

## Drug Abuse, Youth Violence and Social Order: A Study of Petroleum Hawkers in Minna, Niger State, Nigeria

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**Abstracts:** This paper explored the relationship between the abuse of drug and youth violence in Nigeria. The petroleum hawkers who were almost exclusively males, within the age bracket 15-35 years and with a penchant for violence in the city of Minna, Nigeria, had their activities examined as a reference point for youth violence. The antisocial activities of petroleum hawkers during fuel procurement often threaten peace which has also earned them an identity. A multi-stage random sampling procedure was used to select four wards out of eleven that constitute Minna metropolis. A sample of two hundred (200) respondents was selected, however, only 165 were found to be good for analysis after data cleaning, representing 83% of the response rate. Using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, the study found that violence activities among petroleum hawkers were attributable to drug abuse as a result of significant correlation at  $P \geq 0.05$ . The result of regression analysis indicates that poverty ( $r=8.4$ ) could adequately explain drug abuse and violent activities among petroleum hawkers in the area of this study, but age ( $r=0.5$ ) could not. In fact, other factors that propelled hawkers to violence were peer group influence (.456) and gangsterism (.217) which correlated at  $P \geq 0.01$  level of significant.

### Introduction

This paper explored the relationship between the use and abuse of drugs and involvement in violent activities by petroleum hawkers. The petroleum hawkers otherwise known as “black marketers” in Minna had their activities examined as a particular reference point for youth violence. These hawkers are young persons, almost exclusively males, who sell petroleum products by road sides at strategic locations in the city of Minna. The ages of these youth range from 15 to 35 years. The black marketers constitute a group that has a penchant for violence.

The petroleum hawkers constitute an emergent gang that served as a ready raw material for political thuggery particularly during election periods. The aggressive nature of these youth is more pronounced whenever there is fuel scarcity. The anti-social behaviours of these hawkers in the city of Minna have earned them an identity and from whom peace loving residents try to maintain safe distance. Petroleum hawkers are also always seen as trouble making people. This paper, therefore, examines the issues of drug abuse and violence among petroleum hawkers and social order in Minna from the sociological perspective. The paper is then sub-divided into seven sections. The first section is this introductory section; the second section contains the literature review, while the third section is where theoretical framework is dwelt. The fourth section contains method employed in data collection, just as result and discussion are situated in section five, while recommendations and conclusion are in section six. The reference is in the seventh section.

### Literature review

Sociological and criminological literatures are replete with empirical studies that tried to establish relationship between drug addiction/abuse and crime. The way such relationship was established had

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been as diverse as the researchers. While some authors (for example, Jenny, 1999) felt there exist a robust relation between drug addiction and crime; others (like Spencer, 2000) revealed that the association between them was mild.

Barry and Paul (1994) in a study of 268 homicide offenders incarcerated at the New York State Correctional Center reported that 86 per cent of cases of homicides were alcohol related. In the cases of combination of alcohol with other substances such as marijuana, 44 percent of the respondents believed the homicide was a result of the combination (1994:8). Barry and Paul then came up with a tripartite classification of drug related violence. A 'psychopharmacological' violence was that which results when either the perpetrator or the victim had taken drug. The second one called 'economic compulsive' was that type of violence carried out for economic gains. A good example of this type of violence was the ones exhibited by youths at Mega Station in Minna during hawkers' procurement of petrol to be sold for drugs habit sustenance. The last of the classification was the 'systematic' violence. Any murder or violence that occurred out of dispute between or among drug dealers was termed systematic. This was simply violence within the drug distribution circle or any related situation (1994:9).

All the studies reviewed above have attempted a linkage between drug use and criminal activities, but none has made specific attempt to relate addiction with violence. Thus the search for other works which focus on violent crimes.

Igbinovia, (2003) opined that upsurge of violence and other series of crimes in Nigeria was as a result of the breakdown of societal ethos and moral values (2003:21). Blau and Blau (1982) believed violence was attributable to socio-economic inequality in society."If there is a culture of violence, its roots are pronounced inequalities (1982:114).

