2020

Drug Control Officers' Perception of Nigeria's Narcotics Control Policy

Olufemi Ajayi
Walden University

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Olufemi Ajayi

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Review Committee
Dr. Timothy Fadgen, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Anne Hacker, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Michael Brewer, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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Olufemi Ajayi

MA, International Law and Diplomacy, University of Lagos, 1996

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The Nigerian government's cannabis prohibition policy has failed to achieve the suppression of supply and reduction of demand for drugs. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the policy implementation experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers regarding Nigeria's drug control policies. The theoretical foundation was social construction theory. Data were collected from reviews of public documents and in-depth interviews with 15 active or retired drug control officers. Data were sorted, organized, and coded through directed content analysis to identify themes. The themes that emerged included defective nature and content of the policy, poor policy implementation, and unfavorable cannabis control environment. Participants reported that the prohibition policy has been ineffective because of the defective nature of the policy, poor implementation strategy, and an unfavorable drug control environment. Findings may be used to promote open discussion and knowledge of psychoactive drug control, which may improve the social condition in Nigeria. Study recommendations include the introduction of people-friendly and harm-reducing interventions such as the promotion of needle and syringe exchange services, opiate substitution therapy for drug-dependent individuals, and safe lifestyles.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to all individuals and groups who are committed to policy reforms to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number of people in all societies while protecting and respecting minority rights.

Acknowledgments

Please permit me to use this medium to express my sincere appreciation to the chair of my committee, Dr. Tim P. Fadgen, for all the mentoring, guidance, and encouragement during my dissertation journey. I thank my committee members, Dr. Anne Hacker and Dr. Michael Brewer, for timely and helpful feedbacks and their unflagging commitment to my dissertation success. I must also thank my dear wife, Iyabode, and my children, Femi Jr, Bukola, and Wole, for their sacrifices and understanding each time I played the absentee husband or father to devote much needed attention to my academic work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

After more than 25 years of Nigerian government's application of the drug prohibition policy, the abuse, trafficking, and cultivation of *Cannabis sativa* continue to intensify (Alemika, 2018). Despite the consistent use and increasing severity of arrests of drug users, traffickers, and producers as well as the unrelenting seizure of their drugs, the illegal cultivation of cannabis at the expense of food staples and cash crops continues to increase as shown by the rapid spread of the drug crop from the traditional seven cannabis-cultivating states (Delta, Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, Ogun, Osun, and Oyo) to all parts of Nigeria (National Drug Law Enforcement Agency [NDLEA], 2015). Marginal producing states like Kwara, Kogi, Abia, and Enugu have joined the league of major cannabis states in the country (Alemika, 2018).

The number of cannabis farmers and traffickers continues to increase despite the high number of arrests and incarceration and the huge quantity of marijuana herb and resin seizures, while cannabis consumption continues to spread and increase among women and youth populations as shown by NDLEA statistics (Alemika, 2018; Carrier & Klantschnig, 2016). The Nigeria Drug Use Survey established the increasing use of cannabis in Nigeria and reported that prevalence of drug use in 2019 was estimated at 14.4% or 14.3 million people, a figure that is high when compared with 2016 global annual prevalence of any drug use of 5.6% among the adult population (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2019). The report indicated that cannabis was the most commonly used drug and that 10.7% of the adult population or 10.6 million people

had used cannabis in the past year. These data suggest that the narcotics prohibition policy has not achieved the objective of supply suppression and demand reduction.

In addition to being ineffective, the implementation of the narcotics criminal prohibition policy has resulted in the proliferation of illegal drug markets in Nigeria's urban settlements in Lagos, Port Harcourt, Abuja, Kano, and Kaduna, thereby facilitating increased violence, crimes, conflicts, and loss of lives (Obot, 2004; Klantschnig, 2015). The draconian and militaristic implementation of the criminal prohibition policy has also led to avoidable health challenges, such as the rapid spread of blood-related diseases including human immunodeficiency virus and Hepatitis B, the widespread breach of human rights, and deleterious ecological consequences; however, the country continues to treat the cannabis challenge as solely a law enforcement problem rather than a full-fledged social issue (Barnett, 2009; Gyong & Tanimu, 2009; Otu, 2013).

The continued implementation of the multifaceted and cost-intensive narcotics prohibition policy has in recent times been adversely affected and almost crippled by low national budgetary allocations and reduced external grants, perhaps owing to chronic donor fatigue (Alemika, 2018; Carrier & Klantschnig, 2016; NDLEA, 2017). Dwindling resources mean that drug control agents are chronically dissatisfied and perennially complaining of shortage of funds, lack of equipment, and a poor working environment (Gaspar, 2014). The poor resource base of the NDLEA had meant high turnover of staff as well as lack of fresh recruitment and training opportunities to replace lost but needed personnel (Gaspar, 2014). Despite the ineffectiveness and counter productivity of the cannabis prohibition policy, there is apparent policy inertia, rigidity, and reform

resistance in Nigeria (Klantschnig, 2009, 2015; Otu, 2013). Alemika (2018) noted that

neither the policymakers nor those responsible for implementing the policy were openly

discussing or considering the possibility of adopting more liberal, effective, and safer

policy options and interventions that are gradually becoming the norm in more responsive

and tolerant societies.

Nigeria's narcotics prohibition policy, which came into force in 1990, was a

national program intended to counter both the dual challenge of nonmedical abuse and

the illicit trafficking of psychoactive substances in the country and a fulfillment of the

international treaty obligation to domesticate the largely prohibitionist international drug

conventions against narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (Obot, 2004; Otu, 2013).

Consequently, the country's leading drug control and coordinating agency, the NDLEA,

was modeled after the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), from

which it inherited the culture of repressive, prohibitionist, and violent war on drugs

(Klantschnig, 2015).

Nigeria's narcotics prohibition implementation process is driven by the desire and

desperation to pass the annual drug certification examination of the United States to

escape being included in the infamous list of countries that are not cooperating with the

United States in the war against drugs (Csete & Sanchez, 2013; Klantschnig, 2015). The

coercive implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy also appears economically

driven by the desperation to be regarded as a partner that is tough on narcotic drugs so as

to enjoy the counter-narcotic assistance and development cooperation of the United

States Government (Klantschnig, 2015). Moreover, as stated in the mission statement of

the NDLEA, the narcotics criminal prohibition policy is an integral part of Nigeria's reputation management and image-laundering foreign policy in the bid to be globally perceived as a ceaseless, no-nonsense, and ruthless fighter of the war on drugs (Klantschnig, 2009, 2015). Notwithstanding the increasing deployment and severity of the implementation of the narcotics prohibition since its inception and its consistent and persistent application, Nigeria's drug control policy is remembered for its ineffectiveness and linkage with Boko Haram terrorism and other organized crimes (particularly money laundering and terrorism financing), violence, corruption, human rights abuses, environmental degradation, health hazards, and economic losses (Gyong & Tanimu, 2009; Obot, 2004; Otu, 2013).

I carried out this qualitative case study to contribute to the literature and knowledge on the problems and prospects of cannabis prohibition policy. I interviewed serving and retired drug control officers of the NDLEA to unravel the challenges and implementational difficulties of cannabis prohibition. This chapter includes background information on the execution of cannabis prohibition policy to suppress supply, reduce demand, and stem the trafficking of this drug crop from 1990 to 2019. I also discuss the research problem and the purpose of the study; state the research question, provide an overview of the theoretical framework; and present the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study along with its implications for social change. Key terms and concepts in the study are also defined.

Background

For more than half a century, the fear of narcotic drugs appeared to be the beginning of wisdom as vocal and tenacious moral, religious, and cultural champions of a drug-free world cataloged numerous problems, dangers, and evils as consequences of psychoactive drugs. The initial concern of crusaders for a narcotics-free world was that the consumption of narcotics had immense potential to induce individuals to violence and heinous crimes, including rape and homicide, and promote addiction with negative consequences for individual well-being, societal welfare, and national security (Bewley-Taylor, 2003, 2005; Nadelmann, 1990). The scaremongering and exaggeration of the dangers of narcotic drugs by the dogmatic zero-tolerance lobby led to the global criminal prohibition of the possession, trafficking, and production of narcotics (Jelsma, 2010; Nadelmann, 1990). However, in the last three decades, there has been increasing concerns that criminal narcotics prohibition creates more danger and causes more harm to individuals, communities, and nations than the narcotics consumption and trade it was designed to curb (Bewley-Taylor, 2005; Jelsma, 2010). Criminal prohibition has not only been ineffective, costly, unsustainable, and counterproductive to implement, but has also proved to be a cure that is deadlier than the disease it was supposed to stamp out (Strang et al., 2012; Wodak, 2007).

Cannabis sativa (otherwise called Indian hemp) is the most significant psychoactive drug in Nigeria, being the most prevalent, most frequently consumed, most trafficked, and most cultivated drug plant in the country (NDLEA, 2014; UNODC, 2018). The three international drug conventions of the global narcotics prohibition regime,

which classified *Cannabis sativa* as a Schedule I drug, strangely criminalized its consumption, possession, trafficking, or production, while treating relatively more harmful but socially acceptable psychoactive substances, such as tobacco and alcohol, with more tolerance and leniency (Bewley-Taylor, 2005; Jelsma, 2010). *Cannabis sativa* has not always been perceived or regarded as the dangerous drug as it is in Nigeria today (Obot, 2004). Before 1930, cannabis was treated like another herbal plant or vegetable and popularly chewed or prepared as a concoction for treating pain, stress, and depression in some parts of southern Nigeria (Alemika, 2018).

Rather than based on any scientific evidence, empirical data, or rational analysis, the characterization of cannabis sativa and its eventual classification in Nigeria as an illicit psychoactive drug, and its criminal prohibition, was the outcome of several decades of consistent and continuous stigmatization, ceaseless neocolonial narratives, racist construction, and ethnic framing of the psychoactive plant as an *evil weed*, *killer plant*, and *black peril* (Laudati, 2016). Western Europe crusaders for the ban and outlawing of cannabis earlier claimed that the weed made Black people crazy, uncontrollable, impudent, and lecherous (Drug War Rants, 2010). Both in Europe and America, *Cannabis sativa* was routinely portrayed as the "killer weed" that make Blacks lose their senses and commit heinous crimes (Drug War Rants, 2010).

Being a signatory to the three international drug conventions as well as a close ally, foreign policy partner, and economic dependent of the United States (arguably the grand patron of narcotics criminal prohibition), Nigeria is dogmatically committed to the criminal prohibition of narcotics drugs, using the cannabis eradication strategy

(Klantschnig, 2015). As could be explained by the social constructionist theory and the related drug securitization theory, Nigeria's narcotics prohibition policy was largely predicated on a backdrop of extreme narcotics negative framing and characterization, continuous demonization and stigmatization, and eventual securitization (Crick, 2012). Without any concrete and empirical evidence, narcotics drugs were labeled evil, mind-altering, and destructive to physical and mental health and the spiritual growth of individuals, communities, and nations, as well as dangerous to moral standing and ethical values (Drug War Rants, 2010). This ideologically driven and morally misguided scenario was the origin of the prevalent canonization of the crusade against drugs as the holy war on the vice, sin, or crime of narcotics consumption, possession, warehousing, and trafficking (Drug War Rants, 2010). Following this, narcotics were labeled and framed as not only evil but also potent existential threats to individuals, societies, and countries (Crick, 2012).

After such securitization and canonization of the war on drugs, it is not surprising that criminal prohibition policy was and still is insulated from any scrutiny, rational analysis, open debate or impact assessment (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012). The perception of drugs as highly addictive substances that are capable of stripping consumers of their self-control and personal responsibility evoked the specter of an uncontrollable bogey that must be conquered through warfare and other coercive measures (Klantschnig, 2015; Otu, 2013). Against this backdrop, any suggestion of reform or change toward a more liberal, tolerant, or people-oriented policy stands the risk

of being perceived as heretical or prejudicial to national security and global safety (Bewley-Taylor, 2005; Jelsma, 2010).

The religious basis, ethical origins, moral motivations, and related imperialist interests of ideologues of the war on narcotics are responsible for the dogmatic framing and the rigid, violent, and militaristic implementation of the narcotics prohibition policy across the globe (Klantschnig, 2015; Nadelmann, 2014). The current situation is the result of the refusal of the zero-tolerance lobby and crusaders of narcotics criminal prohibition to allow a rational, open, and frank debate of the substance abuse challenge or allow any consequentialist evaluation or evidence-based assessment of the coercive and repressive narcotics control policy despite its ineffectiveness, counterproductivity, prohibitive cost, and unsustainability (Jelsma, 2010; Wodak, 2007).

Another challenge of the drug prohibition policy is its exclusivity and its foreign-donor-dictated and externally mandated nature (Klantschnig, 2015). From all indications, Nigeria's narcotics policy, despite its strategic importance to national development, has been left to elitist high-security and policy-making officials. The policy is yet to be subjected to open, public, and rational debate since it was decreed by the military government in 1988 in response to the advent of narcotic drugs challenge and the need to fulfill international drug control obligations (Alemika, 2018; Obot, 2004). The narcotics criminal prohibition policy was neither based on local priorities nor need driven, neither people oriented nor people guided (Klantschnig, 2015). In the same vein, little is known in Nigeria about any inclusive, harm-reducing, human-rights-respecting, ecologically sound, and sustainable approach to narcotics control (Alemika, 2018). There is a need to

engage with policy actors, especially narcotics control officers (who are the on-field narcotics policy implementers) to arrive at a home-grown, pro-people, people-driven, and environment-friendly alternative program to address the challenge of narcotics abuse and illicit drug trafficking.

Moreover, the narcotics prohibition policy has yet to be reviewed to cope with new realities and emerging problems, thereby leading to widespread complaints of policy rigidity, inflexibility, and inertia (Bewley-Taylor, 2003; Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012). The global drug scene has been volatile, changing, and dynamic over the last 55 years (Hobson, 2014). The incidence, dimensions, and implications of the drug phenomenon have been increasing in Nigeria, particularly with the advent of new psychoactive substances, increased abuse of prescription drugs, and proliferation of clandestine methylamphetamine cooking laboratories (Alemika, 2018). Despite the changes in Nigeria's drug scene and situation, no effort has been made to revise or reform the narcotics criminal prohibition policy. Several previous initiatives of the NDLEA through proposed reviews of the NDLEA Act to facilitate the revision of Nigeria's drug control laws have been frustrated by the apathy and lack of political will of Nigeria's legislature.

The narcotics prohibition policy under which Nigeria operates was not evidence based or grounded in relevant research findings or any reliable scientific evidence, but was largely predicated on wrong assumptions, misconceptions, religious sentiments, and misguided moralism (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012). Recent research evidence has shown that tobacco and alcohol that are permissible for consumption and are regulated

under the drug control regime are more harmful and the cause of more deaths and illnesses than *Cannabis sativa* (Rogeberg, 2018; Williams & Warf, 2016).

The premise of this study was that the retention of the narcotics criminal prohibition is not justified by its poor results and severe limitations given the unfavorable consequences of its implementation on drug control officers and the public. The narcotics criminal prohibition policy is a product of the social construction of psychoactive drugs as a menace to the well-being of individuals, societies, nations, and the global community that has been sustained through half-truths, misinformation, disinformation, political intimidation, and suppression of dissent by its protagonists (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012). Drug prohibition is an ineffectual cure that is more harmful than the disease, in this case the negative effects of drug consumption and production, that it attempts to stamp out (Barnett, 2009; Wodak, 2007).

The basis of the current and prevalent narcotics control policy, the belief that the severe and repressive crackdown implementation of the narcotics criminal prohibition policy, dubbed the war on drugs, would deter the illegal production, manufacturing, and trafficking of drugs, has proved to be a grand illusion (Bewley-Taylor, 2003; Bonnie, 2010). The failure of the war on drugs is a subtle repudiation of the general deterrence theory on which the criminal prohibition was predicated (MacCoun & Reuter, 2011). Despite this, the reality of worsening drug prevalence and the failure of efforts to suppress drug supply and drug demand indicate that humankind does not yet understand the complex relationship and interplay between formal drug policies and informal social and self-control factors (MacCoun, 1993; MacCoun & Reuter, 2001). The U.S. drug law

enforcement policy, which served as the model and template for Nigeria's drug

prohibition predicated on a rational choice behavior, has been described as analytically

attractive but psychologically implausible (MacCoun, 1993; MacCoun & Reuter, 2001).

Apparently, the proponents and protagonists of narcotics prohibition did not reckon with

the inelasticity of drug demand and that some people might not be risk averse but could

in fact be risk-loving (MacCoun & Reuters, 2001).

Given the on-the-job training, experiences, and socialization of a typical NDLEA

drug control officer as well as the vision and mission statement of the organization, the

tendency is for these drug policy implementers to perceive and treat psychotropic drugs

as evil substances that must be eradicated, and drug offenses, including drug use,

trafficking, and production, as hazards that must be stamped out at all costs and by all

means. Nigeria and its drug control agency (NDLEA) have assimilated and imbibed the

idea of psychoactive drug use, production, and distribution as inimical to individuals,

societies, nations, and the international community that led to the undue reliance on

draconian legislations, punitive policies, and extreme measures to suppress supply and

reduce demand (Obot, 2004; Otu, 2013). Nigeria and the NDLEA remain committed to

the criminal prohibition of all psychoactive drugs, not giving any thought or

consideration to more liberal and effective policy options despite the apparent failure of

prohibition to reduce drug demand or suppress supply (Alemika, 2018; Klantschnig,

2015). It was, therefore, necessary to examine the factors responsible for the

ineffectiveness of the cannabis prohibition strategy and to interrogate the continued use

and emphasis on the coercive implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy despite its apparent failure to achieve the set goals.

Problem Statement

Nigeria's program for curbing nonmedical use and trafficking of cannabis is violent, repressive, and environment polluting (Chouvy, 2013; Klantschnig, 2015; Otu, 2013). Moreover, after nearly three decades of the implementation of cannabis eradication and interdiction policies, the consumption, cultivation, trafficking, and trading in the prohibited weed have been on the increase (NDLEA, 2015). Furthermore, although the ineffectiveness of criminal prohibition of psychoactive substances across the world has led to the gradual introduction of more evidence-based and liberal policy options in many countries, there is little or no official recognition, not to mention consideration, of these alternatives to prohibition in Nigeria (Carrier & Klantschnig, 2016; Jacques, Rosenfeld, & Wright, 2016). Nigeria's drug policy elites and implementers have been socialized and indoctrinated to regard psychoactive drugs and their use or production as the intolerable phenomena that must be stamped out at all costs and by every means (International Drug Policy Consortium, 2017).

Nigerian drug control agents appeared so preoccupied with their unfavorable working conditions and life-threatening challenges that little attention was paid to the inherent weaknesses and ineffectiveness of the cannabis prohibition policy to achieve the desired outcomes of supply suppression and drug demand reduction (Klantschnig, 2015). Despite the apparent failure of both the cannabis eradication strategy and interdiction efforts, Nigeria's drug policy formulators and implementors continued to treat the drug

challenge as solely a criminal justice issue that could be fully curbed through law enforcement rather than consider using balanced and eclectic approaches (Klantschnig, 2015; Otu, 2013).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Nigeria's drug control agents (NDLEA field officers) regarding the implementation of the country's cannabis prohibition policy. The study was used to explore the influence of drug law agents' perception of drug offenses and their criminal prohibition as well as interrogate the institutional challenges of NDLEA in executing Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy through documenting and analyzing the experiences of NDLEA field officers. This study was used to explore the effects of the social construction of the drug challenge by drug law enforcers as well as the perennial challenge of poor funding, shortage of staff, inadequate equipment, capacity deficits, and occupational hazards on the continued implementation of cannabis prohibition policy. This study drew attention to more liberal, humane, people-oriented, and regulatory options to coping with the challenge of cannabis production and consumption in the country. The strategic objective of this research was the promotion of drug policy consciousness and awareness raising toward a better understanding of the inherent difficulties of using prohibitive and coercive methods instead of liberal, regulatory, and need-driven approaches. The study focused attention on the inherent challenges of solely using law enforcement to wipe out a social problem. I conducted face-to-face individual interviews with purposively selected drug control

officials and reviewed relevant public documents and appropriate official records during this qualitative case study.

Research Question

The research question (RQ) for this qualitative case study was the following:

RQ: What are the experiences of Nigeria's drug control agents (NDLEA field officers) regarding the country's cannabis prohibition policy?

