug/substance abuse and dependence deepen social exclusion in most phases of an individual's life (de Espíndola et al., 2020) indicating to some extent problematic interpersonal relationships for those that abuse illicit substances and drugs. Although, Gorta (2009) hinted that police officers who engage in illicit substance and drug use claim to do so while off duty, it remains unclear whether officers resort to these drugs

and substances to cope with the strenuous aspects of policing, and training drills.

The use and effectiveness of punitive and custodial regulations and policies to curb drug and substance abuse is heavily debated and criticized (Crook, 2009; Otu, 2011, 2013). To this end, the capacity of extant rules and regulations put in place to serve as deterrents to illicit substance and drug abuse in police educational institutions (such as the Academy) could be limited and unhelpful in preventing the scourge. In fact, Nnam et al. (2020) alluded to the connivance of some law enforcement agents in the sale and use of these illicit drugs and substances. The apparent failure of existing laws on illicit drug and substance abuse brings to the fore the need for policy redirection. Accordingly, Nnam et al. (2021) advocated for noncustodial control and preventive measures against illicit drug and substance abuse through the use of social marketing principles which focus on the working of societal and psychological factors implicated in the harmful behaviour, and manipulating these factors to deliver effective mass media knowledge drive. No doubt, delicate probing studies on the subject matter will provide more information for an effective campaign toward a redemptive direction.

## METHOD

### *Research Design Overview*

Drug or substance abuse centers on individuals' experiences, therefore an exploration of such occurrence may be best illustrated using qualitative inquiry. Hence the need for this particular

approach in the study of the subject matter. The qualitative approach has the goal of understanding human action from the perspective of those who engage in them (insider's perspective or native point of view- ethnographic interviewing). This study anchor on the phenomenological approach as it seeks to ask participants about their experiences with substance and drug misuse. It is an attempt to understand their social reality. Phenomenologists usually use the ethnography and interview methods and this study engages the latter technique. This approach derives from the interpretive or constructivist paradigm (Leavy, 2017). Therefore, the nature of this study renders it to this philosophical worldview. According to Draus (2017), many tendencies or trends in drug and substance use alter and change very rapidly and are not formally documented anywhere. Therefore, it is important to go to the informant or source to find or gain exact information about the subject matter. Consequently, interviews with this study's participants took a semi-structured, open-ended, flexible conversational format (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The authors presumed participants would have different experiences in illicit substance/drug use. Nonetheless, during the interview, the interviewers used prompt questions to guide participants to respond to key areas of focus in the study. These prompts were presented during the interviews with participants to ensure a connection to the study's purpose and research questions (Beitin, 2012).

### ***Study Participants and Data Source***

#### *Researchers' description*

The first author holds an academic doctorate in sociology and specializes in policing and crime control. The second author holds an academic master's degree in sociology and a doctorate in criminology. He specializes in policing and penology. The third author holds an academic doctorate in educational psychology and specializes in student personalities and academic procrastination. The fourth author holds an academic master's degree in social and personality psychology; a doctorate candidate in psychology; and one of his interests includes qualitative and quantitative data analyses.

All four authors developed an interest in the subject matter as a result of the rising incidences of drug and substance abuse among the police cadet population in the institution. This culminated in the arrest of a few cadets by the NDLEA- Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency (The Nigerian Voice, November 6, 2020; Ngbokai, 2020). This spurred the authors to probe and interrogate the subject matter in the best way plausible through this study.

All the study's participants were ASP (Assistant Superintendent of Police) cadets at the Nigeria Police Academy who have been identified as engaging in drug/substance abuse and the participants confirmed this to be so before they were interviewed. The cadets' permission and consent were solicited, and they granted the interview. The researchers also guaranteed the confidentiality of responses from the cadets.

The institution's research ethics committee after going through the proposal for this study, approved it, and it was subsequently funded by Tertiary Education Trust Fund (Tetfund).