Moreover, Effiom and Effiong (2005) in a study on violent behaviour tendencies among youths with sample of 350 students in Calabar reported that the social environment played a significant role in begetting youths who were likely to be violent. The researcher established a significant difference between school children from barracks and those of non-barracks in terms of violent behaviour. This was because the calculated T value of 6.12 was greater than the critical T value of 1.96 given 0.5 level of significant. The researchers concluded that children who grew up in violent environment were likely to be violent later in future (2005:19).

Also, in a study of 252 residents of Lagos on living conditions and urban violence, Ezekiel and Emmanuel (2008) reported that unemployed youths were the common perpetrators of urban violence. The research established a strong relationship between incomes, education and participation in any form of violence. Ezekiel and Emmanuel (2008) focused on living conditions, not drug abuse. The only strength of the study was the discovery of youths as chief perpetrators of violence. Having reviewed some relevant literature, the next item is the highlights of a guiding theory.

### **Theoretical framework**

The central argument of this theory is that “elements in the structure of society promote deviance by making deviant behaviour a viable adaptation to living in the society” (Clinard and Meier,1995:107).The theory further argues that modern societies emphasized certain values such as education, health, wealth while at the same time limiting access to certain segments of society. Those blocked to these societal goals are the poor, the lower class in the society. “Anomie is (therefore) the social condition in which success goals are emphasized much more than the acceptable means by which to achieve them” (Clinard and Meier,1995:108).”It is,...my central hypothesis that aberrant behaviour may be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed aspirations and socially structured avenues for realizing these aspirations”(Merton,1969:164).Merton further argued that:

It is only when a system of cultural values extols, virtually above all else, certain common success-goals for the population at large while the social structure rigorously restricts or completely closes access to approved modes of reaching these goals for a considerable part of the same population, that deviant behavior ensues on a large scale(1969:171).

Since the society cannot provide for all in terms of success goals through legitimate means, others who could not achieve success through the acceptable ways do so through drug abuse, violence and distortion of social order.But how do we study the petroleum hawkers in Minna brings us to the issue of methods

### **Methods**

For the purpose of this research, the existing division of Minna into 11 areas by the Niger State Independent Electoral Commission (NSIEC) as political wards was used to avoid bias. The presence of hawkers at different locations within these areas was considered. These wards include Limawa 'A', and 'B', Makera, Minna Central and Minna South. Others are Nasarawa 'A','B' and 'C', Sabongari and Tudun Wada North and South.

The wards were then arranged alphabetically and numbered. From a pre-research survey each ward had an average of 50 hawkers present. From the frame which had 11 wards, four (4) wards were selected using a simple random technique. The four wards selected include Limawa 'A', Makera, Nasarawa 'B' and Tudun Wada South. Four wards were selected because this represents one third of the entire study population. The figure was adequate for a fair representation of the population which was one key element of sampling as argued by Carely and Lury (1984) and Blalock and Blalock (1971).

With an average of 50 petroleum hawkers from each of the selected four wards and taking the said average, the entire sample size amounted to 200.To administer questionnaire, 50 respondents were selected randomly. The procedure applied was that “Yes” and “No” were written into 60 places on

papers which were kept in a bag for each respondent encountered to select. If he/she selects “yes”, he/she automatically became a research subject, while a “No” selector was not.

Karl Pearson’s correlation coefficient technique was used to establish relationship principally between drug abuse and youth violence. The randomness of the data and the sample size also occasioned the choice of Pearson’s technique. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0 was used to analyse the data.

## Results and Discussion

Hypothesis  $H_{01}$  sought to establish whether higher levels of drug abuse among petroleum hawkers could be employed to explain their increased involvement in violent activities.

The mean score for drug abuse was 11.08, with a standard deviation of 2.35. The involvement of petroleum hawkers in violent activities had a mean value of 19.50 and a standard deviation of 4.74. When Pearson product-moment Correlation was applied to the data, an  $r$  value of 0.167 was observed. The significance value of the test was however 0.032, which was lower than 0.05 (which was the level of significance employed in this research). This implied that drug abuse and violent activities by petroleum hawkers were significantly correlated; any apparent relationships could not be explained as being due to chance alone. The results of this test are presented in Table 1.1 below.