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this qualitative exploration was based on social construction theory. MacCoun (1993) stated that the inability of drug prohibition laws to achieve drug demand reduction and supply suppression, despite their relatively consistent and strict implementation, was a subtle refutation of the rational choice model and the related general deterrence theory, which were based on the assumptions that people are rational during both conforming and deviant behaviors, and that people choose deviant behaviors based on reasoned cost-benefit calculations (MacCoun, 1993). The obduracy and persistence of drug prohibition policy despite its failure to deter drug offenses can be explained using the social construction theory and a strand of the drug securitization doctrine. This conceptual framework was used to make sense of the continued reliance of Nigeria's NDLEA and its drug interdiction officers on the cannabis criminal prohibition policy despite the prevalence of psychoactive substances, the proliferation of drug production outfits, and the increased drug trafficking after the consistent and increasing use of repressive counternarcotic operations.

The social construction theory was postulated by behavioral scientists to explain the nature and origin of knowledge. Berger and Luckman (1991) reasoned that knowledge is created by interactions of individuals within society and that knowledge and truth are created rather than preexisting and discovered by the mind. Constructionists posit that concepts are created or put together through interactions of individuals or groups in a community rather than discovered, yet these constructs may be analogous to something concrete in the world (Schwandt, 2003). Social constructionism could be used to explain how the consistent and persistent expression and framing of concerns, fears, anxieties, and panic over the perceived evil, dangerous nature and addictive effects of narcotics drugs led to cultural perception and societal acceptance of narcotics drugs as a harmful and addictive substance and its consumption regarded as an undesirable and dangerous behavior (Hammersley, 2017). The social construction theory can also be used to explain the uncritical retention, increased intensity, and fanatical commitment of Nigeria, like many other countries, to the increasing and coercive implementation of the criminal prohibition policy despite its publicized failure to achieve the desired supply suppression and drug demand reduction (Klantschnig, 2015; Obot 2004).

The securitization theory originated from the international relations theory in the early 1960s. The drug securitization theory has been used to characterize the identification and labeling of narcotic drugs as a threat to the existence, essence, and core values of humanity as well as the systematic, consistent, and sustained portrayal, presentation, and treatment of narcotic drugs as a threat to individuals, communities, nations, and the international society (Crick, 2012). An existential threat is defined by

foreign relations scholars as something that is a threat to the existence, a phenomenon or situation that has the capability to permanently change the core values of a group and the way it governs itself against its will, and something that can alter the way of life or independence of the action of a people (Walter, 2016). The drug securitization theory can be regarded as a specialized form and an extension of social construction because securitization involves the construction of a social problem as an existential threat to the survival and security of human beings as individuals and groups through speech acts and labelling that provide justification for legislation and action against the identified threat (Crick, 2012). The effect of the securitization of the drug problem is the social construction and formulation of a global drug policy that is placed above political contestations and insulated from open debate and scrutiny and therefore resistant to change or reform (Kushlick, 2014).

Although the social construction theory explains the dogmatic belief and entrenchment of the cannabis prohibition policy as well as the fanatical and religious implementation of the cannabis criminal prohibition and ruthless eradication programs despite several negative implementational consequences, the related drug securitization doctrine contributed to the canonization and institutionalization of the war on drugs, thereby making the crusade against narcotic drugs "high security" and exclusive "sensitive" issues reserved for top policy elites that cannot be subjected to open debate or public scrutiny (Klantschnig, 2015). Though it was the social construction, characterization, and demonization of drugs as evil and detrimental to the welfare of individuals, communities, nations, and the international society that gave birth to drug

prohibition and the criminalization of drug offenses, it was the labeling of drugs as an existential threat through the securitization doctrine that led to the canonization of drug control as a holy crusade from which no derogation was to be tolerated (Kushlick, 2014). Although securitization of drugs did not midwife a change of policy direction from what was established by social construction, it contributed to the continuation and persistence of the existing drug criminal prohibition trend (Hobson, 2014).

Social construction was used in this study to explain how cannabis abuse, drug abusers, and drug control are perceived and constructed by drug interdiction officers. In consonance with Schneider and Ingram's (2014) proposition of the social construction of target populations, social constructionism was deployed to explain how drug abusers and other offenders are perceived and characterized by drug control agents in the drug prohibition implementation process and how this construction affects the means and ways drug prohibition laws are interpreted and carried out. The social construction of target populations leads to the negative profiling of drugs users and other offenders as targets that deserve nothing but severe punishment during the implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy to rid the society and markets of the evil weed (Schneider & Ingram, 2014).

Given that the main purpose of this research was the exploration of the ineffectiveness and failure of the criminal prohibition policy, the social construction theory was considered necessary and adequate as the major plank for the theoretical foundation of the study. However, beyond the failure of cannabis prohibition to achieve the suppression of supply and drug demand reduction, this study was also concerned with

the resistance to change and persistence of the prohibition policy despite its inefficacy.

The securitization doctrine was not needed to explain policy failure per se, but it helped

to illuminate the perseverance, rigidity, and resistance to change of cannabis prohibition

policy advocates, and the persistence of the drug prohibition regime despite not yielding

expected outcomes. The drug securitization theory explains the mechanism for the

canonization of the drug prohibition policy into a holy war on drugs that must be fought

until drugs and drug offenses are exterminated and for as long as the welfare and security

of individuals, societies, nations, and the global community are imperiled by drugs

(Crick, 2012).

This theoretical framework, fully elaborated in Chapter Two, was used to explain

and understand the method to the madness of Nigeria's continuous investment of

humongous human, material, and monetary resources in the criminal prohibition of

Cannabis sativa when it has become obvious that the supply, demand, and trafficking of

this drug crop not only continues to grow unabated but that the coercive implementation

of the prohibition also exacerbates health hazards, crimes, corruption, environmental

degradation, and other deleterious consequences on Nigerian society.

Nature of the Study

This inquiry was a qualitative case study. Yin (2013) reasoned that the case study

is the most appropriate method to explore one or more cases of contemporary, real-life

events or processes within a bounded system. A case is perceived and treated as bounded

by time and place (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The rationale for the qualitative case study was

that it would facilitate data collection using multiple methods and sources of information,

including in-depth interviews and reviews of relevant documents and public records

(Patton, 2015; Yin, 2009). Qualitative methodology is indicated when an issue needs to

be comprehended in an in-depth, detailed, and contextualized manner (Goertz &

Mahoney, 2013). Given that the issue for exploration was the multidimensional challenge

of cannabis criminal prohibition (its inefficiency, deleterious effects, and resistance to

change), it was best investigated with a qualitative approach.

The qualitative interviewing of experienced individuals and relevant informants

helped me to understand and reconstruct events that I had not personally experienced. I

conducted several interviews to get a full and representative description of the

experiences and perceptions of key actors and stakeholders in cannabis control (see

Maxwell, 2013). Given the need to discuss the challenge of drug abuse and trafficking

and address the seeming ineffectiveness and paucity of information on Nigeria's drug

control policy, there was a need for the qualitative exploration of the experiences and

perceptions of narcotic officers and agents involved in the implementation of the

country's criminal prohibition policy.

Using criterion sampling to get knowledge-intensive research participants, I

conducted a qualitative case study involving in-depth face-to-face individual interviews

with narcotic control officers of the NDLEA. Moreover, I carried out an analytical review

of relevant public documents and appropriate official records of the NDLEA on cannabis

criminal prohibition policy vis-à-vis alternative policy options. Researchers who use in-

depth interviews with key informants and multiple data collection methods often require

fewer participants per method or data source (Lee, Woo, & Mackenzie, 2000). I carried

out in-depth interviews of purposively selected narcotics control officers until attainment

of data saturation or informational redundancy (when no novel information is provided

by additional interviews) to guarantee comprehensive understanding (see Mason, 2010).

In a qualitative case study, the sample size must be small enough to permit the deep case-

oriented analysis that is the hallmark of a qualitative inquiry, with emphasis devoted to

the meaning rather than magnitude of experiences (Sandelowski, 1995). The socially

created origin and culturally nuanced nature of the drug prohibition phenomenon

indicated the qualitative case study as the most appropriate method of inquiry.

Quantitative research was not the preferred approach for this case study because

of the complex social nature of the drug control phenomenon that made it more amenable

to exploratory and interpretive research. Quantitative methodology is used to investigate

research problems and questions of relational, causal, and predictive nature and includes

the operationalization of constructs (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015). The

current study was exploratory and inductive and not geared toward finding the effect of

an action or a process or for testing or comparing variables for the acceptance or rejection

of any hypothesis or theory (see Goertz & Mahoney, 2013; Patton, 2015). A detailed

description of the design and procedure of the study is provided in Chapter 3.

Design of the Study

In this qualitative case study, I interviewed purposively selected serving and

retired NDLEA drug control officers who had been involved in the implementation of

cannabis prohibition for at least 10 years. I also conducted analytical reviews of public

documents and official records of NDLEA relevant to the implementation of Nigeria's

cannabis interdiction and eradication policies. The primary source of data for this study was the in-depth interview of research participants (NDLEA drug control officers) until data saturation was achieved. The interview questions were open ended and framed to elicit rich, thick, detailed, and relevant descriptions from the key informants. Additional data were public documents and official records of NDLEA, which were reviewed to mine contextual and supplementary information. These documents were assessed to ensure that they were from credible sources, relevant to the drug control policy, in consonance with the theoretical framework, and related to the research question and the purpose of the study.

Methodology

The methodology for this study involved purposive and criterion sampling techniques. I used purposive and criterion sampling to select NDLEA officers who had been involved for at least 10 years in the implementation of counternarcotic operations in Nigeria. Following IRB approval, I got a list of NDLEA personnel containing all officers who had served the agency for over 10 years, from which I prequalified my potential research participants and thereafter emailed them my expression of interest letters and informed consent forms. After ensuring informed consent, I selected and briefed 15 suitable potential participants and followed up with in-depth face-to-face interviews until I attained information redundancy. The concurrent data collection and analysis led to the exploration of the issues, perspectives, experiences, and difficulties of drug control officers in implementing the cannabis prohibition policy. I sorted, collated, organized,

analyzed, and interpreted collected data for coding, categorization, recognition of patterns, and development of themes.

Definitions

Alternative development programs: Strategies involving socioeconomic interventions aimed at providing sustainable and competitive alternative sources (means) of livelihood to people to attract them away from the lucrative drug trade. These include crop substitution strategies and creating alternative livelihood opportunities for drug peddlers, farmers, traffickers, and others who earn a living through the drug trade (Felbab-Brown, 2012).

Balanced approach to drug control: The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB, 2015) defined balanced approach as a holistic approach to the world drug problem that places equal emphasis on supply suppression and demand reduction in an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner. A balanced approach to drug control involves trying to focus on demand reduction approaches while carrying out supply reduction activities. Linking supply reduction and demand reduction is expected to increase the efficacy of a drug control policy.

Behavior change communication: The consistent and sustainable use of any of a series of communication strategies to effect drug awareness, attitudinal change, and positive behavioral modification leading to targets opting out of the drug abuse and trafficking conundrum (INCB, 2015).

Cannabis eradication strategy: The methods and means of destroying marijuana crop plants, processed resins, or herbs including manual weeding and burning (otherwise

described as the slash-and-burn technique), manual spraying with herbicides, and aerial

spraying of cannabis plantations with herbicides, as well as the manual burning and use

of incinerators to burn cannabis resins or herbs (NDLEA, 2015). Cannabis eradication is

an example of eradication of illicit drug crops.

Crop substitution strategy: An example of alternative development program that

involves introducing and incentivizing the cultivation of other crops instead of the coca

plant (used for cocaine), puppy leaves (for heroin), and *Cannabis sativa* (cannabis herbs

and resins). For instance, in Nigeria, it is believed that the government's introduction and

promotion of the cultivation of lucrative and prolific plants like cashew plant, olive plant,

and improved varieties of cocoa might stem the proliferation of cannabis plantations in

Nigeria.

Drug abuse preventive education: A series of programs, activities, or

interventions geared toward forestalling the abuse (misuse, overuse, or harmful use) of

psychoactive substances (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization, 2015).

Drug addiction and dependence: Drug addiction, according to a WHO manual, is

a state of being abnormally dependent on a drug. The WHO Expert Committee on Drug

Dependence in 1963 discarded the term *addiction* in favor of the term *dependence*.

Dependence, according to the Expert Committee, was defined as a state (psychic and

sometimes also physical) resulting from the interaction between a living organism and a

drug, which manifests as a behavioral disposition and other responses that include a

compulsion or urge to take the drug on a continuous or periodic basis to experience its

psychic effects and sometimes to avoid the discomfort of its absence. Drug dependence can be physical or psychological.

Drug behavior modification: Approaches are diverse and include activities and programs geared toward demotivating drug consumption. These initiatives include scaremongering communication strategies; penalties for drug use and possession (demand reduction approaches); punishments for drug crop cultivation, production, smuggling, and sale (supply reduction strategies); and the introduction of competing alternatives to drug consumption and drug crop cultivation and manufacturing. The central idea behind behavior modification is disincentivizing the activities along the drug value chain (INCB, 2015).

Drug crop eradication strategies: The tactics or techniques employed to wipe out drug crops such as coca plant, opium poppies, and marijuana herbs (INCB, 2015).

Drug decertification: An Act by the United States Congress by which the Congress authorizes the U.S. president to impose economic or military sanctions on countries that the U.S. authorities perceive as not doing enough to cooperate or collaborate with the United States in the war on drugs and against global drug trafficking, especially those with consequences for the U.S. illicit drug markets (INCB, 2015).

Drug decriminalization: Use of the specified drugs should not be a criminal offense (INCB, 2015).

Drug demand reduction: Efforts for reducing the demand for illegal drugs, including preventive interventions, treatments, and research initiatives. Such efforts could

indirectly promote supply reduction through fall in the number of drug users; drug supply

invariably falls as the market for illegal drugs shrinks (INCB, 2015).

Drug depenalization: A situation in which the specified drugs remain illegal but

the possession of little amounts (particularly for personal use) attracts only minor

penalties such as fines or community service, instead of conviction and incarceration.

Decriminalization is broader than depenalization; it replaces penal sanctions for drug-

related offenses with a more tolerant and regulatory regime that works with the legal

system. Decriminalization treats drugs (and the larger issue of substance abuse) as a

public health issue or social problem instead of a criminal justice or law enforcement

challenge (INCB, 2015).

Drug interdiction: A general term used to describe coercive measures to

discourage and deter drug trafficking, such as arrests of drug dealers, couriers, and

vendors as well as seizures of drugs and confiscation of proceeds of drugs (NDLEA,

2015). Drug interdiction was initially restricted to the action of prohibiting or forbidding

certain specified drugs or, more specifically, the action of intercepting and preventing the

movement of a prohibited drug.

Drug legalization: Removing the prohibition over the production, supply, sale or

consumption (though still retaining some government regulation) of a psychoactive

substance. Cannabis (popularly called marijuana) is the only narcotic drug to have been

legalized in some parts of the world.

Drug prohibition: A short phrase for *drug prohibition policy or laws* through

which governments forbid, except under license, the cultivation, manufacture, supply,

and possession of certain designated substances that are classified as drugs. Drug prohibition policy represents the global system of commitments through treaties, including the international drug conventions.

Drug prohibition conventions: A collective term to describe the three drug laws that codified the international agreements for drug prohibition. UNODC (2009) listed these conventions as the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, with modifications introduced by the 1972 Protocols; the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971; and the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988 (UNODC, 2009). The drug prohibition conventions are officially called the United Nations Drug Conventions or international drug laws.

Drug substitution therapy/treatment modalities: The administering of milder and less addictive psychoactive substances (such as an opioid) to counter the withdrawal symptoms that accompany nonuse of the addictive drug (another opioid) to which the body of the drug-dependent user was already accustomed (Strang et al., 2012).

Drug supply reduction: Activities, including law enforcement, for removing drugs from circulation and reducing access, making drugs more expensive and less socially tolerated.

Harm reduction: The International Harm Reduction Association defined harm reduction as the series of policies, programs, and practices designed to reduce the harms associated with the use of psychoactive substances, especially among people who are unable or unwilling to stop drug use. Harm reduction principle or policy focuses on

preventing or limiting harm rather than on preventing or stopping drug use, and the focus is on people who continue to use drugs (Hunt, Trace & Bewley-Taylor, 2003).

Harm reduction program: A series of activities or interventions aimed at reducing the health, social, and economic costs and other implications of drug use.

Public good: Socioeconomic benefits, including improved public health, reduced crime, greater stability and quality of life for individuals, families, and neighborhoods (Strang et al., 2012). Stability includes (but is not limited to) political, economic (macroeconomic and microeconomic), social, and cultural resilience.

Assumptions

The assumptions of any study are determined by the research approach as well as the philosophical issues underpinning the study (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In a qualitative inquiry, the researcher commits the vivid description of the phenomenon and the elaboration of meaning (Patton, 2015). Based on reviews of relevant literature, the following were the underlying assumptions for the current study.

I was the principal instrument for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (see Porter, 2010). My research strategy was to take charge of the process of understanding the variables, concepts, and constructs by giving meaning to the collected data while ensuring fidelity to the experiences and perspectives of research participants and faithfulness to the research context (see Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Maxwell, 2012). Because each of the participants recruited for this research had expertise, experience, and exposure to implementation of narcotics control policy, I assumed that they were experts who were able, willing, and ready to share their experiences and

perceptions on Nigeria's narcotics control regime. The narcotics prohibition policy is of critical importance to the status of drug use, distribution, and production with significant implications for public health, environmental safety, sustainable development, human rights, democracy, and national security of the country.

Given persistent fears that Nigeria is being overwhelmed by the twin problem of illegal drug use and trafficking, as well as drug-related challenges of money laundering, arms smuggling, corruption, and other organized crimes despite the consistent implementation and increasing intensity of the drug prohibition, I assumed that Nigeria does not need to do more of the same old things (upscaling law enforcement or the so-called war on drugs) but needs a change of approach and direction. I assumed a need-driven, people-oriented, and home-grown solution would enjoy national ownership and be more sustainable than an externally determined, donor-driven, and inextricably tied to a hegemon's drug policy. The use of legislation needs to be combined with communication and socialization for counternarcotic efforts to be effective and sustainable (see Porter, 2010).

Drug prohibition and its implementation side effects and unintended consequences, rather than drug abuse, trafficking, and production, has become the main challenge of the drug phenomena (Barnett, 2009). Narcotics prohibition policy is a remedy that appears to have become more dangerous than the menace it was designed to combat (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012). There is a need for evidence-based criteria for assessment of the success or implementation of narcotics control policies or interventions. Frequent headlines announcing arrests of drug couriers or seizures of many

tons of cannabis are not authentic signs or valid indicators of the success of the war on drugs. Drug hauls or successful interdiction (arrest and seizure rates) are inappropriate and incorrect performance evaluation criteria (Klantschnig, 2015). The main driving force of the worsening drug problem is the huge profit that is associated with the illegality of drug use and production that amplifies drug trafficking, a so-called dividend of prohibition. Drug trafficking is sustained by the underground market, which arose to fill the gap and meet the unmet needs caused by making drugs illegal and thereby denying access to legal sources of needed drugs.

Facts, evidence-based arguments, and propositions of pragmatic and rational alternatives can convince policymakers to consider embarking on policy reforms or changes (Strang et al., 2012). The incremental but steady liberalization of the drug policy environment in countries such as Netherlands, Canada, and some U.S. states indicates that persistent advocacy and recommendation of pragmatic policy options and regulatory models can make a difference. Reform of drug prohibition or its replacement by more liberal, more pro-people, and more effective policies is a serious possibility. Cannabis has been proving to be far less harmful than some legal recreational psychoactive substances such as tobacco and alcohol (Bewley-Taylor, 2005). Cannabis is also a medically important therapeutic agent whose prohibition denies sick people access to its medicinal uses (Barnes, 2000; Smith, 2000).

The Nigerian narcotics control environment is not conducive to any policy debate and does not encourage or promote open discussion, scrutiny, or criticism of drug prohibition in Nigeria (Obot, 2004). Anti-prohibitionist sentiments are considered

anathema and politically incorrect in the country unlike in more liberal and tolerant parts

of the globe. As in most government policies, money is a critical factor. The law

enforcement caucus who survive on the drug prohibition enterprise in Nigeria has a

vested interest in the perpetuation of narcotics prohibition (maintenance and dominance

of the law enforcement approach) like the politicians of the day (Klantschnig, 2015).

Although the crucial decisions for policy action are largely nonscientific and focused on

what policymakers and influential politicians and the public deem of value, there are

opportunities for scientific evidence to inform deliberations and influence the

identification, selection, or reform of policies or interventions that could maximize the

public good (Strang et al., 2012).