#### ***Researcher-participant relationship***

Two authors (who were saddled with the conduct of the interview) were each acquainted with two (per author) of the study's participants, in that these cadets were in the authors' respective departments and the authors had taught these participants at some point in the Academy. The fifth participant was not known to any of the authors before the interview.

#### ***Participant Recruitment and Selection***

The use of illicit drugs and substances in the Academy is prohibited and a punitive offence, this called for great discretion during the recruitment and selection of participants for this study. For participants to willingly volunteer for the interview, the authors were aware that they must gain the trust of the volunteers given the sensitive nature of the study's interest. Throughout the cadets' academic and policing training the authors who also serve as lecturers to some of the cadets had interacted with cadets who know about the drug and substance use behaviour of a few of their colleagues. This identification made it easy for the authors to use the snowballing technique to solicit the cooperation and enlistment of the would-be participants in the study guaranteeing the confidentiality and non-disclosure of whatever information they divulged other than for research

purposes. Initially, six participants were interviewed but one was excused because it was discovered during the interview that he has a pending disciplinary case on the subject matter. One of the authors had the privilege of providing counselling for a cadet who once had an episode of psychosis most likely induced by drug/substance abuse (as he disclosed during the counselling session about his struggles with illicit drug/substance use) about 18 months before this study recruited the cadet as a participant in the study. In all, five participants were granted interviews that lasted 30 to 50 minutes. Two participants were interviewed by the second author and the other three participants were interviewed by the fourth author based on the confidence they reposed in each author. It is important to state and emphasize that the cadets were not coerced in any way, nor compensated in any form to partake in the study regardless of the lecturer-student relationship.

### ***Data collection***

Face-to-face interviews that were recorded using a midget provided the data used for this study. These interview sessions were then transcribed by the second and fourth authors. Specifically, emphasis was laid on the principal questions during the interviews, while giving room for questions that probe the varying personal drug/substance abuse experiences of the participants. These experiences were analyzed for thematic patterns of convergence and divergence.

### ***Participants' demographics***

Participant one is 24 years old, from southern Borno state; a Christian; who had repeated a year due to poor academic performance; his father retired as a senior police officer and has lost his mother.

Participant two is 23 years old and from Ondo state, but resides in Lagos state; he claims to be an atheist; had repeated two years due to poor academic performance. His parents are alive but divorced.

Participant three is 26 years old, a Muslim, from Kebbi state, but resides in Kaduna state; he has an average academic standing as he does not have any carry-over courses.

Participant four is 26 years old, a Christian, from Bauchi state, where he also resides with his parents; his father is a retired police officer. Presently, he is being asked to re-take his final academic year due to poor academic standing (more like relegation)

Participant five is 28 years old, a Muslim from Zamafara state, and resides with his parents in Kebbi state, he has been relegated once due to poor academic standing.

## **FINDINGS**

First, the transcribed interviews were assessed such that the responses to the study's focal areas were identified and extricated. The pertinent and significant responses to the main and follow-up (prompt and probe) questions posed to participants during the interview sessions are presented in this section.

**Causes of drug abuse among cadets of Nigeria Police Academy**

Germane to this research question is the revelation that all of the participants started abusing drugs/substances before gaining admission into the Academy. The responses provided that indicate this are as follows:

Interviewer (Main Question): When did you start using drugs/substances?

Participant 1: *I cannot remember I can't tell, but before I came into POLAC [the Academy].*

Participant 2: *I started in my junior secondary school days.*

Participant 3: *Actually, [I started taking drugs] during my secondary school, I think senior secondary school 2, during my secondary school...and I started with Shisha before any of them [other drug/substances].*

Participant 4: *Even before I entered here [Academy] I had started to use drugs and substances.*

Participant 5: *I started using substances before coming to the Academy. I started using it in college of education. I went to a college of education before coming here. In my second year precisely which was 2014, I started using it.*

Interviewer (Prompt question): Why do you use these drugs/substances?