**Table 1: Results of Pearson product-moment Correlation test for Hypothesis  $H_{01}$**

Experiment No	Variables		Pearson $r$	Significance value	Inference	Action on hypothesis
	$X_1$	$X_2$				
1	drug abuse	involvement in violent activities	0.167	0.028	Statistically significant difference	Reject $H_{01}$ ; <b>Accept <math>H_{A1}</math></b>
Mean value (standard deviation)	11.08 (2.35)	19.50 (4.74)				

Source: Author’s analysis of research data, (2009)

The positive value observed implied positive linearity between the variables. This suggested that abuse of drugs by petroleum hawkers would likely be accompanied by higher levels of involvement in violent activities and vice versa. The very low  $r$  value observed implied that the abuse of drugs among petroleum hawkers and their involvement in violent activities did not appear to be strongly related. However, drug abuse patterns of petroleum hawkers could be applied to explain up to 2.8% of variations in the incidences of violent activities involving petroleum hawkers. This result is not consistent with Jenny (1999) whose study found robust relationship between drug use and violence; in fact 44 percent of respondents attributed their violent activities to alcohol and other substance use,

it is however consistent with studies like Spencer,( 2000) which revealed that the association between both was mild.

Further, most of the respondents were unemployed (141 or 85.5 %). It was clear from the data that petroleum hawkers had no steady source of income outside hawking petroleum products. Where respondents acknowledged of having a second source of income, such sources were only there to “supplement” the sale of petrol. Apart from ‘elders’ (those in hawking business for upward of 10 years and have stable family and other apprentices working under them), that hardly complain of their employment status, most petroleum hawkers complained of their unemployment status. This data supports Baron (1999) (1997) Inciardi (1979) studies all implicated unemployment as prevalent among drug users.

Pearson product-moment Correlation, when applied to the data, yielded a negative  $r$  value of -0.078 for association between poverty among petroleum hawkers and increased likelihood of their involvement in drug abuse. In the case of the association between poverty among petroleum hawkers and increased likelihood of their involvement in violent activities, an  $r$  value of -0.288 was observed.

The results of the Multiple Linear Regression included a computed  $F$  value of 7.402 and test significance value of 0.001. These results implied that poverty among petroleum hawkers was significantly related to their involvement in drug abuse and violent activities.

The respondents also seem to be violent. For instance 104 or 63 percent of respondent reported to have ever hit and injured someone in the last one year. Though, only 75 or 45.5 percent of the respondents reported to have ever committed such offence under the influence of alcohol or any substance of abuse. So their violent acts may be due to other factors but not directly due to drug abuse.

Gangstarism and learning may be the factors that propelled petroleum hawkers to violence as they both do not only correlated at .217, but also with violence activities at .456 significant level, precisely when  $P \geq 0.01$ . This current paper reinforces the fact that petroleum hawkers were gangsters whose violent activities were related to conforming to the sub-cultural norms. It was observed that petroleum hawkers within areas like Mega station in Tudun Wada ward, Total filling station in Makera ward and Kpakungu motor park were more violent than others. This was due to the fact that hawkers in these areas mentioned above live in groups where a lot of learning and imitations take place. In fact, petroleum hawkers in these areas have stable leadership and attain regular meetings. Campbell and Muncer's (1989) study also supports the assertion that peer group influence was a potent factor in sub-cultural groupings and their delinquent behaviours, which included violence.

Again, the violent activities of the respondents as showed by the data conformed to the type of gang Fagan (1989) called the entrepreneurial. That is, youth who were concerned with attaining social

status by means of money and the things money can buy. Petroleum hawkers can do anything to ensure the petrol business was not threatened. That is why petroleum hawkers constitute a group from whom peace loving residents of Minna keep safe distance. Their threat to social order has no mate as far as the city of Minna is concerned.

### Conclusion

The petroleum hawkers are violent in nature and drug abusers as well. However, their violent activities are directly linked to peer group influence and gangsterism than it is to drug abuse. The paper has brought to the fore, the issue of petroleum hawkers, not just as a sociological entity with a penchant for violence, but also as an emergent gang harmonized by business and violence.

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