Scope and Delimitations

The delimitation of a study allows for the narrowing of the scope while

establishing the parameters of participant recruitment and the research context

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The current study did not include Nigeria's narcotics

policymaking process but was limited to drug policy implementation because there had

been no democratic narcotics policymaking per se in Nigeria that involved the elected

policymakers; the extant narcotics prohibition policy was inherited from the military

junta that seized power in 1983 and ruled until May 1999. There had been no review or

reform of the criminal drug prohibition policy by legislators since it was decreed into

existence in 1989, and half-hearted attempts by NDLEA to reform drug laws have been

brushed aside or aborted by the National Assembly (Nigeria's legislative arm). The study

focused on cannabis prohibition rather than psychoactive drugs' prohibition because

cannabis is the unrivalled drug in the country in terms of consumption, local production, and trafficking, according to the Nigerian Drug Use Survey (UNODC, 2019). However, whatever is true of the implementation challenges and experiences of drug interdiction officers with cannabis sativa is largely true and applicable to most other psychoactive substances.

The participants in this study were knowledgeable individuals purposively selected for their information, institutional memory, experience, and readiness to discuss Nigeria's narcotics policy and alternative policy options. The narcotics officers were competent, committed, and professionally conscious operatives or officers of the NDLEA, with institutional memory of the drug law agency. Each participant was involved in face-to-face interviews in which they freely responded to open-ended questions.

Limitations

Limitations are the inadequacies and possible drawbacks of any study (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). The main limitation of this study was the relatively small sample size and coverage because it was difficult, given the limited time and resources, to cover all of the critical stakeholders of this important policy issue; the in-depth interviews were restricted to policy implementers: NDLEA's narcotic drug control officers.

Another limitation of the study was the use of serving narcotics control officers who might have regarded my interview questions as a quasi-performance appraisal of their agency (NDLEA), thereby increasing the possibility of biased and self-serving responses. To address this conflict of interest, I sensitized and socialized my interviewees

to the academic and nonpolitical nature of my inquiry and emphasized the need for them to provide candid, credible, and objective. I also assured them of their confidentiality and privacy as my sources of information. I also used some retired narcotics control officers instead of serving personnel of NDLEA, but the responses and insights of these retired personnel, based on their service knowledge and experience, might have also carried their own bias and prejudices. Patton (2015) recommended the use of standardized open-ended questions to structure interview sessions as an approach to reduce interviewees' bias.

A limitation in a qualitative inquiry of this nature is the layers of subjectivity and bias of the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection, analysis, and interpretation (see Tufford & Newman, 2012). To remediate this limitation, I interrogated and addressed my subjectivity and bias while also ensuring fidelity to the experiences and perspectives of my research participants and the research context to ensure a rigorous, credible, and dependable study (see Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Significance of the Study

It was necessary to explore, describe, and characterize the policy and regulatory environment in Nigeria for controlling the use, cultivation, manufacture, and distribution of psychoactive products designated as narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The objective was understanding of the challenges associated with the current narcotics prohibition regime while also highlighting viable alternatives. Despite nearly 30 years of strict implementation of the criminal prohibition policy, there has been increasing prevalence and consumption of psychoactive substances accompanied by increasing

human casualties and property losses arising from the aggressive and repressive

implementation strategy (Klantschnig, 2015; Otu, 2013). Gyong and Taminu (2009)

reasoned that the crackdown approach employed to curb the use and proliferation of

psychoactive substances might lead to severe consequences for all segments of Nigerian

society and stakeholders involved in the narcotics value chain, including users, peddlers,

traffickers and barons, as well as the environment, economy, and sociocultural space. Otu

(2013) stated that cannabis cultivation had negatively impacted Nigeria's food

sufficiency and security by consuming close to 60% of the arable land devoted to

growing food staples and cash crops in major cannabis-producing areas. This study could

increase awareness and understanding of the agricultural and food security implications

of Nigeria's drug prohibition policy, illuminate the prevailing resistance to policy reform

while drawing attention to more liberal, health-friendly, and harm-reducing alternatives

to criminal prohibition of psychoactive drugs, thereby creating an enabling environment

for policy reform and change to a more rational and evidence-based regulatory drug

policy. Promotion of liberal and effective strategies may arrest the menace of illegal drug

use and trafficking and contribute to the release of more arable land for agriculture,

reduce drug-related environmental pollution, and curb policy-related health challenges

(including the spread of HIV and Hepatitis B), violence, and the associated breach of

human rights, thereby facilitating the transformation of the individual and social

conditions in the drug-afflicted regions of the country.

Significance to Practice

The outcomes of this study may contribute to spurring narcotics policymakers to prioritize evidence-based, liberal, pro-people, and effective policies while encouraging narcotics control agencies and officers to implement policies and interventions that will maximize public good (social benefits), including improved public health, better environmental safety, harm reduction, reduced levels of violence and criminal activities, and an enhanced standard of living and quality of life for individuals and communities in Nigeria. Research findings may provide insights to policy implementers regarding pragmatic and rational paths to expand Nigeria's national narcotics policy space for improved safety, stability, and security. If public good is the goal, evidence of impact and efficiency could help policymakers and implementers select appropriate policies that achieve expected outcomes (Strang et al., 2012).

Significance to Theory

I documented the origin and history of Nigeria's narcotics prohibition policy and contextualized this within Nigeria's social, cultural, religious, and moral contexts and its geopolitical location, political economy, unequal foreign relations, and political dependency. Through my theoretical foundation, especially my analysis and innovative integration of the social construction theory and the drug securitization doctrine, I underscored the consequences of the seemingly inextricable linkage of Nigeria with the global drug prohibition system. I situated Nigeria's narcotics challenge within the social construction paradigm and the consolidation and solidification of the criminal prohibition policy under the realities of the international narcotics securitization doctrine that led to

the canonization of the criminal prohibition policy. I explained the reason (the method behind the madness) of policy rigidity, inertia, opaqueness, secrecy, and exclusivity of Nigeria's narcotics prohibition regime and presented a theoretically grounded case for the reform and change of the narcotics prohibition policy.

Significance for Social Change

This study has the potential to promote evidence-based interventions that could disincentivize narcotic drugs, make them less accessible, reduce violence in drug markets, lower the incidence of misuse and abuse of legal pharmaceuticals, prevent early drug use initiation in youths and adolescents, and reduce drug use and its deleterious effects on drug dependents. The research findings and outcomes may provide credible evidence to help policy implementors make evidence-driven decisions about which policy options will promote the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people. The findings may draw attention to the demerits of employing law enforcement to address a health issue and social problem, thereby indicating the need for the introduction of people-friendly and harm-reducing interventions such as the promotion of needle and syringe exchange services, opiate substitution therapy for drug-dependent individuals, and safe lifestyles. The communication and implementation of research findings may contribute to the promotion and popularization of alternative recreational practices, school and out-of-school youth clubs, outdoor and indoor sports competitions, and community programs and opportunities for natural joy and fulfillment to replace the euphoria and the cheap highs obtained from narcotics.

Research demonstration and evidence-based restatement of the counterproductivity, ineffectiveness, and nonsustainability of narcotics criminal prohibition have demonstrated the necessity of preventive approaches to halt narcotics trafficking and production through alternative development interventions (crop substitution and alternative livelihood schemes) that could replace the lucrative narcotics trade and reduce its attraction and corruptive influence. The findings of this study, particularly information about drug control officers' perceptions of the cannabis prohibition policy and their implementational challenges and experiences, may contribute to improvement of cannabis control and may be useful to the NDLEA management, drug interdiction officers, drug-concerned NGOs, government policymakers, and drug policy analysts.

Summary

This study was conducted to explore and appraise Nigeria's narcotics prohibition policy, particularly the cannabis interdiction and eradication policy, compared to more liberal and cost-effective policy options. The study focused on the implementational challenges, ineffectiveness, and public health and environmental hazards as well as the associated violence, crimes, and ethical concerns of the policy. In Chapter 1, I described the phenomenological case study approach, the background, the central research question, and the significance of the study. I also reported my deployment of the triangulation of multiple data mining methods and sources to collect data from research participants and relevant public documents for analysis and interpretation to understand and explain Nigeria's policy inertia, rigidity, and resistance to change despite the

ineffectiveness, implementational challenges, and negative effects of the narcotics

prohibition regime. In Chapter 2, I provide an analytical review and synthesis of relevant

literature, including the theoretical foundation and related concepts and constructs that

indicated the gap in the literature, with the goal of situating and contextualizing my study

within the discipline of public policy administration.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

After almost 30 years of implementation of the narcotics prohibition policy using coercive methods to suppress the production and supply and reduce the demand of cannabis sativa, the cultivation, trafficking, and trade in hemp products (herbs and resins) have been on a steady increase in Nigeria (NDLEA, 2015; UNODC, 2016). The proliferation of cannabis plantations has led to a situation in which almost half of Nigeria's agricultural land is being used for cultivating cannabis at the expense of essential food staples and cash crops (Alemika, 2018; NDLEA, 2015). Increasing the incidence, severity, and intensity of coercive implementation of narcotic prohibition policy has not improved the expected outcomes of supply suppression and demand reduction (Alemika, 2018).

Aside from its inability to achieve the desired goals, the implementation of the narcotics prohibition policy has created a riotous and conflict-ridden underground market for illicit drugs, which has precipitated drug-prohibition-related violence, crimes, and health hazards, particularly rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and Hepatis B and C, arising from increasingly potent or adulterated drugs and overdose of illicit drugs (Barnett, 2009; Obot, 2004). The coercive implementation of the drug prohibition policy has also exacerbated drug-related deaths, environmental degradation, economic losses, pervasive corruption, and political insecurity (Otu, 2013). These challenges of narcotics prohibition are rarely discussed and shrouded in secrecy in Nigeria because current debates on narcotics policy are dominated by exaggerated claims of potential health hazards of psychoactive substances and sensational reports of drug hauls (heavy seizures) and high

arrest figures by the NDLEA (Obot, 2004). Meanwhile, the growing realization of the

inefficacy, counterproductivity, unsustainability, and harms associated with forms of

narcotics criminalization around the world has led to less harsh and more people-oriented

policy options, including the depenalization and decriminalization of presumably soft and

benign psychoactive drugs, especially cannabis, in other countries (MacCoun, 1993,

1998; MacCoun & Reuter, 2011) as well as the movement toward replacement of

narcotics prohibition with regulatory regimes (UNODC, 2016). These less punitive,

harm-reducing, and health-friendly policy alternatives to narcotics prohibition, which are

already in use in more welfare-oriented and open societies, are yet to be publicly

discussed or officially recognized in Nigeria (Obot, 2004).

Despite perfunctory references to the need for drug demand reduction and drug

abuse preventive education in the NDLEA Act (that mirrors Nigeria's drug control

policy), the implementers of the drug control policy in the country appear reluctant to

consider alternative policy options as they rigidly stick to criminal drug prohibition and

law enforcement while de-prioritizing and neglecting drug demand reduction, prevention,

treatment, and rehabilitation services (Klantschnig, 2015; Otu, 2013). This qualitative

case study addressed the perceptions of drug policy implementers to scrutinize Nigeria's

narcotics prohibition policy and to gain an in-depth understanding of the deficiencies,

implementational challenges, economic costs, and deleterious consequences of

continuing the narcotics criminal prohibition while also discussing safer, liberal, and

more pro-people policy options.

In Chapter Two, I present the literature search strategy and the resources, concepts, constructs, terms, and literature related to the conceptual framework of this study. The literature search focuses on the historical origins and perspectives of narco-phobia and narcotics prohibition and the evolution of narcotics prohibitionist tendency in Nigeria and the interrogation of this tendency by advocates of policy liberalization. I sought literature on the history of cultural, religious, moral demonization, and stigmatization of psychoactive drugs, especially *Cannabis sativa*, as well as the social construction and securitization of social problems. Chapter 2 also contains the research strategy and the theoretical foundations that were used to frame the research questions and guide data collection.

I also discuss the conceptual framework for illuminating and understanding the entrenchment, tenacity, and persistence of the narcotics criminal prohibition in Nigeria within the context of the inertia and rigidity of the country's narcotics policy space. In the first section of Chapter 2, I review literature on the drug prohibition phenomenon, including its inherent deficiencies, ineffectiveness, implementation challenges, costs, consequences, and unsustainability. The second section of Chapter 2 contains the theoretical foundation on which the research was built. The last section highlights relevant studies on narcotics prohibition policy and their findings on the effects of continued drug prohibition on narcotics supply, consumption, and illegal production and trafficking as well as the implications for public health, security, organized crimes, corruption, human rights, environmental hazards, and socioeconomic welfare. The chapter also provides current thinking, trends, and recent developments in the field and

concludes with contemporary literature on more liberal, rational, and pragmatic policy options and interventions that are being considered as substitutes for the drug prohibition regime.

Literature Search Strategy

The goal of the literature search was to identify relevant and current literature that addressed the narcotics prohibition policy. The literature review includes findings from seminal publications as well as recent literature and studies on psychoactive drug prohibition and alternative drug control or regulation models. The literature review provides a theoretical basis and conceptual framework underpinning the current study and validating the study's potential to contribute to the existing literature (see Salah, Ratajeski, & Bertolet, 2014). The literature review supports the research methodology, research questions, and the purpose of the current study (see Salah et al., 2014). My literature review reflects the search for and synthesis of studies on psychoactive substances' prohibition policy and the perspectives on the inherent deficiencies, ineffectiveness, implementational difficulties, economic costs, health effects, environmental consequences, and unsustainability of the drug prohibition regime as well as perspectives on the rigidity, resilience, persistence, and resistance to change of the drug prohibition policy despite its notorious demerits.

The review includes findings from classical as well as recent literature and studies on the prohibition of psychoactive substances. I review peer-reviewed journal articles, scientific reviews, scientific professional publications, and meta-analyses published within the last 8 years on drug prohibition and alternative policy options.

I conducted literature searches using multidisciplinary databases including but not limited to ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost, Medline, SAGE Journals, PsycINFO, and ScienceDirect as well as specialized sources such as Nigeria Institute of Drug Abuse, Nigeria Institute of Substance Abuse, Australian Criminology Database, Drug-Scope, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, ProQuest Criminal Justice, CINCH: Health Issues in Criminal Justice, Addiction, Addictive Behaviors, and the *Journal of Public Health Policy*.

The key terms used for conducting this literature search included, but were not limited to, different mergers and combinations of the following words or terms: *cannabis, policy, implementation, impact, outcome, prevalence* and *narcotic drugs prohibition, psychoactive drugs/substances, drug control policy, drug laws/conventions/treaties, criminal prohibition policy, crack-down policy, cannabis eradication drugs interdiction, war on drugs, drug law enforcement, drug law reform, drug crops control, crop eradication, drug supply reduction, drug prevention, zero-tolerance or abstinence policy, alternatives to narcotic drug prohibition/ war on drugs, responsible use policy, drug prevention and management, harm reduction policy, drug counseling, drug treatment services, drug rehabilitation services, methadone* and other *drug substitution services, drug demand reduction, drug-prohibition-caused health hazards/crimes/violence/conflicts and environmental effects, narcotics prohibition economic costs/consequences, ethical concerns of narcotics prohibition,* and *human rights challenges of drug law enforcement*. I specifically searched for classical works and current researches on social construction of health and social problems, social

construction of drug debates, drug offenses and target populations, as well as the securitization of social problems. In all cases, the selection of relevant literature was predicated on the following criteria: relevance of an identified study to the research questions; quality of the study based on giving preference to studies of scientific standard and evidential value; recency of publication; and geographic region of the research study.

Theoretical Foundation

Nigeria's drug prohibition policy as well as its crack-down implementation approach, especially the cannabis prohibition strategy, is predicated on a backdrop of gradual, systematic, and ceaseless narcotics stigmatization and demonization, which led to the media framing and social construction of psychoactive substances as evil, destructive, and addictive substances. In line with this, drugs were generally characterized and regarded as an existential threat to individuals, families, communities, and nations (the securitization doctrine) that must be tackled through a holy crusade on drugs, hence the unrepentant criminal prohibition and the relentless prosecution of the War on Drugs, in solidarity and compliance with the President Richard Nixon's earlier declaration of same in the early seventies. Against this backdrop, the theoretical framework for this study comprises mainly the social constructionist theory and a strand of the drug securitization theory. In the process, I explored the deontological (racial, religious, and moral) dimensions; the economic and imperial roots of the social construction of drugs as a menace to humankind. I also used the social construction theory and the drug securitization doctrine to interrogate and situate the persistence and dominance of the narcotics criminal prohibition despite its perceived failure and the

availability of seemingly more innovative policy options and alternative regulatory

models and interventions already in use in other drug-afflicted countries across the globe.

This is geared to explain and illuminate the tenacity (durability), rigidity, and persistence

of the narcotics criminal prohibition policy despite its perceived comparative

disadvantages vis-à-vis more liberal, effective, and safer alternatives.

Social Constructionist Theory

The social constructionist theory was postulated by behavioral scientists to

explain the nature and origin of knowledge. Berger and Luckman (1991) reasoned that

knowledge is created by interactions of individuals within society; and that knowledge

and truth are creations of communicating and interacting people rather than preexisting

and static objects uncovered by the mind. Social constructionists thus reason that

concepts are socially created rather than found, though these concepts may represent

something concrete (Schwandt, 2003). The social construction of reality has since the

early nineties been deployed to analyze the evolution of socially constructed meanings

and understandings of the world as a basis for shared beliefs and presumptions about

reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Social constructionism essentially refers to social

meaning-making processes, especially the meaning or connotation attached to an issue or

occurrence by a group and adopted by the group with respect to how they perceive or

deal with that issue or situation (Charmaz, 2006; Berger & Luckman, 1991).

The Social Constructionist Theory is predicated on the premise and belief that

human beings rationalize and explain their experiences by constructing models of the

social world, which they share and concretize with the aid of languages (Diaz-Leon,

2013). Social Constructionism regards the language, the communication and the speech as central to the interactive and cognitive process by which human beings understand the world and themselves; this constructionism is concerned with human interactions and relations and underlines the crucial role of active individuals in the social construction of realities (Galbin, 2014). The social constructionist model has been used to explain how the consistent and persistent expression and framing of concerns, fears, anxieties, and panic over the perceived evil, dangerous nature and addictive effects of narcotics drugs led to cultural perception and societal acceptance of narcotics drugs as a harmful and addictive substance and its consumption regarded as an undesirable and dangerous behavior (Hammersley, 2017).

The constant linkage of narcotics consumption to moral degeneracy (especially of youths and women), criminality, poisonous contamination of the psychoactive substance, health problems, and addiction (inability to stop or control use) led to the construction and public acceptance of narcotics as grave social problem that must be legally banned (Hammersley, 2017; Borio, 2007). Social constructionist theory describes and illuminates how a public problem is defined and framed by the processes of its cultural conception and creation as well the manner it was socially constructed (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009). Social constructionists view knowledge as constructed; and argue that meanings and understandings of the world are shared based on common assumptions about reality (Andrews, 2012). Social constructionism has its roots in symbolic interactionism and phenomenology, with the concept firmly established by the seminal publication, *The Social Construction of Reality*, by Berger and Luckman (1966), with the basic tenet that

people construct (make) their social and cultural worlds while these worlds

simultaneously make the people (Burr, 2003). While Burr (2003) acknowledged the

major influence of Berger and Luckman (1991), the origins of social constructionism has

partly been traced to an interpretivist approach (Andrews, 2012).

The social constructionist theory was later deployed by Nadelmann (1989) and

Klantschnig (2015) to explore and interrogate the media framing, social creation and

societal acceptance of the stereotyping of narcotic drugs as evil, dangerous and addictive

substances that must be stamped out and banned for the sake of the good health of

individuals, the safety of neighborhoods and the security of nations. Hammersley (2017)

asserted that addiction as well as the perception of drugs as an addictive, harmful and

undesirable substance is socially situated and culturally constructed. Social

constructionist theory helps to explain the moral panic, health anxieties, and religious

fears about narcotics as socially created and culturally constructed rather than based on

rational analysis or empirical facts (Gablin, 2015).

The training, socialization, and practice guidelines of drug police officers

influence their perception of drug use and other offences and it is reasonable to conclude

that the way drug interdiction agents view drug offences invariably influence how they

implement and enforce these drug laws. Worrall and Kovandzic (2008) reasoned that the

police might be favorably disposed to harsh enforcement of drug laws and higher

punishments for drug offences because they feel such offences are directly harmful to

society or that drug use is a catalyst to more serious crimes. On the other hand, police

may favor strict enforcement of drug laws because of selfish interests such as profit

arising from asset forfeiture or the career advancement and promotion through pumping up of arrest figures and seizure numbers (Worrall & Kovandzic, 2008).