Participant 4: *I use it for pleasure.*

Participant 3: *I use it to calm down, particularly to sleep.*

Participant 5: *Ok...to wipe, I can say to wipe away the stress...to wipe... to cover up the time...to pass away your memories...*

Interviewer (Probe Question): Can you tell me the factors that were responsible for you trying out illicit drugs/substances?

Participant 3: *let me say peer group influence, you see your colleague, mate, smoking shisha yourself you want to like feel among...that is what started it (substance abuse).*

Participant 5: *I was like sitting together with friends and we were like...ok we...our group we like music, we like dancing, we kind of asked...do we need another form of experience to explore and eh ok... let's try high...then with what? Let's try weed and we now concluded and we went in the evening and got it. We took it the first day, it wasn't an experience [we thought of], we didn't feel anything like the first day, so it now encouraged us to go for more because we already heard of the experience of it, that how it works, how it makes people feel, so we didn't get that gratification at first so we*

*went for the second time and it continues...*

Interviewer (Probe question): You take these substances just to take your mind off things?

Participant 5: *Yes, actually eh... I understand that whenever am not in this setting, this environment, my mind goes off taking any substances, at home, I feel comfortable, and I do other things, but it comes back, the feelings, the urging, everything comes back like a month after the resumption, and I become involved in it [taking these substances] again.*

Participant 4: *Like seriously, at times because of the kind of activities we use to have in this compound we are engaged almost most times, those substance to me are the things that always give us joy in this compound, because so far as we are concerned, all of us left our houses to come down here to spend up to four months with some weeks before going back for break and like we are already used to all those things outside so we find it difficult... we find it difficult to cope here without taking all those things [substances], so they (substances) are the ones that use to make us feel comfortable in this compound.*

The causes of drug/substance abuse seem to have similar patterns among participants. According to the participants, the regimented nature of the Academy harms the social life of most of the cadets. This sometimes makes them feel depressed and in a bid to remain cheerful and strong, many of them resort to drug/substance abuse. In addition to these, Participant 2 reported that many who are non-abuser before coming into the Academy started consuming and depending on drugs due to peer influence.

#### **Accessibility to illicit drugs/substances within the Academy**

On the accessibility of drugs/substances within the Academy, the following correspondences suggest some of the means through which cadets have access to illicit drugs/substances:

Interviewer (Prompt Question): Tell me how you get access to these substances:

Participant 1: *The Okada (bike) riders sometimes do help us bring them in, especially weed, whenever we resume school. A few times we can compensate officers (rank & file) to help us.*

Participant 2: *We can put it in foodstuff, like eh... garri (cassava flakes), milo or milk cans socks, and pockets of our clothes.*

Participant 3: *Sometimes you know cadets come with*



*provisions, like 'garri' now, for example, you know two 'modus of garri' when you open the leather (polythene bag) you will put the 'thing' inside, so when they bring out the bag they will not know that something is inside.*

Interviewer (Probe Question): How do you get the substance when you exhaust the one you brought in?

*Participant 4: No... at times if we don't have access to those officers, some of us use to take the risk of scaling the fence to go and get it outside. In terms of alcohol, we used to sneak into the officers' mess or rank-and-file mess to go and obtain it there. So, when it comes to Indian hemp, that is marijuana, we have some contacts which we made, at sometimes we used to communicate with the officers, we use to liaise with them for them to bring those substances for us.*

*Participant 5: Yes we used to go [out of the Academy] for it ourselves before, but not anymore, after three years now, but not now again. There are risk-takers (cadets) too, people that can go beyond or far, that can go beyond their lines that can cross their*

*boundaries to do something for others, it can be to satisfy themselves or to satisfy you or it can be for the eh... token*

Interviewer (Probe Question): What do you mean by 'token'?