Schneider and Ingram (2014) posited that the social construction of target populations has a critical influence on public officials, especially policy implementers, and shapes the policy purpose, design, and future policy review or modification. There are strong pressures on public officials to provide a beneficial policy for powerful and positively constructed target populations and to devise punitive and harsh policy for negatively constructed people (Schneider & Ingram, 2014). The cultural characterization, media framing, and popular perception of populations targeted by the drug control policy, including drug users and producers, as deviants, outlaws, and outcasts marked them out as deserving of policy punishments (arrests and incarceration) rather than benefits of social policy (drug counseling, treatment, and rehabilitation). The social construction of target populations (drug offenders) further explains the preference of drug interdiction officers for law enforcement measures at the expense of supposedly people-friendly, harm-reducing and human rights-promoting policy options.

To further explicate the democratic essence and possibilities of the social construction of reality, as propounded by Berger and Luckman (1991), Schneider, Ingram, and Deleon (2014) in 'Democratic Policy Design: Social Construction of Target Populations' addressed the essential elements of a democratic policy including people's participation, inclusiveness, stakeholder's engagement, social interaction, effective communication, and feedback mechanism in an eclectic situation where goals, projects, programs, interventions and solutions compel collective action based on shared

knowledge, ideas, and experiences. The trio put in clear perspective how social construction influences policy designs as well as the inexorable allocation of benefits and penalties of public policies to target groups.

Schneider, et al (2014) underlined the role of democratic policy design and implementation framework to ensure better understanding and appreciation of the daily challenges of policy targets and reasoned that a decision or policymaking based on shared knowledge and common understanding has higher probability of successful implementation (Schneider, Ingram, & Deleon, 2014). Policy development, whether local, national or international, is essentially a social construction undertaking where the vital interests and needs of policymakers, executives and bureaucrats who seek change, and the citizens who are targets or would-be beneficiaries of change are taken seriously (Schneider et al., 2014).

Jun (2012), in 'The Social Construction of Public Administration: Interpretive and Critical Perspectives', discussed the crucial role of social construction of public administration and the significance of its proactive and deliberate application to humanize, democratize, and collectivize public administration to make it more people-oriented, people-driven, and people-focused. In this conceptual exploration of contemporary public administration, Jun (2012) reasoned that modern public administration should be more than just governing, managing, and control of the public. He challenged the democratic deficits of modern public administration which he contended made it rather inadequate for understanding current intricate and complex human phenomena. Public administration, he said, should go beyond rational analysis,

administrative efficiency, planning, and goal achievement and should not just include but prioritize the public ideals of people's participation, deliberation, civic engagement, bargaining, negotiation, citizen empowerment (Jun,2012). Jun (2012) prescribed that authentic modern public administrators should go beyond top-down centralized governance approach to forge interactive, consultative, communicative, and collaborative processes that are less hierarchical or outrightly non-hierarchical (and largely horizontal) in order to create socially acceptable solutions or interventions where synergy that is predicated on optimum coordination, cooperation, and collaboration is achieved at the implementation stage.

This is because complex human issues, including the psychoactive drug challenge, might not be easily resolved or managed using conventional management principles and techniques. Relying on case studies from and his experience of both Eastern and Western countries, he made a good case for interpretive and interpretive perspectives as a counterforce for sheer technical rationality that reduces public administration to the structural-functionalist conception of management. At any rate, he argued, mainstream public administration that is overly dependent on the role of management and professional experts at the expense of the inclusion and empowerment of critical stakeholders and target groups may have severely limited capacity to address social problems, resolve conflicts, or otherwise generate socially acceptable and grounded solutions that are sustainable. Therefore, theorizing the social constructionist approach to public administration, Jun (2012) reasoned that public administration need not be all about immediate results, management performance and efficiency, and the

governing and controlling of the people, it must deliberately prioritize democratic engagement and active participation of the people to guarantee their ownership of the development process rather than just being beneficiaries and mere clients or customers to public administrators. The social construction of public administration thus emphasizes the joint negotiation of pragmatic solutions to problems and the arrival at democratic decisions on the way forward on major public issues through regular social interaction and stakeholders' engagement where public administrators are facilitators and true partners to the people rather than professional experts or service providers. This social constructionist approach may reduce the tendency of modern public administration to impose on the people expert solutions to complex social problems where people-oriented, people-driven, and people-guided policies might be more effective and sustainable.

Drug Securitization Theory

The securitization theory was propounded by the International Relations Theory in the early 1960s as a means of explaining security using a more flexible framework than allowed by conventional security schools. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde (1998) conceived securitization as a verbal exercise involving speech acts where an issue is presented or labelled as a threat to the very survival and existence of a stated object, and consequently, desperate and extreme means are justified to combat this threat (Buzan, et al, 1998). An existential threat is defined by foreign relations scholars as something that is a threat to the existence, a phenomenon or situation that has the capability to permanently change the core values of a group and the way it governs itself against its

will, something that can fundamentally alter the way of life or independence of action of a people (Walter, 2016).

The drug securitization theory has been used since the mid-seventies to characterize the identification and labeling of narcotic drugs as a threat to the existence, the essence, and core values of humanity as well as the systematic, consistent, and sustained portrayal, presentation, and treatment of narcotic drugs as a threat to individuals, communities, nations, and international society (Walter, 2016). The securitization theory has been deployed by public analysts to explain the political processes through which the security essence of a public problem, whether real or contrived, is established; it states how the social obligations arising from the collective acceptance that an issue, problem or phenomenon is a threat is fixed, and it explains how this acceptance of the existential threat influences the reality of any policy being formulated or reformed (Balzacq, Leonard, & Ruzicka, 2016). The securitization theory has gained a lot of acceptance and traction in the last one decade as the study of the securitization doctrine has attracted the attention of political theorists (Balzacq, et al., 2016). While the securitization theory initially focused upon and emphasized the "speech acts" that identified and labelled the act, situation, substance, or phenomenon as existential threat, the securitization process currently embodies the procedures and the capacity to articulate a specific approach, the social commitments necessary and the policy to be emplaced to ensure that human or national security is protected (Crick, 2012).

Crick (2012) explicated that by identifying drug problem as an existential threat to the security of the individual, communities, states and the world, the international community labels narcotics supply and demand as a global security issue, thus taking drug control above politics and beyond ordinary policymaking. Specifically, drug securitization theorists conceive that narcotic drugs are a security issue because their misuse or abuse is a threat to the existence of humanity (Buzan et al., 1998). As conceptualized and elaborated by the Copenhagen school in the mid-90s, securitization is a gradual process of problem identification, labeling as an existential threat, continuous and consistent "speech acts" like the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and President Richard Nixon's declaration and prosecution of the "War on Drugs" as well as gradual and continual framing until acceptance as a global security issue (Kushlick, 2011). The ultimate effect of the securitization is the formulation of global drug policy that is placed above political contestations and effectively insulated from open debate and scrutiny (Kushlick, 2014). Against the above backdrop, the social constructionist theory was the main plank of the theoretical compass for my study and analysis. However, I additionally deployed the drug securitization theory given its usefulness and versatility to also explain the stiff resistance to change, resiliency, and perseverance of Nigeria's narcotics control policy.

History of Drug Control in Nigeria

The consumption, production, and distribution of psychoactive substances, so-called illicit drugs, have a long history in Nigeria while the use of cannabis sativa (locally called Indian hemp or weed) predated the country's political independence from Britain

in 1960 (Nelson, Obot, & Umoh, 2017; Obot, 2004). In the same vein, given the

neocolonial origin of drug control in the country, initiatives to curb the production,

trafficking and use of narcotics correspond to the history of international attempts to curb

and prevent illicit use and trade in narcotics drugs and psychotropic substances. Global

efforts to control the trade of narcotics can be traced to the International Opium

Commission held in February 1909 in Shanghai, China, that led to ground-breaking

recommendations, which later crystalized into the International Opium Convention of

1912. This historic action, which was geared towards focusing attention on the increasing

use of and trade in Opium, especially in China, United Kingdom, and United States of

America, ended the inertia and apathy to the challenge of growing use of and trade in

psychoactive substances (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012).

The International Opium Convention largely established the superstructure for the

global drug control system. The Opium Convention was followed by the first Geneva

Conventions of 1931 and the Convention for the Suppression of Illicit Traffic in

Dangerous Drugs of 1936 (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2012). Bewley-Taylor and Jelsma

(2012) reported that these preliminary conventions were later followed by the ground-

breaking Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 and its protocol of 1972; the

Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971, and the Vienna Convention Against

Illicit Traffic in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

These multilateral drug treaties that were created under the aegis of the United

Nations impose obligations on state parties to combat both the abuse and illegal

trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances through structures and

platforms for global consultation, cooperation and communication of both operational and scientific information on the patterns and trends in the international narcotics trade. Being a former colonial territory of Britain, Nigeria's drug control evolved from the above framework. Though initially merely part of the taxation and revenue drive of Her Majesty's colonial government, colonial drug control was ostensibly geared towards fulfilling the humanitarian obligation to ensure that Nigeria did not become drug ridden. The first notable drug control legislation in the country was the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance of 1935 that was made by the British colonial administration (Obot 2004).

The indigenous civilian administration that replaced the British colonial government in October 1960 did not enact any law or policy until it was toppled by a military government. The Military government led by Major General Aguiyi Ironsi enacted the Indian Hemp Decree No. 19 of 1966, that prescribed life imprisonment for illicit trafficking (later reduced to 10 years), with death penalty prescribed as the maximum punishment for drug (Indian Hemp) cultivation (later reduced to 21 years) and 10 years' imprisonment for use or possession (Obot, 2004). The activist regime of Major General Murtala Mohammed enacted the Decree No. 34 of 1975 which abolished the capital punishment for the cultivation of Hemp and replaced it with a penalty of 21-year imprisonment and reduced the 10-year jail term to 6 months' imprisonment or fine for use and possession (Obot, 2004).

The second republic under the civilian leadership of then President Shehu Shagari was also a period of drug policy apathy and inertia as there was no new legislation on drug matters or any revision of the old order till a coup d'état terminated the civilian

regime. The sacking of the Second Republic civilian administration and coming into

power of the authoritarian regime of Major General Muhammadu Buhari led to drastic

changes and increased severity in general law enforcement in country (Obot, 2004; Otu,

2013). The regime engaged in various draconian reforms to the Hemp and Miscellaneous

Offences Decree, tagged Decree No. 20 of 1984, which prescribed capital punishment for

illicit trafficking of narcotics and uncharacteristically backdated the decree to take

retroactive effect from the time of coming into power of the military government in

December 1983. Three young Nigerians, who had been charged with cocaine trafficking

sometimes in 1983, were executed perhaps to demonstrate the commitment of the regime

to the War on drugs. Following the uproar that followed the execution of the three drug

traffickers, the Ibrahim Babangida regime, that toppled the Buhari military junta in a

palace coup, abolished the death penalty and replaced it with life imprisonment through

the Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous Offences) Amendment Decree of 1986 (Obot, 2004).

Yet, there was no respite to the illegal cultivation, distribution, and consumption of

cannabis and some other psychoactive substances.

In response to the upsurge of trafficking and illegal use of psychoactive

substances in the country and following the coming into force of the global 1988

Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the

military government of General Sanni Abacha, in what was perhaps the most drastic

development in Nigeria's drug control history, enacted the NDLEA Decree No. 48 of

1989 (Obot, 2004). This Decree was later amended in 1990 by Decree No. 33 (famously

labelled 'the double jeopardy decree'), in 1992 by Decree No.15, and in 1999 by Decree

No. 62, all of which were fused and harmonized in 2004 under the Laws of the

Federation of Nigeria (LFN) as Cap. N30 (NDLEA, 2014).

Decree 33 of 1990 was tagged '*the double jeopardy decree*' because it prescribed

that Nigerians who were jailed or otherwise penalized overseas for drug offences would

on deportation to and arrival in Nigeria be arrested and prosecuted for the second time for

that same offence, that translates to tarnishing the image of the country. It was Decree 62

of 1999 that transferred jurisdiction on drug cases to the Federal High Court. The regime

of General Sanni Abacha extended the range and purview of the war on drugs through the

enactment in 1995 of Decree No. 3, called the Money Laundering (Miscellaneous

Offenses) Decree. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo's civilian administration followed this with

the 2004 enactment of the Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act while President

Goodluck Jonathan introduced the revised Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act of 2011

which repealed the earlier Act of 2004 (Klantschnig, 2015). However, in all these, the

commitment to the criminal prohibition of drug use, possession, production, distribution,

and trafficking was unshaken.

The establishment of the NDLEA to oversee and coordinate all drug laws,

policies, and activities to suppress the supply, use, manufacturing, and production of

narcotic drugs, was a deliberate attempt to consolidate all drug control functions that

were formerly carried out by older government agencies, the Nigeria Customs Service

(NCS) and the Nigeria Police (that were involved in drug interdiction), and the Federal

Welfare Department, then statutorily charged with the treatment, counseling, and

rehabilitation of drug dependent persons. The setting up of NDEA with its extensive

investigative, interdiction and prosecutorial powers as well as its drug demand reduction responsibilities took drug control in the country to a new and unprecedented height (Klantschnig, 2015).

Drug laws and the penalties for drug offences have always been draconian and extreme in Nigeria (Obot, 2004). The military government of the first military government in the country, General Ironsi introduced capital punishment as the maximum penalty for cultivation of Cannabis sativa way back in 1966. Though the death penalty was abrogated by the 1975 amendment by the military regime of General Gowon, the tough-talking military regime of Buhari-Idiagbon reintroduced the death penalty for illegal dealings in narcotic drugs like cocaine and similar psychoactive substances.

This repressive and extremist nature of drug control policies and laws in Nigeria is attributed to the predominant role of the military in the political governance and consequently drug policy formulation in the country (Obot, 2004, Otu, 2013). Obot (2004) reasoned that the usually repressive tendency of the military made their administrations in Nigeria favorably disposed to the draconian provisions and prohibitive essence of the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. The appointment of officers of armed forces, including the army, the police, and security intelligence services, to execute such policies reinforces the coercive character of the country's drug control particularly as these officers use war rhetoric and prefer the use of extra-judicial institutions like military tribunals to try drug offences (Nelson, Obot, & Umoh, 2017; Klantschnig, 2015; Obot, 2004). Given the earlier media framing, public perception and subsequent social construction of

psychoactive drugs as a menace and lethal problem that is detrimental to the welfare of humankind and national security as well as the pioneer role of the military in the formulation and execution of Nigeria's response to the drug pandemic, it is understandable that Nigeria's drug control policy has been prohibitionist and repressive rather than liberal, and the punishment for drug offences has always been draconian and extreme (Otu, 2013; Klantschnig, 2015).

Nigeria's Drug Prohibition: Context and Challenges

Nigeria's drug problem is complex and hydra headed (Obot, 2004; Otu, 2013). The drug scene is a bewildering and uncharted terrain while the drug control is compromised by myriads of factors. Apart from Nigeria's geopolitical location between source countries of Asia and Latin America and user/consuming countries of Europe and America, the many and porous international borders, numerous points of entry and exit, the shared linguistic and cultural identity with neighboring countries, and the ceaseless cross-border commerce and socio-cultural exchanges, make policing drug consumption, production, and trade an uphill task (Odejide, 2000). Moreover, the abject poverty of the majority, the ethnic diversity and religious plurality, the exploding youthful population, and the expansive land mass, and several other centrifugal forces, combine to further magnify and compound Nigeria's narcotic challenge and complicate the drug policy environment (Alemika, 2018).

The geographical and socioeconomic factors that provide a favorable and fertile environment for illegal drug use and trafficking that might contribute to the seemingly unstoppable proliferation of cannabis sativa farms across the country at a rate that is

higher than the capacity of law enforcement agencies to track, trace, confiscate and destroy (Odebunmi, 2008). Another disturbing dimension to the drug pandemic is the recent discovery of about 10 clandestine drug laboratories in the country for the mass "cooking" of methylamphetamines (Alemika, 2018). The drug abuse and trafficking menace is further compounded by the increasing abuse and indiscriminate consumption of new psychoactive substances (NPS), including tippex, glue, paint, organic solvents, aerosols, and the widespread non-medical use of addictive medicaments, including Benylin with codeine and tramadol especially among women and the exploding youth population (Alemika, 2018).

Moreover, the drug menace in the country is compounded by the linkage of indiscriminate drug consumption among Nigeria's able-bodied but largely unemployed and underemployed youth population with terrorist activities in North-Eastern Nigeria as well as the youth thuggery and environmental militancy in the Niger Delta and South-Eastern regions of Nigeria (Giade, 2014; Obot, 2004). Coping with the hydra-headed problem of drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking as well as the associated drug-related challenges are crying for the attention of policy makers and implementers (Giade, 2014).

Given the above complex and intellectually challenging scenario, there is an urgent need to make sense of the experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers and meanings out of the challenges of Nigeria's drug situation and policy environment. Unravelling, explaining, and characterizing the coercive and repressive drug prohibitionist phenomena could benefit from an interpretive and naturalistic approach, such as a qualitative study. A qualitative research is called for when there is a need to

study things in their natural settings, situate, and contextualize them with a view to interpreting social phenomena and make sense of things in terms of the meanings ascribed to them by the affected or concerned people (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). What is been proposed is a qualitative exploration and interpretive analysis of the implementation of Nigeria's drug prohibition policy.

Nigeria's Quest for a Drug-Free Society

There is a noticeable dogmatic commitment of Nigeria's drug policy elites to zero-tolerance for psychoactive substances. Despite the increasing availability of smuggled Class, a drugs, including cocaine, heroin, and amphetamines and the fact that the country is a known major grower and exporter of Cannabis sativa, the battle cry or official mantra of the country's drug policy formulators and implementers remains "Towards a Drug-Free Nigeria" (NDLEA, 2014). MacCoun (2001), in his book "Drug War Heresies", stated that the hope of a drug-free society or world was overly ambitious, optimistic and somehow unrealistic because there was little probability of achieving the utopia of a world without psychoactive drugs (MacCoun, 2001).

MacCoun (2001) explained that drug control was not a war that must be won but rather a problem that needed to be managed. Otu (2013) stated that the exaggerated fears of psychosocial consequences of the trade and sale of drugs had made Nigeria to embark on a desperate, repressive, and violent war on drugs that was inflicting needless harm on the populace without achieving the utopian objectives of eradicating drug abuse, cultivation, and illicit trafficking in the country. Otu (2013) stated the offensive against drug offenses that are implemented through law enforcement approaches, including drug

seizures, offenders' arrests, and incarceration, have been largely ineffectual, counterproductive, and discriminately directed against poor and disadvantaged Nigerians. Moreover, Klantschnig (2015) questioned the sincerity and credibility of the goals of the country's persistent prohibitionist policy given its continued and rigid implementation without any discernible change of strategies, direction, emphasis, or innovation despite not achieving publicly stated objectives.

Klantschnig (2015) offered a political economy perspective to the persistence and dynamics of the drug control regime in Nigeria and doubted that the dominant strategies were driven by drug demand and supply trends and factors. Rather, Klantschnig (2015) reasoned that the continued propagation of the war on drugs in utter disregard and exclusion of more liberal and less intrusive alternative approaches to drug control was deliberately anchored on satisfying the expectations and pandering to the wishes of friendly foreign governments who sponsor and support Nigeria's drug control efforts and who obviously preferred a tough, no-nonsense, and military approach, even when and where they have proven largely ineffectual. Klantschnig (2015) contended that drug control imperialism or foreign influence arising from the strong bond with international partners was the only plausible explanation for the dogged persistence in criminal drug prohibition when the strategies had proved not just ineffective but counterproductive and harmful. Building on this foreign dependency theory of the resistance to change of Nigeria's policy elites, Otu (2013) linked the preference for law enforcement and the tendency towards military and gun-boat approach to cannabis eradication to the near-fanatical commitment of successive Nigeria governments to cultivate the reputation of

no-nonsense administrations that were tough on narcotic drug offences and worthy to pass the drug certification examinations of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (Klantschnig, 2016; Otu, 2013) .

The vision statement of NDLEA underlined the organization's commitment to narcotics supply suppression and demand reduction supposedly to protect public health, public safety, and national security from the harms and dangers which are inherent in or caused by the possession, consumption, trafficking and trade in these drugs (NDLEA, 2016). The drug prohibition policy was thus introduced in Nigeria to suppress supply and discourage demand for drugs owing to assumed real and exaggerated fears of the catastrophic effects of drug sale and use in the country (Otu, 2013). This repressive and coercive approach is characterized by undue use of law enforcement and little or no use of drug demand reduction, harm reduction, drug abuse prevention education, drug counselling, treatment and rehabilitation services (Otu, 2013; Obot, 2004).

Despite about 29 years of consistent implementation and intensification of the drug prohibition and incarceration policy accompanied by frequent and wild celebration of successful drug hauls and arrests of high-profile drug barons and dealers (NDLEA, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015), the war on drugs has had limited impact on drug demand and supply suppression and the market price of cannabis sativa, that is the most consumed, traded, and produced narcotic drug in the country (Otu, 2013; Obot, 2004).

Though deterrence is one of the goals of criminal drug prohibition, this objective is considered illusory, unrealizable, and not evidence-based, and therefore largely unrealizable. There are no statistics to suggest that drug prohibition can sufficiently and

sustainably deter drug use and sale either through the fear of punishment for non-compliance or by sufficiently suppressing supply and increasing market price to discourage drug demand (MacCoun, 2001). Rather, drug prohibition cause people to resort to sourcing and purchasing drugs from illegal markets with many disastrous implications (Barnett, 2009). The inherent inefficiency, ineffectiveness, woeful failure, public health effects, safety risks, environmental consequences, human rights hazards, and discriminatory downsides of the war on drugs have engaged the attention of researchers and experts over the years (Nadelmann, 1998; Chilton, 2001; Obot, 2004; Otu, 2013; Klantschnig, 2016; Alemika, 2018). Crook (2009) described it as a punitive criminal justice and "a brainless policy" that is both immoral in conception and wrong-headed in principle, as it prosecutes victimless crimes like drug use and possession while Chilton (2001) stated that the drug war is fruitless, tragic, and misinformed in every way.

Drug Prohibition and Public Health

Though, drug prohibition was predicated on the fear that consumption of narcotics is dangerous and inimical to the individual health of drug users and that it inevitably leads to drug dependence and addiction, there is considerable evidence that most drugs do not inevitably harm or kill their consumers and that most drug consumers do not invariably become drug dependents or addicts (Barnett, 2009). Reflecting on the age-long orchestrated health nightmares of psychoactive agents, Bourgois (2008) noted that despite the 20th century scaremongering and warnings about deleterious behavioral consequences of Cannabis consumption only few health hazards or behavioral threats have been proven to exist. Moreover, even if drug use is harmful to some consumers,

there is ample evidence that drug prohibition is more harmful and dangerous to the individual and public health than drug use (Kushlick, 2011, 2014; Barnett, 2009).

Rather than protect and promote public health, drug prohibition has been found to facilitate the spread of blood-borne diseases like Human Immunodeficiency Virus and infective Hepatitis through restricting the access of narcotics users to sterile injection needles and syringes thereby forcing drug users to share these instruments [which might be infected] hence spreading these blood-borne diseases (Barnett, 2009; Hall & Weier, 2015). Moreover, drug prohibition entails lack of official recognition of drug use and sale, which practically translates to non-regulation of drug use, sale and distribution, thereby denying the society the benefits attached to product quality control and increasing the scary likelihood of counterfeiting and adulteration of drugs (Hall & Weier, 2015).

As revealed by the celebrated fentanyl-laced heroin incident in the United States, end-users are ignorant of what they are getting when they are forced by circumstances of drug prohibition to purchase drugs, including marijuana, from an illegal market that is unrecognized and unregulated. The consequent lack of quality control and standards in the illegal markets implies maximum exposure to all unimaginable risks and increases the possibility of poisoning and overdose from consumption of fake, contaminated, or over-concentrated substances (Hall & Weier, 2015). Under the drug prohibition regime, the opaqueness of unregulated illegal drug markets encourages increasing adulteration of drugs with fatal consequences for desperate and unsuspecting consumers (Kuchlick, 2014). The increased risk index introduced by drug prohibition, therefore, makes drugs

more harmful than it would have been if it were legal and under the usual regulatory regime of the Food and Drug Administration.

Moreover, drug prohibition by illegalizing cannabis use and cultivation deny people access to the proven medicinal benefits of cannabis therapeutic effects, particularly its analgesic and sedative properties that is employed to treat health disorders such as migraines, dysmenorrhea, and painful terminal diseases (Smith, 2000). The active pharmaceutical ingredient in Cannabis, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), has been shown to possess several therapeutic uses including serving as an anti-epileptic, treatment of intraocular pressure in glaucoma patients, stimulating appetite, promoting weight gain, relieving bronchospasm (constriction of air passages of the lungs) in asthmatics, and treating spasticity associated with multiple-sclerosis and wasting syndrome in HIV/AIDS patients (Smith, 2000; Barnes, 2000). The standardization and quality control of Cannabis products that would come with the de-prohibition and regulation of Cannabis use and sale would translate to reduced health burden on the medical system (Franciosi, 2018). Cannabis, because of its versatility and multi-purpose therapeutic potential is already being touted the Aspirin of the 21st Century. The strict prohibition of Cannabis in Nigeria by denying people access to the therapeutic application of Cannabis might be causing more harm to public health than any benefits it can possibly confer by frustrating or restricting the medical use of this natural locally available herb.

Notwithstanding the above, advocates of drug abstinence insist that criminal behavior can be the direct effect of cannabis use which can cause brain damage, emotional disturbance, mental illness, and anti-social behavior (NIDA, 2010). Advocates

of prohibition and zero-tolerance for drugs argue that decriminalization or outright legalization of Cannabis for medical or recreational use would send the wrong signals about the safety of marijuana thereby giving adolescents and youths false security about marijuana consumption and thus increasing their vulnerability to this mind-bender (Joffee & Yancy, 2004). However, Joffee and Yancy explained that no country has in practice totally legalized the indiscriminate use of marijuana for all ages and so there are no studies that conclusively indicate that decriminalization invariably leads to increased drug use. On the other hand, the experiences in Netherlands that engaged in de facto decriminalization of marijuana showed that the de-prohibition of this drug did not lead to any significant increase in use by most groups of people though it led to slight increase among youths (MacCoun, 2011). Experience in several jurisdictions indicates that marijuana use or possession of small amounts for consumption does not warrant the prohibition with the consequential imposition of criminal stigma and the trauma of incarceration.

Drug Prohibition and Public Safety

Based largely on impressionistic observations and anecdotal evidence without any solid and verifiable empirical data, advocates of prohibition posit that drug consumption or use predispose people to violent behavior; that the quest for money to purchase drugs can lead narcotic dependent people to engage in violence or commit crimes to get the money they need to satisfy their drug habit (Barnett, 2009). Prohibitionists that relied largely on unverified anecdotal information believed that marijuana was addictive, capable of impairing intelligence and driving ability as well as triggering anxiety, trauma,

and psychological illnesses (Hendricks & Abassi, 2013). It was also passionately argued

that because the full effects of the long-term consumption of marijuana has not been

scientifically determined and because it grows in the wild and there is no potency

limitation or purity control, governments retain the obligation to prohibit all non-medical

or scientific uses (Barnes, 2000). From all indications, there are lots of lingering and

persistent fears but no solid empirical data to support the criminal prohibition of the use

and possession of marijuana on grounds of being inimical to public safety.

On the other hand, Carden (2012) argued that the policies and laws against the use

of marijuana are the source of problem rather than the use of the drug, concluding that the

blanket ban on marijuana is a needless blunder that has negatively affected many people,

especially youths. Barnett (2009) argued that using aggression to enforce the prohibition

of the use or sale of cannabis exposes people to more harm than the use or sale of

narcotic drugs as evidenced by the health hazards and criminogenic consequences of

illegal and unregulated markets. Moreover, drug prohibition by influencing the upward

movement of the price of illicit drugs force drug users to obtain more and more money to

purchase drugs, thereby creating the incentives and increased propensity to commit

property theft and other profitable crimes (Ostrowski, 2014). Furthermore, forcing drug

users into a criminal subculture to obtain drugs as well as invariably promoting exchange

of goods between drug users and criminally-minded drug dealers in an illegal drug

market put drug users in more compromising environment that facilitates involvement in

crimes and other illegal activities beyond the drug trade (Barnett, 2009; Ostrowski,

2014).

Perhaps most important, drug prohibition unavoidably jeopardizes public safety by denying the public the many benefits of quality control and standardization in a legal and regulated market. Drug prohibition makes it impossible for a government to enforce quality control (in terms of composition, concentrations and preparation) of drug products sold and manufactured clandestinely; neither can any government regulate access to these products (based on sales points, opening hours, legal age to purchase or to consume) or the modalities and circumstances of use (in public places, when driving or other situations), where their use is prohibited. (Zullino, Tsartsalis, Calzada, & Cattacin, 2017). The high prevalence of cannabis uses despite prohibition in the United States compared to the situation in Netherland, where cannabis use has been largely decriminalized is an indication of the failure of prohibition to stop drug consumption (Zullino et al., 2017). By forcing drug users to use narcotics of unregulated and thus dubious quality and standard, prohibition makes drugs more harmful than they are naturally. Against this backdrop, drug laws rather than promote public safety contribute to and exacerbate drug-related harms, dangers and diseases. Drug prohibition is a solution to a supposedly dangerous act (drug use and sale) that causes more harm to people that it was intended to protect. Duke (2012) noted that while all narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances may not be harmless to people's health, yet two of the most harmful drugs psychotropics, alcohol and tobacco, are already legal and have proved to be less harmful in impact than they were while under prohibition. Drug decriminalization or guided deregulation might prove to be a blessing rather than the misadventure or suicidal step that prohibitionists predict that it would be.

Drug Prohibition and the Underground Economy

Drug prohibition by banning drug use, production, and sale compel desperate people to resort to illegal sources to meet their drug needs thus creating the illegal, so-called "black" market that has become the breeding ground for violent crimes (Duke, 2012). The non-availability of legal markets for needed narcotics drugs led to the emergence of illegal markets dominated by inner-city youth gangs and cults as underground markets became the surest place to get marijuana in the last half of a century (Duke, 2012). Despite the much-vaunted illegality of cannabis, everyone that desperately wanted the drug got what they needed, thus demonstrating the ineffectiveness and utter failure of drug prohibition and the criminalization to stop cannabis supply or make it unaffordable or generally unavailable (Gray, 2002). Most often because of cannabis prohibition, the much-vilified drug offences have become open and common secrets: the drug-using person (a neighbor or friend's brother) knows one operator who is linked to other offenders, whether they are fellow users, peddlers, barons, local mafia, or mob associated with drug smuggling and related organized crimes. Rather than stop, suppress or reduce the supply of cannabis, prohibition facilitates the growth of illegal drug markets and a flourishing underground economy (Duke, 2012; Gray, 2002).

Drug prohibition unconsciously supports and promotes big drug farms and drug cartels by eliminating small drug dealers and increasing profits accruing to drug barons (Alemika, 2018). The drug war is, therefore, not just a blunder as it amounts to aiding and abetting crime because it promotes the business of drug cartels. Drug prohibition encourages drug dealing by providing a profitable underground drug economy while at

same time destroying the legal economic opportunities of impoverished communities, thus denying young people of any viable options to joining the illegal drug business (Ostrowski, 2014). It precipitates a helpless situation of if you cannot not beat them join them.

The opponents of drug prohibition, who are invariably advocates of legalization, claim that the legalization or decriminalization of cannabis will put operators of the illegal drug markets out business or force them go into legitimate business. This has reportedly been the experience in Netherlands, and in both Colorado and Washington, the first two states in the United States that legalized recreational marijuana in November 2012 (Franciosi, 2018). Following this, Colorado in December 2013 and Washington in January 2014, decriminalized public sales of marijuana. In both Colorado and Washington as well as in far-away Netherlands (where marijuana use, possession and sales were first decriminalized), the black market has almost completely disappeared as there are state-registered and regulated Cannabis dispensaries (Franciosi, 2018). This is beneficial to everyone, including drug users, the States, and the society but at the expense of drug barons who thrived better in the illegal black market.

Drug Prohibition, Violence, and Organized Crime

The widespread belief was that drug use predispose drug users to violence and possibly violent crimes since psychoactive drugs (especially stimulants) supposedly possess the capacity to elicit aggressive behavior. Odebunmi (2008) asserted that violent crimes including rape, kidnapping, murder, and armed robbery are often associated with the use of psychoactive substances, including cannabis. Cultism, hooliganism,

restiveness, and even cybercrimes among youths are frequently linked to so-called illicit drug consumption (Odebunmi, 2008). In fact, cannabis prohibition laws were predicated on the belief that cannabis is psychologically addictive or that cannabis consumption has a biochemical mind-bending effect (Odebunmi, 2008). However, the notion of the criminogenic capacity of cannabis is no longer widely respected because it is now known that there is nothing about the pharmaceutical effect of marijuana that propels its user to violence or crime (Cole, 2012). Current evidence has proved that the prohibition of drug use and sale might generate or promote more violence than the consumption and sale of the drugs that it was intended to forbid or ban (Barnett, 2009).

Yet, drug prohibitionists warn and argue that legalization would stimulate phenomenal increase in drug use and lead to concomitant increase in supposedly drug-related and drug-induced violent crimes such as assaults, rape, drugged-driving, child abuse, wife-battering, spouse-abuse, and of other forms of domestic violence (Shorey et al., 2018). It is also contended that the harm attributable to any increased drug consumption would not be offset by the increased safety of legal, regulated, and responsible drug use and the expected reduction in the use of more dangerous but already legalized drugs (Shorey et al., 2018). It is also being canvassed that the harm currently associated with the side-effects of prohibition, including violent crimes and prohibition, would be negligible and tolerable compared to the much bigger harm arising from any increased drug use not offset by the increased safety of legal drug use and the expected reduction in the use of more dangerous but legal drugs (Shorey et al., 2018).

Moreover, Caulkins (2016) noted that while cannabis does not appear to impose serious damage on third parties and medical harms are considered generally moderate, cannabis use may not be totally benign because the weed might still be harmful to the users in some other ways such as reducing their cognitive ability, academic performance, and career success. Caulkins (2016) stated that the worrisome thing about cannabis is that it is a performance-limiting substance. Notwithstanding this, there is no verifiable evidence, if any, for the common claim or concern that without prohibition, cannabis use would considerably increase (MacCoun, 2011). In Netherlands, Washington, Colorado, and Alaska where use of small quantities of cannabis has been decriminalized, there was no evidence to support the prediction of soaring drug use (MacCoun, 2011).

On the other hand, legalization advocates (anti-prohibitionists) argued that it is drug prohibition that creates widespread violence and violent crimes through compelling the emergence of illegal markets that are unregulated, ignored, and uncontrolled (Gray, 2002). Since illegal markets are not subject to any laws, the law of the jungle; "might is right" prevails as violence becomes the major currency and language of survival as well as the means of enforcing agreements. Duke (2012) explained that, by perpetuating narcotics prohibition, violent crime was encouraged and enthroned through creating robust underground economy that relies solely on violence to enforce agreements, safeguard territories and protect areas of influence of drug dealers, and for evading arrest and conviction by governmental authorities. Drug prohibition has inevitably created a violence-driven crime-oriented underground market culture (Cole, 2012; Duke, 2012).

Werb, et al., (2011) stated that violence was increasingly deployed by drug barons and groups to gain or retain their market share of the illegal drug commerce, especially in contexts where the deviant groups make a living from substance racketeering. Werb et al., (2011) noted that in many instances the aggressive response of operators to the illicit nature of the drug trade have contributed to increased militarization on the part of embattled but desperate drug dealers and barons, causing further increase in prohibition-induced crimes and killings (Werb, et al., 2011). Governments typically react to increased drug market violence with more funding and heavy ammunitions for drug law enforcement without addressing the side-effects of criminal prohibition of drug use and sale and the official denial of access to needed drugs, which is fundamental cause of market violence. These interventions typically increase policing efforts with government continuing to focus attention and resources on drug law enforcement at the expense of much-needed drug prevention, counseling, treatment, rehabilitation and other rational responses to drug use and availability (Werb, et al., 2011). But, MacCoun (1999) noted that there was no definitive evidence that drug prohibition and its coercive enforcement reduced drug prevalence or led to drug reduction or supply suppression, rather, he asserted, prohibition could be linked to much of the crime and violence around illicit drug markets and a consideration percentage of the harms and dangers associated with drug adulteration, drug over-dosage, and drug-related illnesses, as well as drug-related corruption and violations of civil liberties (MacCoun, 1999).

Drug Prohibition Promotes Corruption and Regulators' Capture

Drug prohibition generates huge profits for drug dealers and puts them in an economically strong position to influence, compromise, and corrupt public officials. On the other hand, drug prohibition conventions and rules allow designated government agents to use force to disrupt and frustrate much-desired drug activities such as recreational consumption and sale of drugs for monetary gains. The absolute power to prohibit or penalize of the police vis-à-vis the high economic capacity to induce of the drug offender promotes an unhealthy environment and alliance that leads to corruption of law enforcement officials (Barnett, 2009). Levine (2003) explained that the authority to forbid and ban also gives the police the de facto authority to give out the license or privilege to manufacture and sell drugs in return for favors. Prohibition thus facilitates corruption by giving police officers power over desperate drug offenders who possess large amounts cash to compromise the police if they need to do so (Ostrowski, 2014). Drug prohibition thus promotes the corruption of police officers and other law enforcement agents, leading to perversion of the course of justice through "regulator capture", thereby decreasing the capacity of law enforcement agents to fight drug crimes.

Drug Prohibition and Defiance of the Law

The prohibition of drug use and possession, two acts that are popularly perceived as victimless offenses or at best soft crimes amounts to illegalizing habitual practices and what average people regard as acceptable; this gradually breeds disrespect for the law and generally reduce the law-habit among reasonable and law-abiding population (Ostrowski, 2014). By criminalizing misdemeanors (drug use and possession), drug prohibition also

leads to the needless staining and stigmatization of non-violent offenders. The catch-all nature of drug laws that prohibits and criminalizes essentially voluntary, consensual, and benign drug behaviors creates a regime of coercive rules that are perceived as inherently unjust, unfair, and punitive (Gray, 2002; Ostrowski, 2014). The prohibition of socially acceptable and culturally permissible behavior such as the consumption of soft and supposedly benign drugs, therefore, reduces the acceptance of and respect for drug laws, and invariably increases the defiance and disobedience of laws in general (Gray, 2002; Obot, 2004). This is particularly so for laws that prohibit soft drugs like cannabis sativa, that has been shown to be benign and relatively safe.

Drug prohibition and Promotion of Narcoterrorism

The prohibition of the consumption, production, distribution, and sale of narcotic drugs creates an illegal market that guarantees huge profits and makes drug dealers committed and desperate to continue the drug business despite its illegality (Barnett, 2009). To cope with the expected challenge of law enforcement agents in their lucrative but forbidden trade as well as protect their territories in an underground and illicit economy where the "might is right", drug traffickers typically resort to use of coercive measures, intimidation, blackmail, and other terror tactics to survive and flourish in the drug trade. Drugs prohibition thus inescapably creates a context of violence by depriving the drug trade of a legal process for enforcement of contracts and settlement of disputes (Ostrowski, 2014). Moreover, drug prohibition generates huge profits and free money that could be used and are frequently deployed to terrorism-financing and the acquisition of needed arms and ammunitions, and other weapons for terrorist activities (Rolles,

2010). Drug prohibition by creating an illegal underground economy with a crime-permissive environment facilitates drug money laundering, terrorism-financing, and trafficking of arms and ammunitions. Where there is mass unemployment of youths and under-employment of adults as well as where resource-poor states and governments are compelled to rely on the underground economy for survival and sustenance (Rolles, 2010), the huge profits created by drug prohibition inevitably contribute to the transmutation of deprived and drug-ridden weak economies and micro-states into narco-states, where certain governments and states use narcotics proceeds (so-called proceeds of crime) to resolve the balance of payment deficits.

Huge Costs of Drug Prohibition

Drug law enforcement is a costly and cash-intensive undertaking (Giade, 2014). Canada reportedly experiences some of the highest rates of marijuana consumption in the western world and correspondingly has the second highest incarceration rate next to the US, that places a huge burden on the Canadian economy in costs of law enforcement and incarceration (Grant 2009). The astronomical and ever-climbing cost of incarceration (building prisons and feeding inmates) for drug prison or detention cell inmates translates to huge resources expended in the name of the war on drugs to suppress supply and discourage the demand for psychoactive drugs. Barnett (2009) stated that the most evident consequence of drug prohibition is the inevitable diversion and misapplication of disproportionately huge percentage of scarce resources to the enforcement of drug laws, thereby denying such resources to the enforcement of more essential laws or their allocation for the resolution of more basic public problems. A decriminalized and

regulated marijuana market will most probably free valuable resources and allow law enforcement authorities to devote more time to enforcing major and more violent crimes (Kisely, 2008).