*Participant 5: You offer them, after purchasing...you give them an errand... Or you give them money. It can be anybody willing to summon courage...*

It was reported that the bikers (motorcycles used for transportation) that operate within the Academy do help them to smuggle it into the Academy. At times, cadets do smuggle it into the Academy during resumption. However, the most common substance that is normally smuggled into the Academy during resumption is 'weed' otherwise known as cannabis because of its non-perishable, and affordable. Probing further on how and manner they smuggle these in, participant 2 said it is usually kept inside their food stuff like *garri (cassava flakes)*, containers for beverages, socks, and inside the pocket of their clothes, etc.

There was consensus among participants that some users do scale fence and go outside the Academy to source for these substances and drugs when the need arises, but this is no longer the case. The majority of the cadets interviewed also believe that a significant number of cadets do use drugs and substances within the Academy. It was also reported that some cadets do sell drugs/substances to their fellow

cadets within the Academy. It was reported that some police officers especially the 'rank and file' do aid and abet (i.e. conspire) by getting it for user cadets. According to participant 1, such officers are usually compensated either in cash or in kind.

**Awareness and effectiveness of Academy rules and regulations or code of conduct against drug/substance abuse**

Interviewer (Prompt Question): So are you aware that there are regulations against substance use by the Academy authority and do you recognize that it is an offence to take these substances and drugs in the Academy?

Participant 1: *Yes... I know.*

Participant 2: *Am aware it is an offence... am aware...*

Participant 3: *Yes. I want to stop.*

Participant 4: *Initially, it is a dismissal offence, and now they categorize it under section B punishable by suspension and warning letter.*

Participant 5: *I think the laws are effective but not consistent. It does not operate fully, because there are still people who make the laws and execute the law, they also get involved and intermingle.*

Interviewer (Probe Question): Why do you think the law is not effective and consistent?

Participant 5: *Maybe, in my understanding now, it can be*

*two reasons: one from the people who enforce it and the people it is enforced on. And like, for instance, regardless of the rules, cadets still break it anyway doing what they want, and going out to get it by jumping the fence. Also, some officers will not yield to cadets requesting them to purchase these substances for them, while a few others do yield to such requests probably in return for a reward.*

Participant 4: *Yes, I once had a disciplinary issue resulting from involvement in substance use. It bothered on the issue of alcohol and cigarettes, that's just it. I was caught with it in my pocket. I was detained and later on, I faced the committee for disciplinary action...*

Interviewer (Probe Question): What was the disciplinary action like?

Participant 4: *There was no outcome up till now...In the Code of Conduct, the punishment is withdrawal, it's a dismissible offense.*

Interviewer (Probe Question): So, what do you think is holding the outcome?

Participant 4: *No, there is nothing much, because I think it has been settled right from the house.*

Interviewer: Ok... your people have

spoken... You are sure they won't open that file again?

Participant 4: *"They won't open the file again. Yes, though the Academy takes the offence seriously.*

It is also unclear what the punishment for drug/substance use is from the participants' perspective; the rules on drug/substance use are not consistent and stable.

### **Interpersonal relationships with other cadets**

Participants conveyed that they feel free and more comfortable relating with fellow drug dependents than non-drug dependents. They reported being more united with other cadets' illicit drug/substance users than non-drug dependents cadets. One participant even revealed that cadet users have shared "slangs" that serve as bonds among them.

Interviewer (Main Question): Describe your relationship with fellow cadets:

Participant 1; *I don't have many friends.*

Interviewer (Probe Question): So how about the ones you have?

Participant 1: *Not much, but we know each other...we share common slang such as 'a friend with weed, is a friend indeed', and 'get high,*

*and be connected with the most high,' among other slangs.*

Participant 2: *I won't say I have any personal relationship with any cadet. I don't fight or quarrel with any.*

Participant 4: *In terms of my life, with means of the drug, we know ourselves more than anybody in the Academy. So, we don't use to associate ourselves with people that are not into it, we only walk around together (we that use to take the drugs).*

Participant 5: *Yes, the cadets that I have a personal relationship with, are those that are involved with one thing or the other...*

Interviewer (Probe Question): You mean your friends do it too?