Cannabis prohibition in Nigeria principally takes the form of cannabis drug eradication and interdiction involving arrests of drug offenders and the destruction of cannabis farms as well as the seizure of cannabis products (herbs or resins). Cannabis crop eradication is an uphill task in Nigeria given the common use of slash-and-burn technique and the little or no utilization of modern technology combined with the challenging geographical terrain which ensures the proliferation of new farms and plantations at rates higher than the rate of tracing, tracking, discovery, and destruction of cannabis farms (Odebunmi, 2008; Alemika, 2018). Nadelmann (2004) noted that millions of Americans, most of them before 18 and 50, have never been arrested or convicted of any criminal offence before except for cannabis use or possession and that enforcing marijuana laws costs between $10 to 15 billion annually in direct costs. Cannabis laws and prohibition thus amount to unjustifiable incalculable social costs as they criminalize and stigmatize users (Barnett, 2009). Prohibition means loss of tax revenues that could be realized by legalizing and regulating cannabis use and sale, the pauperization of peasant cannabis growers through destruction of their farms and produce (Felbab-Brown, 2012). The glaring ineffectiveness cannot possibly justify the huge frittering away of the huge sums spent on drug policing especially as it inevitably translates to the diversion and inefficient utilization of direly needed law enforcement resources (Barnett, 2009). Duke (2012) posits that the more the clogging of courts and prisons with drug cases, the lesser

the room and the more meager the means required for the prosecution of other criminal cases and deterrence of more hardened criminals; yet chasing potheads (marijuana smokers) has not shown any effect on reducing drugs in the US even though they are much-publicized drug demand reduction crusades (Cole, 2012).

Criminal prohibition of cannabis consumption or procession means fewer resources and diminished attention and focus on serious crimes like child abuse, aggravated assault, rape, and murder (Cole, 2012; Duke, 2012). Apart from the above easily calculable cost implications of drug prohibition, there are several deleterious economic consequences of prohibition that is incalculable. These include prohibition-influenced economic losses to drug users, the loss of man-hours or the productivity of those who die during the enforcement of criminal prohibition, the lost productivity of those incarcerated for drug offenses, the needless burdens, and costs imposed by organized crimes financed by proceeds of drugs, and funds (public and private) wasted on drug prohibition-generated diseases and health challenges (Felbab-Brown, 2012).

Beyond the humongous economic losses associated with the huge costs of implementing drug prohibition (astronomical expenses of drug crop eradication, interdiction (arrests and seizures), prosecution and incarceration), there are also direct economic losses of the gains that could be derived from the industrial uses of hemp for fabrics, ropes, and cellulose as well as the pharmaceutical use of medical cannabis for the cheap treatment of several significant diseases. Smith-Heisters (2008) reasoned that indiscriminate and wholesale cannabis prohibition has largely scuttled the immense potential of the hemp industry (for the manufacture of fabrics, ropes, paper, composites

[reinforced plastics], and cellulose). The criminal status of cannabis uses and production is thus a financial burden on national economies across the globe. Against this backdrop, the retention of the drug prohibition policy can scarcely be justified based on cost-benefit analysis.

Drug Prohibition Promotes Environmental Hazards

Much of the public debate on cannabis prohibition or decriminalization focuses on the public safety, health, and crime implications of cannabis consumption while scant attention has been given to the environmental consequences of the production or cultivation of the drug crop (Carah et al., 2015). Yet, the illegal or quasi-legal cropping and trafficking of cannabis and similar prohibited psychoactive substances considerably affect agricultural land and the ecosystem (Carah et al., 2015; McSweeney et al., 2014). Whether illegal, quasi-legal or even legal, cannabis cultivation invariably involves a series of invasive human activities on the ecosystem, especially the destruction of virgin lands, natural vegetation, indiscriminate water leakages or diversions, creation of pathways, the making of highways, proliferation of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, and other agrochemicals, waste stacking and dumping, the plundering of fish and other aquatic animals, wildlife exploitation and energy consumption (Bauer et al., 2015; Carah et al., 2015; Smith-Heisters, 2008). However, given the fuzzy or quasi-legal status of cannabis in most jurisdictions, its production is oftentimes accompanied by some clandestine and illegal activities that worsen environmental degradation (Giannotti et al., 2017, Owley, 2018).

Moreover, the cannabis prohibition policy, and the associated war on drugs invariably encourages or compels those who wish to cultivate cannabis to go into illegal cultivation. Most illegal, secret, and clandestine growing of cannabis is usually not carried out in a clean, efficient, and environment-friendly manner (Demski, 2018). The criminal prohibition of cannabis production and distribution is, therefore, an incentive to illegal cannabis farmers to set up toxic farm sites in deep far-off forest reserves and other protected areas where people can operate with scant regard for preservation of the natural environment (Demski, 2018). The legalization of cannabis sativa production has the potential to shift the location of cannabis cultivation from relatively ungoverned territories (Owley, 2018). Illegal cannabis growers threaten virgin lands, forest reserves, and national parks through the indiscriminate and stealthy unauthorized clearing of trees and vegetation, thereby endangering biodiversity and destroying both fauna and flora (Carah et al., 2015). The prohibition of cannabis cultivation forces illegal growers to prospect for arable soil in protected public lands and forest reserves that are usually beyond the censorious eyes of forest rangers and guards.

Clandestine cannabis cultivation also leads to over-exploitation and misuse of water resources as well as the diversion of streams for irrigation purposes. Indications are that the water utilization during illegal cannabis production is substantial, as outdoor marijuana cultivation has proved to be a water-intensive and environmentally stressful endeavor (Demski, 2018). Demski (2018) reported that the amount of water daily gulped by clandestine cannabis cultivation was a serious challenge in California, plagued by drought and fires. The illegal cultivation of cannabis compromises its sustainable

production by reducing the efficiency of water utilization and increasing the amount of water input needed for growing cannabis.

Furthermore, illegal cannabis cultivation is inevitably accompanied by massive pollution of the environment including land, water, and air by the pesticides (that are used to eradicate pests) and the toxic herbicides (used to combat weeds) and other useful agrochemicals, which are toxic to both human beings and the environment when misused or improperly disposed of (Gray, 2002). In the unregulated world of clandestine cannabis cultivation, banned herbicides and adulterated pesticides (including rodenticides and fungicides that are deleterious to human health) are routinely used and carelessly disposed of thereby polluting soils and food crops and the poisoning of drinking water sources (Demski, 2018). In this devil-may-care scenario of illegal cannabis cultivation compelled by the prohibition regime, there is massive pollution arising from improper material waste disposal which goes beyond mere misuse of agrochemicals and extends to indiscriminate and reckless dumping of unused pesticides/herbicides and expired fertilizers, and abandonment of sediments on soils and waterways. Whenever there is an incentive to grow cannabis illegally, as is the case under a cannabis prohibition regime, there is also a corresponding motivation to handle farmlands improperly (Owley, 2018). Clandestine cannabis cultivation has been linked to other harmful agronomic and land use practices like the dumping of trash, human waste, and fertilizer, which are of great environmental concern when located near streams and other water resources because of deleterious effects including bio-magnification (accumulation and concentration of

dangerous substances), and eutrophication (proliferation of unwanted plants inside water bodies), and the accumulation of various sediments (Gianotti et al., 2017).

Cannabis crop eradication is another aspect of drug prohibition and the war on drugs with proven and unmistakable deleterious environmental consequences. Drug crop eradication by law enforcement agents displaces drug production into ungoverned resource-rich frontiers; the more you eradicate drug crop farms, the more drug crop farmers are compelled to clear and cultivate virgin lands, thus leading to massive and sometimes irreversible deforestation as well as ecological hazards associated with cropping of marginal lands (Owley, 2018). Aggressive and massive cannabis plantation destruction promotes deforestation by progressively compelling cannabis growers to move into and clear new lands and novel habitats (McSweeney, 2015). When drug fields are destroyed through aerial fumigation or by manual clearing, forest and habitat loss are consequently increased. In the same vein, the official use of herbicides to destroy cannabis farms and the destruction of seized cannabis herbs and resins using incinerators or openly setting fires to such cannabis products or farmlands cause massive environmental (soil, water, and air) pollution.

The interaction of cannabis with the environment is, therefore, predicated on its fuzzy, uncertain, and quasi-legal status that largely determines, where, when and how cannabis is produced (Gianotti et al, 2017; Owley, 2018). The implementation of drug prohibition through drug eradication and interdiction pushes drug crop cultivators and traffickers into remote and ungoverned areas, which usually become havens and refuges for biodiversity (McSweeney, 2015). The decriminalization of cannabis consumption and

cultivation and its regulation, standardization, and quality control are expected to banish secrecy, increase transparency and promote good agronomic practices that would decrease the environmental hazards associated with clandestine cannabis cultivation (Demski, 2018).

The administrative procedures, standardization and quality control that come with legal regulation of Cannabis production should compel cultivators to engage in efficient, responsible, sustainable, and ecology-friendly agronomic practices that would limit environmental hazards to the barest minimum (Owley, 2018). Yet, despite ample scientific evidence of the negative effects of unfavorable drug policies on the global environment, enough attention has not been paid to the diverse forms and manners that drug policies influence the environmental impact of illegal crop cultivation systems and practices thus leading to widespread policy silence on the ecological consequences of drug control policies and practices in transit zones (Gianotti et al., 2017, McSweeney, 2015). This notwithstanding, it is obvious that drug prohibition is at variance and inconsistent with the United Nations' sustainable development goals and the global commitments to environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

Drug Prohibition and Human Rights Violations

Beyond the violation of individual freedom that is inherent in drug prohibition, the restriction of individual liberty (that prohibitionists insist is justified by the desire or need to protect public health and safety through the general prevention of drug abuse) is usually executed using coercive and repressive methods that invariably lead to egregious breach of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Despite the seemingly emerging

consensus that prohibitionist drug control policies exacerbate human suffering and human rights abuses, some die-hard drug-free advocates still believe that drugs are so dangerous and evil that no sacrifices are too great and no cost too huge to bear to keep narcotics and other psychoactive substances away from non-discriminatory consumers.

Gyong and Tanimu (2009) pointed out various forms of human rights breaches and unethical violation of fundamental freedoms of individuals associated with NDLEA's drug control programs. The researchers highlighted rampant, arbitrary, violent and forcible arrests during drug raids and busts; coercive interrogation and inhuman investigation procedures; indefinite detention periods, oftentimes over four days, inside dingy, insanitary, dirty, stuffy, poorly ventilated and overcrowded cells; and excessive solitary confinement (Gyong &Tanimu, 2009). Moreover, the commando-style cannabis eradication campaigns often resulted in severe and huge collateral damage to important food and cash crops, colossal environmental pollution, and degradation arising from the aerial spraying of herbicides to destroy targeted hemp farmlands (Klantschnig, 2015). Gyong & Tanimu (2009) also noted high-level of human rights violations including torture, sexual harassment of inmates, and extortion of relations of drug offenders that have been reported as rampant in NDLEA detention cells.

Against this background, the UN Global Commission on Drugs urged the international community to replace harsh and draconian counternarcotic measures grounded in repressive and coercive ideologies with more people-oriented, harm-reducing, and effective policies shaped by scientific evidence, public health principles, positive ethical values, and human rights standards (UNODC, 2016). The global body

stated that a new drug regime of humane and effective policies was the only way to simultaneously reduce drug-related deaths, diseases and suffering and the violence, crime, corruption and illicit markets associated with ineffective prohibitionist policies (UNODC, 2016).

Notwithstanding these liberalist global declarations and official commitments, drug control (prohibition) in Nigeria is still being carried out with prohibitionist outdated laws that are believed to be more draconian than measures ever applied to eradicate drug trafficking, sale, and use across the globe (Obot, 2004). While the country's drug law (the NDLEA Act) is almost a complete rehash of the global Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, the national policy comprehensively covered practically all proscriptive aspects of drug trafficking, cultivation, manufacturing, and production as well as the drug-related issues such as money laundering, organized crimes, and terrorism-financing (NDLEA Report, 2016). Okereke (2017) noted that NDLEA in its execution of the War on Drug adopted highly prohibitionist and punitive approaches to drug control in Nigeria that ended up criminalizing every kind of activity connected with the production, processing, distribution, sale, use and concealment of illegal drugs. NDLEA's wholesale adoption and expansive interpretation of the three UN drug conventions created an exceptionally draconian and macabre jurisprudence that practically stripped drug offenders of their long-cherished natural rights and discarded all their civil liberties as human beings as soon as they are suspected to be involved in drugs. Under the NDLEA Act, the presumption of the innocence of the accused, a time-honored principle of equity and

natural justice is jettisoned, and the accused is presumed guilty until he/she can prove

otherwise. Under Section 20 of the NDLEA Act, the burden of proof in a drug offense is

removed from the NDLEA and placed on alleged offenders, contrary to Section 36(5) of

the 1999 Constitution (Okereke, 2017).

Under this drug prohibition regime, fundamental rights such as freedom of

movement, privacy, peaceful assembly, and the freedom of association of drug suspects

are routinely breached or brushed aside through mounting roadblocks, profiling of people

for suspects, stop-and-search, urine testing (urinalysis), body strip searches, and knock-

door-and-search without warrants and without probable cause (Gyong & Tanimu, 2009;

Klantschnig, 2015; Okereke, 2017). Moreover, drug users or petty dealers are subjected

to coercive interrogations, intrusive searches, and all manners of degrading invasive

medical investigations (including endoscopy), 'preventive' or pre-trial detention, long-

term detention without trial, and denial of healthcare and treatment and counseling as

well as legal services (Obot, 2004; Klantschnig, 2015; Otu, 2013). Some drug suspects

who might be innocent victims of arrest are routinely housed (detained) for days or weeks

with hardened criminals while some drug users are exposed to sexual assault and rape by

unethical law enforcement officials who subject them to intimidation, blackmail and

illicit requests of sex-in-exchange-for-release (Okereke, 2017).

Besides this habitual breach of fundamental human rights, suspected drug barons

are subjected to preventive detentions, "arrest-to-loot", and non-judicial forfeiture of

property (Klantschnig, 2015; Okereke, 2017). Given the illegal, secret, and prohibited

nature of drug activities, drug control agents also feel entitled to carry out invasive

investigations or intrude into the innermost private lives and natural bodily processes [including the stomach, intestine and digestive system] of suspected drug offenders to discover possible drug ingestion or carrying of narcotics internally, even without any probable or logical cause. The fact that actionable or solid evidence of guilt of drug offenders, if and where they exist, are usually obtained after such invasions or intrusions implies that the privacy and the dignity of multitudes of innocent victims are routinely and unapologetically violated in the process of enforcing drug laws.

Drug busts, raids, or sting operations are carried out at odd hours of the night or at dawn in commando-style operations leading to collateral damages and deaths of drug farmers, drug control agents, and innocent citizens who might be caught in crossfires or otherwise be victims of accidental discharges. The drug interdiction (arrests and seizures) and enforcement activities in the War on Drugs understandably prioritize effectiveness evaluated with the number of arrest figures and the volume of drug seizures at the expense of the convenience, comfort, safety, and welfare of average citizens, thus increasing the possibility of collateral damages as well as harms and dangers beyond targeted drug offenders (Otu, 2013; Gyong & Tanimu, 2009). The above scenario made Okereke (2017) observed that gross human rights abuses have been institutionalized as indicators of "success", "performance", "effectiveness" or "toughness" in the war on drugs in Nigeria.

In the bid to ferret out drug suspects and detect drug money laundering and possible deployment of drug money for terrorism-financing, the war on drugs extends to anti-money laundering operations involving currency reporting legislations to allow

government agents to monitor the laundering of proceeds of drug crime (NDLEA, 2016; Okereke, 2017). Currently, any money lodgment above five million in a personal account and above 10 million in a corporate or company account must be reported to the government. Therefore, in the bid to empower government agents to search for the relatively small number of drug offenders, the financial privacy of all citizens is sacrificed and disregarded. The egregious and vicious violations of human rights tolerated in the War on drugs are dangerous precedents that represent an unhealthy increase in government power for all purposes (Klantschnig, 2016). Drug law enforcement has invariably become a means of social control and subtle means of suppression of political opposition.

Aside from suppressing the supply of and the demand for drugs, thereby minimizing the impact on the public health, safety, and security of the country, NDLEA's War on Drugs is aimed at also discouraging drug trafficking and the involvement of Nigerians in the drug trade to sanitize the image of Nigeria and rid the country of the ugly tag of "a nation of drug traffickers" (NDLEA, 2016). Along this line, Nigerians that had been arrested, tried, and punished overseas for drug crimes, upon return to Nigeria are re-arrested, charged and tried for exporting drugs and bringing the reputation of Nigeria into disrepute (Gyong & Tanimu, 2009). If found guilty, the drug offenders are punished again for the rechristened offence of tarnishing Nigeria's image, a typical case of double jeopardy.

Given the prohibitionist nature of NDLEA's vision and mission statement, there are several inherent conflicts and contradictions. The policy of arresting and detaining

poor and vulnerable Nigerians to achieve the much-publicized goals of promoting national security, activist foreign policy and improved international reputation is tantamount to bartering much-cherished individual freedoms and civil liberties for the uncertain, nebulous and illusory goals of societal peace, national security, and global reputation (Gyong & Tanimu, 2009). Experience has shown that while many Nigerians have suffered serious human rights abuses and harm under this repressive and coercive drug regime, the expected goals and gains of national security and improved global reputation remain largely unattained.

When NDLEA engages in sting operations and commando-type raids or busting of drug targets or the violence-driven eradication of cannabis farms, many lives are lost, and properties of law-abiding Nigerians are needlessly destroyed. Close to about 200 NDLEA operatives have been lost (and the pictures of such anti-drug "heroes" displayed on the notice board at the so-called 'NDLEA Hall of Fame' along with hundreds of other Nigerian martyrs killed during those dangerous and repressive operations (NDLEA, 2015). This amounts to violent and needless deprivation of Nigerians of the most basic and fundamental right of a human being, the right to life, all in the desperate bid to protect much-vaunted national security and improve Nigeria's so-called image or reputation to attain the certification benchmarks of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. Nigerians in tens and hundreds are, therefore, robbed of their individual liberties and lives by NDLEA narcotic officials under the instrumentality of outdated drug prohibition laws, modeled after that of the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which are executed using coercive interrogation approaches and degrading investigation techniques.

During those raids, heavy collateral damages are visited on the lives of innocent citizens, the food crops and cash crops on nearby farmlands, the individual NDLEA officers (Otu, 2013). The NDLEA thus daily face the ethical dilemma and conflict of depriving Nigeria citizens of their lives while chasing the nebulous and elusive goals of promoting a "drug-free" Nigeria, under the slogan of "zero tolerance for drugs" (NDLEA, 2014).

Despite the highly punitive and downright draconian nature of Nigeria's drug laws and policies, narcotics control officers are perpetually calling for higher penalties, stiffer punishments and longer jail terms in the belief that the severity of penalties would guarantee deterrence (Klantschnig, 2015). However, behavioral scientists assert that it is the certainty of prosecution and punishment rather than the severity of penalty that deters crime. From all indications, the coercive and repressive drug prohibition regime leads to the weakening of constitutional rights as well as loss of fundamental freedoms, with devastating consequences for human rights in fledgling democracies like Nigeria.

Drug War: Both Discriminatory and Class Based

The war on drugs appears to be often discriminatorily waged in terms of the socio-economic class, immigration status, social class, position, and ethnic origin of the people who are targeted. Those who are arrested, tried and incarcerated are often the poorest group, the most marginalized segment, and disadvantaged members of a society, the underclass, immigrants, underclass ethnic groups, small-time dealers and low-level drug offenders (Okereke, 2017; Gyong & Tanimu, 2009). Similarly reflecting on the situation in the United States, Falconi (2016) reasoned observed that drug prohibition disrupts and distorts poor black communities by forcing bright young black people to

work the illegal drug market and glamorizing drug dealing. The violent drug busts and sting operations carried out odd hours of the night and at dawn drug raids are usually directed at slums and squatter settlements rather than high-brow middle-class or upper-class neighborhoods. Marijuana from all indications also appear more stigmatized, demonized and vilified than other prohibited drugs like heroin, cocaine, and amphetamines as well as the legal but more harmful drugs such as alcohol and tobacco because marijuana started as and is still perceived as a drug of the underprivileged poor and underclass.

Gyong and Tanimu (2009) observed that the drug war arrests and detentions were solely directed at economically deprived and disadvantaged groups (usually the abjectly poor, the homeless, the underemployed, or unemployed youths), blue-collar semi-literate employees rather than white-collar workers, underclass substance users, drug peddlers or street-level operator rather than wholesale dealers, because narcotic control agents often have little access or lack the capacity to take on and interdict affluent drug barons and their powerful cartels that control major illicit activities in narcotic drugs. The researchers drew attention to manifest socio-economic bias and class discrimination involved in the implementation of narcotics criminal prohibition policy such as "stop and search" operations, knock-and-search home visitations, or the "pre-profiling" of people for mandatory random tests that are considered intrusive and degrading treatment just to confirm drug ingestion as a mode of concealment of drugs by suspected couriers as well as in other desperate activities involving arrest and detention of drug suspects (Gyong &Tanimu, 2009). There were indications of coercive raids and busts were used when

drug offenders live in the squatter settlements, shanty hamlets and slums of Muslim and Ajegunle while kid gloves were deployed when the drug users and dealers reside in the high-brow areas of Ikoyi and Victoria Island in Lagos.

Between Prohibition and Legalization of Drug Policy

The drug debate is often couched in binary or all-or-nothing (white or black) terms between drug-free ideologues who are favorably disposed to sustaining total drug prohibition and the proponents of outright legalization of all drugs. The drug issue is presented as a war of attrition of two irreconcilable extreme groups that must be won by one side instead of a health or social problem that needs to be managed. The impression is also sometimes created that there is a universal approach or an all-size-fits-all solution to all psychoactive substances or drugs. The reality is there is no reason to be restricted to the two extremes (outright prohibition or downright legalization) because there are lots of grey areas and several functional alternatives between them. At the same time, there appears to be no scientific basis for applying the same mode of control for hard drugs like cocaine and heroin to relatively a relatively soft drug like cannabis. MacCoun (2011) contended that innovations in Western Europe had indicated that they do not have to choose between a punitive war on drugs (total drug prohibition) or a libertarian free-market regime (outright legalization) for narcotics (MacCoun & Reuter, 2001, 2011). MacCoun's (1993) earlier assessments of the impact of decriminalization based on the partial depenalization regimes applicable to Marijuana in 12 U.S. states between 1973 and 1978 gave indications that decriminalization would not necessarily lead to an increase in demand or prevalence of marijuana, though he cautioned that

decriminalization is a far cry from outright legalization. Nonetheless, he noted that there

was a positive indication that decriminalization rather than full-scale legalization could

be a preferred alternative to drug prohibition (MacCoun & Reuter, 2011).

Despite the existence of tested middle-road approaches such as decriminalization

and harm reduction which offer some health-protecting and harm-reducing features that

are absent under the full-scale drug prohibition regime, Otu (2013) observed that

repressive law enforcement measures (including interdiction, arrests, and seizures) have

been prioritized and mainstreamed in Nigeria at the expense of alternative public health

and socio-economic approaches to drug control. Otu (2013) noted the lip-service that

seemed to be paid to matching drug demand reduction with supply control and the

lackadaisical implementation of counseling, treatment, and rehabilitation services despite

clear provisions made for these approaches in the NDLEA's enabling law (Otu, 2013).

That Nigeria's drug control policy remains rigidly prohibitionist and authoritarian despite

the move towards drug decriminalization in similar drug-afflicted countries of the world

reveals policy apathy and inertia, at both the policymaking and implementation phases

(Alemika, 2018). This is more so when the UN Global Commission on Drugs, that

oversees the international drug policy environment, recently called for a new drug regime

to replace the three key international conventions for drug control (UNODC, 2016).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Research Question

As increasing numbers of United Nations Member-States review their stance on

prohibition-based UN drug control conventions and gradually embrace a more liberal

approach to drug control, Bewley-Taylor (2002) analyzed the daunting challenges as well

as options open to drug-embattled states who seek more liberal, effective, and less harmful drug policies within the ambit of the UN drug conventions under the international treaty system.

Goldstein (1985) examined drug use and trafficking as a multivalent cause of violence and proposed the *Tripartite Conceptual Framework* for illuminating and analyzing the drugs/violence nexus. Goldstein (1985) noted that drug use may predispose people to violent behavior; make a drug user somebody more vulnerable to violent acts or crimes; and the need to fund costly drug habit may force people to engage in violent crimes to acquire the cash needed to buy drugs (Goldstein, 1985). Yet current empirical medical evidence has refuted any direct causal relationship between drug use and violence.

Following many sensational stories written on the association between the prevalence of illegal narcotic drugs and violence in Africa without evidence-based research, Laudati conducted a study of the reported linkages between the use and trade in cannabis sativa and the ever-rising wave of violence and armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He submitted that the violence-generating and criminogenic effect of cannabis was largely the construction of moral entrepreneurs and racist champions (Laudati, 2016). MacCoun and Reuter (2011) in response to the ideological and passionate but unscientific debate between advocates of drug legalization or decriminalization (depenalization) and conservatives who insist on zero tolerance for drugs and the retention of the drug prohibition policy, MacCoun and Reuter (2011) evaluated the known, the unknown, and what was left to be investigated about the

behavioral impact of narcotics laws and went further to analyze the implications of behavioral research for the legalization and depenalization or narcotics regulation campaign. The researchers concluded that there was not enough data to support the outright legalization of any drug, whether cocaine, heroin or cannabis, though there were indications that decriminalization of cannabis did not noticeably increase the prevalence or the rate of consumption of cannabis. Earlier, MacCoun (1998) had done a comparative psychological analysis of various drug control policies geared towards health-enhancement and harm reduction.

Potter, Gaines, and Holbrook (1990) used qualitative research to explore and appraise Kentucky's efforts to alleviate its ever-increasing marijuana challenge beyond mere drug law enforcement. In the same vein, Werb et al (2011) did a systematic review on the effects of narcotics drug law enforcement on drug market violence given the assumed link between the illicit drug trade and urban violence. In another related study, Wu, Zhu, & Swartz (2016) investigated national patterns in cannabis use disorder (CUD) among adults over 18 years by race and ethnicity in response to increasing concerns over cannabis use and the linkage with health problems.

Bottorff et al. (2013) inferred that against a backdrop of continued stigmatization of cannabis use, even where it was for medical purposes and notwithstanding the increasing prevalence and acceptance among the public, Bottorff, Bissel, and Balneaves (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore and describe the perceptions and responses of users of cannabis for therapeutic purposes (CTP). The goal of the study was to characterize users' perceptions and responses to the stigma they experienced due to the

medical use of cannabis with the goal to create a platform for developing strategies for reducing the stigma and supporting the use of CTP. The research thus explored the ramifications of the stigma and the coping strategies of affected individuals.

The study found that participants' perceptions and experiences of stigma were linked with negative views and portrayals of cannabis as a dangerous and addictive recreational drug that is largely abused and used by social deviants. The stigmatization was also located within the ambience of the prevailing illegality and criminal sanctions associated with cannabis use. There was also a consensus that the stigma associated with cannabis use negatively affected participants' social, professional, and family ties as well as their relationship with health care providers. It was also noted that these reactions forced participants to self-regulate and withdraw from some of their networks and thus resulted in social isolation, disconnection from family and friends, and for some, outright relocation to other cities. The reactions also acted as a barrier to receiving the healthcare that many participants needed.

Fotaki (2010) questioned the assumption that public policies are difficult to implement because policymaking are conceived as predominantly rational processes. There may be other mechanisms involved in policy articulation and the way it is taken up in organizations that rationalistic paradigms cannot explain. Fotaki (2010) asserted that policymaking, in addition to its officially stated objectives, sometimes expresses societal fantasies that originate in the imaginary strivings of the subject. Fotaki acknowledged that, with some exceptions, the role of fantasy as a stimulant of various social and political endeavors has not been given emphasis in public policy analyses. Fotaki (2010)

contended that the fantasy that the fantasy which sustains policymaking also begets its failure whenever it is mistaken for actual reality.

Hammersley, Jenkins, and Reid (2001) theorized the relationship between cannabis use and social identity through employing various sociocultural experiences, beliefs, customs, and traditional practices to demonstrate that cannabis use is an integral part of many people's identities. Hammersley et al. (2001) pointed out that the very reasons for, and the meaning and implications of cannabis use vary from overtime, circumstances, and context. While documenting the history and evolution of cannabis use from its public use by a few so-called deviant people to its increasing patronage by more people, especially youths, until it became the drug of use by a third of some populations, not just social deviants, the theorists reasoned that if cannabis use was important to people's cultural identities then that needed to be understood and explained in the context of a dynamic theory of social identity.

Hammersley et al. (2001) postulated that cannabis ingestion occurs in and defines a range of socio-cultural settings and beliefs and that this psychoactive weed is patronized by different people for various social and cultural purposes other than for purposes of pleasure or getting a cheap "high". The team argued that if 30 per cent or more of a population used cannabis, it had gradually become old-fashioned and unrealistic to continue to perceive cannabis users as a minority or fringe segment of society, pejoratively tagged "drug takers", who are defined by being members of a distinct deviant sub-group. The writers rejected addiction, deviance, and risk-taking as valid explanatory models of contemporary cannabis patronage and posited that cannabis

use was largely influenced and driven by the quest to attain, maintain, and sustain a social identity. The researchers urged that all matters related to social identity be properly understood, situated, and contextualized to create an enabling environment to formulate rational, pragmatic, and effective social policies for the regulation of cannabis use. By exploring, describing, and explaining the mechanism of initiation and socialization into habitual usage of cannabis as well as the critical role of peer group influences and family friends' connections, the researchers implicitly provide a way of controlling and managing the challenges and complications associated with cannabis use. More importantly, the paper postulated a useful and pragmatic theory of cannabis use and identity which could and should be used to inform further research work on cannabis use and regulation. While describing the current cannabis control measures as too harsh, intrusive, and unduly restrictive, the researchers made a compelling case for the emplacement of a regulatory framework for meeting the medical, cultural, and social needs of cannabis patrons without necessarily treating cannabis as casually as a tea or coffee.

Following over two decades of debate in the United States on the appropriate legal status for psychotropic substances, MacCoun (1993) reviewed and critically analyzed what was known and not yet known about the behavioral impact of drug laws and explored the implications of behavioral research for the legalization or decriminalization debate. Before this exercise, advocates on all sides of the debate had relied largely on intuition, impressionistic observations, and anecdotal information than on theories of behavior or empirical findings. MacCoun (1993) identified the two major

alternatives to the current total prohibition regime, namely decriminalization (otherwise called depenalization), where a drug remains illegal but penalties for personal possession are reduced or waived; and legalization in which the possession or/and sale of drug become(s) legal but are regulated like the case of alcohol or tobacco (MacCoun, 1993).

MacCoun (1993) said that while the effects of the narcotics drug prohibition regime over the years on the demand, supply, and price of narcotic drugs and psychoactive substances were well documented, the potential impact of de-prohibition of most psychoactive substances through either decriminalization or legalization regimes was still largely within the realm of conjectures. The researcher, however, reported that the decriminalization of marijuana in twelve states in the United States of America (as at 1993) suggested that decriminalization had little or no reliable impact on the prevalence of marijuana use, as determined by longitudinal and cross-sectional comparisons of drug use indicators in decriminalization and non-decriminalization states (Johnston & Bachman, 1981; Malloff, 1981). However, MacCoun cautioned that these preliminary data on the effects of decriminalization should be carefully interpreted because the policies in non-decriminalization states that were used for comparison were not strictly implemented as control experiments, and the evaluations were susceptible to the usual threats to validity (Cuskey, Berger, & Richardson, 1989). MacCoun (1993) concluded that the effects of legalizing an illicit drug cannot be predicted with any certainty without trying legalization experimentally and observing the impact, a prospect that he described as unlikely. It instructive to note that the number of states that permits medical marijuana

has risen from the 12 reported by MacCoun (19930 to 25 and the Washington, D.C. as at the time of this research.

Literature Review Related to the Theoretical Framework

Several researchers have used strands of the social construction of reality to explain the resort of different societies to drug prohibition in order to manage, regulate, or curb the real or perceived challenge of substance abuse, the illicit production, and trafficking of psychoactive substances as well as to explain the ineffectiveness, durability, and perseverance of drug prohibition and the dogged adherence of prohibitionists despite the failure of drug prohibition to achieve the goals of supply suppression and drug demand reduction.

Dingelstad, Gosden, Martin, and Vakas (1996) stated that drugs are not just widely used but they are equally widely debated. The researchers noted that drug debates and controversies usually proceed without the scrutiny of why certain issues rather than others are considered the crucial and priority issues for debate. Dingelstad et al (1996) contended that debates about drugs are socially constructed. They reasoned that the terms of discussions or debates are not natural or restricted to the nature or properties of the drug itself. Instead, they said, debates usually mirror the nature of the society, particularly the power differentials, such as the influence of groups with the greatest power over the characterization and deployment of the drug in view (Dinglestad et al, 1996). In specific terms, debates reflect an intricate process of interaction between social power and the characteristics of the drug. The researchers asserted that the fact that drug debates cannot easily be explained by the nature of the drug was apparent from a comparison of the

manner different drugs are treated irrespective of their physical properties and social harms. Diglestad et al (1996) pointed to the severe penalties imposed for the use of some drugs, including marijuana in certain jurisdictions, while others, such as alcohol and tobacco, of apparently equal or greater harm to human beings are more socially accepted, widely used, and even publicly promoted. This scenario indicates that drug debates are largely socially constructed since there are indications that something other than the concern for public health and protection of individuals and society from harm account for the different treatments of different psychoactive substances.

Reinarman (1994) used the social construction theory to explain the method to the seeming madness of the various drug scares in order to situate and contextualize the moral and legal attitudes towards illicit drugs. Against the backdrop of a history of drug scares and the major players that orchestrated them and the social contexts that enhanced their development and growth, Reinarman (1994) outlined seven critical factors common to drug scares, including the truth about drug intoxication, media magnification of the truth, the mischief of politico-moral entrepreneurs, propaganda of professional interest groups, a historical context of conflict, the linkage of drug use to a dangerous class or group, and the scapegoating of a drug for a wide array of public problems. Reinarman (1994) used the social construction doctrine to dissect the essential mechanism for the rule creation and enforcement phases of the drug scares despite acknowledging the contradictory cultural values of temperance and hedonistic consumption. He underlined the fact that drug wars, anti-drug crusades, commando operations against substance use, and demonstrations of grave public concern about psychoactive drugs are never mere

direct reactions to negative consequences of drugs but rather recurring periodic cultural and political phenomena.

Schneider and Ingram (1993) contended that the social construction of target populations is an important but largely underestimated phenomenon that is crucial to the inquiry of public policy. The social construction of target populations posits that social constructions influence the policy agenda, the preferred policy tools, and the rationales that justify policy choices as well as the actual policy design (Schneider & Ingram, 1993, 2014). The theory is significant because it can be used to explain why some classes or populations are given priorities or advantages more than others apart from the traditional notions of political power and how policy designs sustain or alter such advantages. A good knowledge of the social constructions of target populations complements conventional paradigms and hypotheses about the factors that underpin policy change, the identification of beneficiaries and losers, and the reasons for the varying levels and forms of participation among target populations, as well as the role of policy in democratic governance. The social construction of a target population could refer to the recognition of the shared or perceived features that distinguish a target group as socially meaningful and the attribution of specific values, symbols and image to the characteristics. Schneider and Ingram (2014) used the phenomenon of the construction of drug users as deviants, so-called pot-heads, supposedly 'violent' individuals, public nuisance, crime-prone irritants, law-breakers, and criminals who are deserving of punishment for drug offenses rather than entitled to healthcare, treatment, and rehabilitation in several societies to explain the fate of drug users under the drug prohibition policy. The duo thus

demonstrated the critical importance of the social construction of target populations and their characterization and stigmatization to the agenda and design of the policy to address the narcotic drug challenge.

Taylor, Buchanan, and Ayres (2016) acknowledged the radical pronouncements and motions within the international drug control landscape and the knocks and attacks on the legitimacy and lack of evidence of the historically dominant model of drug prohibition, Taylor et al. (2016) asserted that there was nothing transformational about the promoted alternative models of guided legalization, decriminalization, depenalization, and regulation. In their paper, the researchers contended that the above supposedly progressive reforms adhere to the same arbitrary and whimsical notions, moral dogma, religious sentiments, and fallacious evidence base of their predecessor, drug prohibition (Taylor, Buchanan, & Ayres, 2016).

Gap Identified in Previous Research

From my reviews of relevant peer-reviewed scholarly journals and articles, both classical and recent, the literature is largely filled and preoccupied with the role of legislation and the criminal justice system to curb drug use and trade as well as trafficking. Little is documented about the role of socialization agencies including the family, the school, the community, and the society; as well as the importance of using information, education, and communication (IEC) in attitudinal modification and behavior change to confront the twin-challenge of drug abuse and illicit trafficking in Nigeria (Alemika, 2018). In addition, while the sole reliance on the deterrent effects of narcotics criminal prohibition has been discussed for at least three decades, not much is

known about the potential, practical benefits, and applicability of alternative policy

options such as decriminalization, depenalization, and legalization (Obot, 2004;

MacCoun, 2001). Open debates, discussions or information materials (literature) on

alternatives to narcotic drug prohibition are not common or popular in the mass media or

public forums in the country (Klantschnig, 2016; Obot, 2004). Moreover, the much-

trumpeted benefits of alternative development programs (including livelihood

opportunities and crop substitution schemes) as practiced in other drug-afflicted countries

are yet to be introduced and practically demonstrated in Nigeria (Alemika, 2018). The

criminal drug prohibition policy that has been in force in the country since 1961 was

introduced and has been sustained largely through propaganda, information spinning,

subterfuge, suppression of dissent, economic manipulation, and political intimidation

(Otu, 2013; Obot, 2004). The severely limited narcotics debate has largely been devoid of

rational argument, non-reflective of the experiences of Nigeria's drug control agents

(NDLEA field operatives), other experiential realities, and empirical research findings,

having been driven solely by ambitious goals, unrealistic targets, religious dogmatism,

class discrimination, misguided morality, ethical posturing, interested foreign pressures,

and the national leadership's quest for political correctness. Although new complications

of Nigeria's drug phenomenon such as the increasing involvement of women and youths

in drug consumption in Northern Nigeria and the prevalence of New Psychoactive Drugs,

such as Benylin with codeine and Tramadol, were flagged in newspapers and medical

circles, there are no indications or information of novel interventions and innovative

strategies for addressing these new drug demand challenges. Little or nothing is said

about the experiences and challenges of drug control agents in their attempts to implement Nigeria's drug prohibition policy. Thus, little is known about why the presumably consistent and ever-increasing intensification and militarization of the cannabis prohibition policy have been ineffective in deterring cannabis consumption, supply, and trafficking. Moreover, despite the deluge of literature, most previous studies of Nigeria's drug policy environment did not mention globally emerging policy alternatives to drug prohibition, not to talk of highlighting potential benefits and applicability of non-coercive and health-friendly policy options such as decriminalization, harm reduction, and other regulatory drug control approaches in Nigeria.

Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative case study was designed to gain in-depth understanding of the process and outcomes of the implementation of Nigeria's narcotics drug prohibition policy, especially its application to the non-medical use and trafficking of cannabis through documenting and analyzing the experiences of purposively selected drug control agents. According to NDLEA's mission statement, the goal of Nigeria's drug control is the elimination of illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as well as the suppression of supply and reduction of demand for these drugs, except for medical and scientific purposes (NDLEA, 2014). Nigeria's drug laws, in both the letters, the spirit, and their mode of implementation, are among the most coercive and repressive across the globe (Klein, 1999; Obot, 2004; Klantschnig, 2015). The extent, intensity, and severity of Nigeria's drug control (interdiction and drug crop eradication) and resources

allocated are disproportionately huge and an overkill compared to the evidence and incidence of drug-related medical problems and crimes, and public safety issues in the country (Csete & Sanchez, 2013). Nigeria's drug control efforts are not mainstreaming public health issues and human rights concerns; and have not succeeded in the self-assigned task of improving the foreign relations or international reputation of the country (Klein, 1999; Obot, 2004; Otu, 2013).

The major pertinent and recurrent themes in the literature includes the penchant of Nigeria for using draconian laws and severe sanctions to address all categories of drug offences (Obot, 2004; Klantschnig, 2015; Alemika, 2018), the gross neglect or abdication of responsibility for drug demand reduction (Nelson, Obot, & Umoh, 2017), the lack of political will to implement alternative development strategies that could reduce the attraction of cannabis cultivation and trade (Otu, 2013; Klantschnig, 2015), as well as the chronic shortage of resources, inadequate logistics, bad working conditions, obsolete technology, and lack of sufficient manpower that are crippling the drug law enforcement agency (Jasper, 2014; Alemika, 2018). Moreover, the criminal justice preoccupation (law enforcement focus) and the sheer bureaucratization of the drug control process obstructed public health and human right-driven interventions to drug challenges in the country (Nelson, Obot, &Umoh, 2017).