Participant 5: *Yes sir, the friends that I have, are into it too.*

### **Illicit drug and substance use effect on cadets' academics performance**

Interviewer (Main Question): Do you believe that using these substances affects your academic performance?

Participant 4: *Yes... at times when it comes to academics, I can say it might turn out to be something,*

*because when I take the drugs at times, it doesn't allow me to even come outside my room...I use to stay indoors in my room. So, I can say in this aspect, it is having a negative impact...Yes, I think it affects me academically, and it is not an effect I want.*

Interviewer (Main Question): Do you think abusing drugs and substances affects your academic performance?

Participant 5: *Well, yes it did affect me... and...*

Interviewer (Probe Question):  
Can you tell me more?

Participant 5: *I was using it since in my 100 level, and my performance was not too woeful to consider the substance intake as a reason for the failure (or such performance). I can remember during the first semester in my 100 level, I had no issues, and my second semester I had only two carry-overs...well let me say I didn't record a lot of failures the first two years, although, I was still using it (substances/drugs). In my third year, I increased my intake of substances, which means I got more involved in going out to look for the substances/drugs. My first-semester performance in the third year was not affected. My second-semester performance was affected as a result of my*

*reluctance. I felt ok, since I have already scaled through with only a carry-over at the borderline, I felt relaxed and gave the 'highness' more time than my academics. But, I sometimes take it so I can read at night, and most times it (drug/substance) makes you mix up things.*

It is noteworthy that the majority of the participants have deficiencies in their academic performance.

### **Implications of drug/substance abuse on cadets' attitudes towards police training in Academy**

Interviewer (Main Question): Do you use drugs/substances to enhance or cope with strenuous police training?

Participant 4: *"It does not affect my physical drills or activities on the campus.*

Participant 5: *Sometimes it may help...*

Interviewer (Probe Question):  
Please tell me more

Participant 5: *It could give you confidence, and could elevate your thought process...POLAC (the Academy) is a stressful place... some activities need you to... some activities need more energy. So if it needs energy, it will also require emotions are there too. It is physical so it requires energy. For instance during "jungle survival" you need it. And instructors could tell you to do what is needful*

*(probably use substances) to accomplish the drills. On the day of "jungle survival," instructors tell you "that you are on your own". You are allowed to use performance-enhancing substances. Even the instructors do use it before going for the drill activities too. Mopol (Mobile Police Officers) uses it to engage themselves in the performance of physical drills.*

### **Implications of drug/substance abuse on cadets' conformity to the Academy Code of Conduct.**

Participants' agreement was unanimous that illicit drug/substance use makes it difficult to fit into the code of conduct guiding the Academy. Most times, they (illicit drug/substance users) sleep more than the schedule required, thereby missing activities like muster parade and class attendance.

The novelty of this study stems from its population of interest - police cadets. The illicit drugs/substance abuse experiences of a sample of this population were examined. From the interviews conducted, it is evident that participants started experimenting with illicit drugs and substances early in life, and mostly resulted from peer influence, curiosity, and/or sensation-seeking behaviour within and outside the Academy. This properly situates the etiology of illicit drug/substance abuse among the study's population under the social learning (Akers, 1985, 1998) and sensation seeking (Newcomb &

Earleywine, 1996; Pokhrel et al., 2010; Roberti, 2004) paradigms. More so, this reiterates findings in the extant literature as regards the onset of drug/substance abuse among users (Poudel & Gautam, 2017; Trucco et al., 2011; Tucker et al., 2011). In these studies, peer influence was a prominent factor. Socialization into illicit drug use, many times happen through social learning.

Few familial, social, and personal risk factors for drug/substance abuse identified by Whitesell et al. (2013) were noticeable in the demographic and bio-data of this study's participants. In terms of motivation for using these drugs/substances within the Academy, participants reported using these drugs/substances for recreation and relaxation (Ajayi & Somefun, 2020). Also, to derive happiness, briefly forget problems, and cope with stress (Geleta et al., 2021) that comes from the rigor and demands of a regimented academic institution. It is worthy of note that stress has been implicated in illicit drug use and the addiction cycle (Torres-Berrio et al., 2018). This study's finding reveals that sensation-seeking behaviours among police cadets lead to illicit substance/drug tryouts by police cadets (Newcomb & Earleywine, 1996; Pokhrel et al., 2010; Roberti, 2004).

It is also apparent from the dialogues with participants that these drugs/substances are accessible due to the porous security within the Academy; and the connivance and complicity of a few police instructors who conspire with cadets who use these drugs/substances (Nnam et al., 2020). The daring personality of some of the

drug/substance abusers indicates that police cadets' sensation-seeking and impulsive behaviours are cogent factors in illicit drug/substance seeking and usage. These imply that cadet users who keenly search for illicit drugs and substances within the institution likely find them (Hadland et al., 2012), and this fosters the tendency of continuous use (Ikoh et al., 2019; Ngure et al., 2019; Tam & Foo, 2012).

Another factor that advances this harmful habit within the institution is the perceived ineffectiveness and ambiguity of the rules serving as disciplinary and deterrence mechanisms by cadets who engage in this practice. This factor coupled with ease of access to these illicit substances and drugs within the Academy strongly indicate the absence of effective social control mechanism with the institution community. That is, the rules that would have enabled police cadets to adhere strictly to the prohibition of illicit drug/substance use are perceived to be slack. Therefore, they are not complied with by police cadet users. Effective strategies that would have brought about conformity and deviation from illicit drug and substance abuse are not available at the Academy. Given this, it can be induced that the social control theory also explains why cadets do not deter from illicit drug and substance use as would have been expected in a regimented institution.

Particularly, an undesirable outcome among drug/substance abusers is poor academic standing, as it has been unraveled in this study and substantiated by other studies (Akanbi

et al., 2015; Bugbee et al., 2019; Dankano & Garba, 2017; Kendler et al., 2018; King et al., 2006). Expectedly, most of the participants in this study do not have good academic standing as reflected by their low cumulative grade point average (CGPA) and the fact that two of them had been relegated (demoted) based on poor academic performance. An additional negative impact on cadet abusers is initiating and maintaining relationships outside the in-group afforded by drug/substance use, all the study's participants reported not having friends outside their cohorts (de Espíndola et al., 2020). These identified themes should be the focus of social marketing principles (Nnam et al., 2021) targeted at highlighting the dangers inherent in illicit drugs/substance abuse.

### ***Implication of Findings***

The import of this finding is the indispensability of a vigorous drug/substance use screening exercise for would-be cadets at the entrance into the Police Academy which has been lacking hitherto. Not only is there an underestimation of the drug/substance abuse occurrences, but there is also a dearth of counselling and therapeutic facilities within the Academy to provide a remedy for the cadet population struggling with the consequences of illicit drug/substance abuse. The report from this study may seem to portray a gloomy picture as is the case with most studies that focuses on the same subject matter, but, in this instance, the scourge can be stemmed through concerted efforts by relevant stakeholders leading to the engagement and training of efficient

personnel for national policing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the initiation and implementation of a continuous, robust, and effective drug/substance use screening during admittance of cadets into the Academy are being proposed. Second, other than making the regulations on drug/substance use unequivocal and consistent in their discharge, alternate preventive regulations such as regular massive enlightenment on the adverse consequences associated with illicit drugs/substance abuse can be initiated through social marketing interventions by the institution's authority.

## CONCLUSION

This study is limited in its sample size. Recruiting willing participants to narrate their experiences with illicit drug/substance abuse is arduous, hence, the less access to participants. The study was also burdened by its subject matter in the context of the regimented research setting.

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