From the review of research till date, what is known is that the consistent implementation and continuous intensification of the drug prohibition policy have neither suppressed supply nor reduced demand or deterred trafficking of cannabis. What is not known, however, is the reason for the continuous investment in law enforcement at the

expense of drug demand reduction and alternative development interventions. Little is also known about the experiences and challenges of drug control officers in the implementation of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy. It is against this backdrop that the research question is concerned about the experiences of drug control officers regarding the implementation of the cannabis interdiction and eradication strategies. This study is geared towards explaining the preference for law enforcement at the expense of drug demand prevention and reduction and provide possible reasons for the ineffectiveness and poor outcomes of cannabis interdiction and eradication efforts. The study would attempt to explain the resilience and persistence of the cannabis prohibition policy despite its astronomical costs but severely limited benefits.

Chapter 2, among other things, comprises the literature search strategy and sources of information for the literature review and synthesis. It highlights classical (relatively old) and current literatures on regulation and prohibition of psychoactive substances. Chapter 2 also contains the conceptual framework that serves as the intellectual compass and lens of the study. The theoretical framework was analyzed and situated in this chapter. The theoretical foundation is based mainly on the social constructionist theory; and partly on the drug securitization theory. The chapter reviewed issues of narcotics drugs prohibition and their impacts on public health, public safety, violence, crime, corruption, illegal markets (underground economy), human rights, environment, class equity and generational justice, huge law enforcement costs, and the erosion of the law-habit (defiance). In Chapter 3, the next part, I outlined the research methodology of my study. Therein, I explained the methods, the research design, the

collection and analytical tools for obtaining the information needed to fill the identified

knowledge gap.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the experiences of

Nigeria's drug law enforcement agents regarding the implementation of Nigeria's

cannabis criminal prohibition policy. I looked at Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy

and drew attention to alternative policy options using the perspectives of drug interdiction

officers. The study focused attention on more liberal, people-oriented, and effective

approaches to coping with the challenge of cannabis production, consumption, and illicit

trafficking in the country. The objective of this research was to contribute to an evidence-

based and rational drug control policy through the promotion of drug policy

consciousness and awareness raising for a better understanding of the inherent difficulties

and challenges of using prohibitive and coercive strategies to achieve drug demand

reduction and supply suppression.

Chapter 3 comprises the research method that was employed in my study, the

research design, the instrumentation, and the data collection and data analysis process. It

also contains a description of my participant recruitment and sampling strategy. I identify

and interrogate the biases and ethical concerns that were involved in the study and

discuss how I addressed them. I conducted this study using a semi-structured

interviewing technique that included open-ended questions to interview government drug

control officers (NDLEA narcotic agents). I complemented interviewing with the

analytical review of relevant official documents, public records, and archival materials on

Nigeria's drug control.

The theoretical framework for this research was based on the social construction theory (Berger & Luckman, 1991) that was deployed to explain the media portrayal, public perception, and general conception of drugs as evil, dangerous, and harmful to the health of individuals, the moral fabric and safety of societies, and the integrity and security of countries (see Kushlick, 2014). This religion-based, morally driven, and ideologically contrived mortal fear of drug consumption, illicit drug trafficking, and other supposedly drug-related crimes bred the addiction and fanatical attachment of concerned government authorities and experts to drug prohibition laws (Barnett, 2009). The securitization doctrine was also used to illuminate the coercive and desperate nature and the resilience and resistance to change of the drug prohibition policy despite its failure to achieve the desired outcomes of demand reduction and supply suppression (see Crick, 2012). The data that were collected during this study provided an understanding of the historical evolution of Nigeria's drug control system and situated the implementational difficulties, challenges, and consequences of the narcotics criminal prohibition policy. Aside from characterizing the current narcotics policy regime, the study highlighted possible policy alternatives to narcotics prohibition that have been introduced in other drug-afflicted jurisdictions.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative case study was geared toward answering the research question regarding the experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers regarding the country's cannabis prohibition policy. A research design is a set of methods and procedures used in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data, which guides the structuring and conduct of

the study, thereby enabling the researcher to find appropriate answers to research

questions (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Addressing the choice of appropriate

designs, Marshall and Rossman (2014) advised researchers to identify the research design

that is methodologically aligned to and congruent with their purpose of inquiry. The

design guides the inquirer on the phenomenon of study and on what, how, and whom to

study and analyze (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Marshall and Rossman identified the main

types of qualitative research designs as case study, Delphi, ethnography, grounded

theory, narrative, and phenomenology. To answer the research question, I chose the

qualitative case study design over other options to facilitate access to rich, thick, relevant,

and detailed information from research participants to obtain adequate and credible

answers to my research question.

Central Phenomenon of Study

The central concept or phenomenon of this study was the coercive

implementation of Nigeria's narcotics prohibition policy since 1990, and its retention

without open debate or reform despite its ineffectiveness, challenges, and consequences

in a global environment in which several drug-afflicted countries are introducing more

evidence-based, liberal, pragmatic, and safer policy options. The theoretical foundation,

based on social constructionist theory and strands of the drug securitization theory,

situates and contextualizes the seeming intractability of the drug problem as well as the

tenacity, durability, and resilience of the criminal prohibition regime despite its apparent

ineffectiveness and negative consequences. Researchers have reasoned that the narcotics

prohibition policy was inherently deficient because it was a cure or solution prescribed

based on poor and faulty diagnosis of the problem, a cure based on the morally induced and religiously influenced ideological presumption that narcotics are evil and dangerous and devoid of any sound empirical data, scientific evidence, or rational analysis (Bewley-Taylor, 2005; Levine, 2002; Nadelmann, 1990).

Research Tradition and Approach

I used a qualitative case study design to explore, describe, and characterize the nature of the narcotics prohibition policy and interrogate its nonscientific, religious, moral, racial, and cultural origins, thereby explaining and illuminating the inherent deficiencies, ineffectiveness, implementational difficulties, and negative consequences of the prohibitionist drug control regime.

Rationale

A qualitative case study design is used to explore, analyze, and describe an event, issue, process, or phenomenon involving individuals, groups, or/and institutions (Yin, 2018). Yin (2013) reasoned that the qualitative case study is the appropriate approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the content, context, and conditions of a phenomenon, issue, or problem, and attempts to address it. The approach was a perfect fit for the current study because it offered an effective tool for the critical interrogation of the implementational constraints, challenges, outcomes, and consequences of narcotics criminal prohibition (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used in-depth face-to-face individual interviews as the main tool for collecting data from drug control officers (NDLEA narcotic agents) who implement the cannabis prohibition policy as an integral part of the country's narcotics prohibition policy. For purposes of triangulating data sources and

methods to ensure rigor and transferability of findings (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I

gathered supplementary data through the review and analysis of relevant official

documents, public records, and archival materials. Triangulation of data collection

methods was used to dilute the effect of the presumably filtered and colored information

from self-reporting by drug interdiction agents due to vested interests and professional

solidarity. The qualitative case study was the appropriate approach for this research

because of its capacity for exploration, analysis, in-depth understanding, and description

that was useful given the complex and multidimensional nature of the drug control

phenomenon.

The qualitative case study was the preferred approach ahead of grounded theory,

Delphi, phenomenology, and ethnography. Grounded theory was not appropriate for this

study because the goal was not the creation of a new theory, as there are suitable

explanations for the establishment, coercive implementation, persistence, and obduracy

of the criticized cannabis prohibition policy (see Corbin & Straus, 2015). Because the

purpose of this qualitative study was not to formulate or discover a new theory, a

grounded theory approach was neither suitable nor necessary (see Kenny & Fourie, 2014;

Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The Delphi approach was also not useful for this

study because there was no need to establish any organizational protocol to understand

varying divergence because research participants were interviewed using interactive one-

on-one discussions (see Morse, 2015). Phenomenology was also not considered

appropriate for this study. Though cannabis prohibition is a social phenomenon, cannabis

control is externally focused while phenomenology is usually focused internally on the

individual where people narrate their lived experiences of decision-making (see Tight, 2016; Yuksel & Yildrim, 2015). Ethnography was also not a candidate because my intent was not to address the social behavior of a cultural group (see Schwandt, 2015) but rather to explore the perceptions of a professional group and the outcomes of their actions in the process of using policy to mitigate a social problem.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I played several roles towards ensuring a critical, ethical, rigorous and socially relevant study. Being a Nigerian, I am directly or indirectly affected by the substance and strategy of implementation of the narcotics prohibition policy. As a mass communicator and professional journalist, I have been involved with the drug control for almost 35 years; first as a news reporter; secondly, as United Nations public information specialist; and thirdly, as the Director-General (de facto head of administration) of the NDLEA from December 2010 to July 2014. My 35-year-long involvement with the narcotic drugs challenge has given me a fair understanding and appreciation of much-vaunted challenges of drug consumption and illicit trafficking as the original problem, and the ineffectiveness and implementational challenges of narcotics prohibition policy as the secondary problem of managing the drug pandemic. Against this backdrop, I have been an observer of the drug phenomenon as well as the challenges of implementation of the narcotics prohibition policy to curb the menace of drug abuse and illicit trafficking and production. I have been a participant and participant-observer of both the much-orchestrated drug menace and the narcotics

criminal prohibition policy that had been consistently implemented since 1990 towards eradicating or curbing the multidimensional problem.

As a qualitative researcher, I am the instrument of inquiry, specifically the primary instrument for data collection, data analysis, interpretation, and reporting (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). There is no gainsaying the fact that all qualitative research approaches are at once personal, interactional, and interpersonal (Patton, 2015). This interactional nature is a source of great strength for qualitative research as it makes the researcher a rich reservoir of direct experiential insight; yet it is also a major source of controversy and skepticism from positivist-inclined scholars who believe that credible research must be free from personal and interpersonal sources of bias (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Positivists thus criticize qualitative research studies for the obvious lack of clinical detachment of the researcher from research participants and contexts (Merriam, 2009).

Handling Bias and Conflict of Interest Issues

Realizing the several layers of subjectivity and potential sources of bias, the qualitative researcher should constantly interrogate his/her beliefs, assumptions, biases, analyzes, interpretations, and conclusions and, additionally, consciously co-opt colleagues, peers and other independent interlocutors to challenge and censor those beliefs, assumptions, biases, interpretations, analyses, and conclusions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I engaged with and addressed major possible sources of personal bias and subjectivity to ensure that they do not detract from the dependability and confirmability of my research. As a qualitative researcher, I intentionally strove to ensure fidelity to my

research participants' experiences and perceptions and the research context/environment

as well as guarantee that my interpretive authority did not suppress the views and

perceptions of research participants who are presumed to be experts in their own lived

experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Personal and Professional Relationships

There were reasonable concerns about the fact that the that I will be interviewing

narcotic control officers of the NDLEA, some of whom were my colleagues while I

served as the Agency's Director-General (head of administration), but the reality was that

I did not have any subsisting power or influence over my research participants. I also

reviewed documents to which I made inputs and official contributions when I was at the

NDLEA. Moreover, there were apparent ethical challenges and seeming conflicts of

interests in carrying out a research study on a subject (narcotics control) that concerns my

former workplace (the NDLEA) as well as conducting interviews on the mandate of the

organization using my former colleagues at NDLEA serving as interviewees. There might

have been fears of the compromise of the voluntary consent when I requested to

interview my erstwhile subordinates at NDLEA or even fears of power asymmetry and

differentials. Furthermore, there could also be bias and subjectivity arising from conflict

of interests or roles in asking NDLEA drug interdiction officers to assess the

effectiveness of narcotics drug prohibition in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, I

emphasized to NDLEA officers that my research was not a performance assessment of

their agency, but one could not really take it for granted that NDLEA officers objectively,

without any iota of bias and prejudice, evaluated the effectiveness and implementational

challenges of Nigeria's narcotics prohibition policy.

To address or at least dilute the consequences of possible biased and self-serving

responses by serving NDLEA officers, I interviewed some retired drug control officers of

the NDLEA who were less likely to be defensive or succumb to the urge to protect their

organization and subsisting jobs. Then, where and when I was prequalifying serving

officers for an in-depth interview, I deliberately headhunted new officers that I did not

relate with directly while I was at NDLEA. To further boost the rigor of my findings, I

sought contextual and supplementary data by mining secondary information through

analytical review of relevant official documents and archival information materials. The

triangulation of both methods and sources of data should mitigate the possible bias and

subjectivity of self-reporting by some interviewees (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Moreover, given the reality that I conducted this qualitative research on drug

prohibition policy partly within the NDLEA where I served before as Director-General

(the head of administration/secretariat) and shared all the organizational challenges and

concerns, the possibility of bias, subjectivity or the filtering (coloring) of data could not

be dismissed outright. This situation demanded that I meticulously engaged with and

critically interrogated the multiple subjectivities associated with conducting this social

research within my former workplace (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). At any rate, the reality is

that qualitative research undertakings are presumed to be far from neutral and value-free

as there are always multiple layers of bias, assumptions, conflicts of interest and roles as

well as politics (whether micro, mini, or macro) and other kinds of latent influences,

issues of power asymmetry and differentials, and interviewer-interviewee interactions to contend with (Maxwell, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). On the other hand, my familiarity with the issues and critical actors and agencies in the narcotics policy environment as well as the good rapport that I had with my research participants actually eased my participant recruitment and facilitated the collection of adequate and relevant information, as I retained my inquiry stance and remained prepared to listen carefully and record interviews meticulously (Patton, 2015).

Other Validity and Ethical Concerns

The researcher was careful not to involve his research participants in invalid research that can occur through researching an unapproved topic or engaging in the premature collection of data before receiving the go-ahead of the Institutional Reviews Board (IRB). It is unethical and disrespectful for any researcher to waste the time and energy of research participants on invalid research (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Moreover, the researcher must be conscious of the need to interrogate his assumptions, biases, experiences, and expectations from his research undertaking (Greenback, 2003).

Perhaps most important, the researcher must tick all the boxes and meet the basic conditions for the approval of the beginning of any research by the Institutional Review Board, namely: guaranteeing and making provisions for voluntary and informed consent, beneficence (minimizing possible harm and maximizing expected benefits), and justice cum equity in the selection of research participants (O'Sullivan, et al, 2008).

Methodology

Participant Recruitment and Sampling Approaches

Given the nature of my research question, which asked for the "what" and "how" of Nigeria's narcotic officers' (NDLEA's) experiences of narcotics prohibition policy, I used purposive and criterion sampling to select relevant narcotics policy implementers, who are knowledgeable about Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy and its crackdown implementation strategy. My data sources were serving and retired NDLEA narcotics control officers, who had demonstrated requisite knowledge and field experience in drug policy implementation (Patton, 2015). I used the triangulation of methods and sources of data to enhance the rigor of my research process and the dependability of my research findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). For my data gathering, I mainly used in-depth (face-to-face) interviews and supplemented with the analytical review of relevant official documents and public records on Nigeria's prohibition policy.

Preference for Face-to-Face Interview

Interviewing was my principal method of gathering data because interviewing is the most reliable means of finding out the feelings and thoughts of people (Patton, 2015). While researchers can use other methods, like participant observation, to study human actions and attitudes, they must discuss with them to find out their feelings and thoughts (Patton, 2015). I preferred to use face-to-face interviewing because it usually offers ample opportunity to probe by asking follow-up questions with a view to filling noticeable information gaps and grey areas (Patton, 2015). Moreover, given my social constructionist stance, face-to-face interviewing provided the unmissable opportunity for

interaction and constructive engagement with my researcher participants (drug policy

implementers: NDLEA narcotic agents), who were partners and co-producers of

knowledge in my qualitative research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Instrumentation

For this qualitative study, there were three major instruments for data collection,

namely the Researcher, the Interview Protocol, and the Document Review Guide. Given

the qualitative nature of my study, I, as the researcher and seeker of knowledge

constituted the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

In this light, the development of instruments of data collection and analysis started with

my personal training to upscale my knowledge and skills in qualitative interviewing, and

document review. In addition, I attended a weeklong training workshop on coding and

qualitative data analysis with the aid data management software, including QDA miner,

Nvivo, and Atlas.ti. Since interviews constituted my primary source of data while

documentary review and analysis provided contextual information, I meticulously

developed an Interview Protocol and a Document Review Guide. I pre-tested these key

instruments in mock interviews and analytical reviews to enhance their fecundity and

effectiveness in data collection as well as further upgrade my skills and experience in

qualitative data analysis with the aid of qualitative data management software.

Training on how to conduct a credible qualitative interview. The conduct of a

successful qualitative interview and produce dependable data involves adequate

preparation for the interview; following the right procedure, protocol, and principles;

efficient time management; and cordial interpersonal relations. I was involved in skill

enhancement to familiarize myself with the professional handling of interviewees, the art of interviewing, and the appropriate use of the interview guide.

Development of interview guide. This involved the preparation and pre-testing of the Interview Guide (or Protocol) that I handled as the primary instrument for this study. The interview guide (Appendix A attached to this proposal) consists of 10 short, sharp, clear, probing and open-ended questions that I derived from my research question. My interview guide approach used a semi-structured interview protocol, less rigid than the formalized interview guide but more structured and systematized than the informal conversational interview mode; it retained the flexibility that allows modification of questions as the situations demand (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Tape recorder   used for face-to-face interviews. Qualitative interviewing requires clean and clear recordings. After pre-testing several tape recorders, I finally settled for Sony digital voice recorder because of its simplicity and excellent quality voice recordings. To hone my skills in qualitative interviewing and build up my confidence in the use of my instruments, I engaged in practice exercises with the use of the Sony digital voice recorder for audio-recording of the responses of research participants.

Practice exercises and pilot testing. Following my skill enhancement and familiarization with best practices in interviewing, I engaged in several mock (practice) interviews to hone my interviewing skills. The practice interviews gave me the opportunity to pre-test and assess the fecundity (the probing potential and ability to generate responses) of my interview questions. The practice interview, a sort of pilot

study, was a part of my learning curve. It allowed me to experience first-hand the intricacies, challenges, and unforeseen features of qualitative interviewing. It also provided me ample opportunity for critical reflections on my interview questions and their capacity to generate the responses I needed to answer my research questions and achieve my research goals (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The practice interview(s) was naturally followed by the revision and finetuning of my interview questions, as required, to ensure adequate, relevant, and candid answers to my research questions and increase the possibility of timely data saturation.

Participant Selection Logic

Research participant recruitment comprised a series of interrelated activities, which can be divided into five major stages: identification of eligible participants, provision of adequate explanation on the study to potential participants, selection of an appropriate sample based on the study goals and research design, securing of informed consent while maintaining ethical standards, and the retention of participants until research completion (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Patton, 2015). After securing IRB approval, I got in touch with the NDLEA management and collected a list of former and serving NDLEA officers who had been involved in drug control for at least 10 years from where I prequalified research participants using my inclusion criteria.

My research participant recruitment was guided by the need to get knowledgeable and experienced interviewees as well as secure their privacy and independence to guarantee research quality and voluntary participation while also deliberately eschewing the possibility of coercion or inducement in my participant recruitment (O'Sullivan,

Rassel, & Berner). Considering the nature of my research problem and the central research question (experiences and perceptions of the implementation of narcotics prohibition policies), I had to select only research participants that were involved or are currently involved in the drug control programs (especially cannabis eradication, interdiction, drug demand reduction) and are articulate and socially-aware. To encourage them and promote their enthusiastic participation, I assured them of their confidentiality and privacy as well as the accurate reflection of their contributions. I equally provided the opportunity for their authentication of my interview transcript; while also assuring them that any external publication based on their interviews would be done only with their approval and concurrence and done without any breach to their confidentiality. I provided enough and easily understandable information about my research to prospective participants to ensure that their consent to participate was not just voluntary but well-informed. While I made deliberate and conscious efforts to minimize harms and maximize benefits to my research participants, I adequately informed my participants of the likelihood and magnitude of possible harms and anticipated benefits from their participation in my research. As earlier stated, I used purposive sampling, specifically *criterion selection approach* to prequalify professionals with relevant knowledge and experience in the implementation of drug prohibition policies. Purposive sampling is predicated on the intention and the emphasis on choosing information-rich individuals, whose study and engagement would explain and illuminate the research questions (Rubin, 2015). The objective of my recruitment was to engage research participants who were sufficiently informed about the implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy to

be authentic and veritable sources of rich, thick, and in-depth information (Yin, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Realizing that interviewees and other research participants are not passive actors but co-producers and co-creators in the knowledge-creating process of qualitative data collection (Merriam, 2009), I deliberately selected only fit-for-purpose research participants for my study.

Ensuring Data Saturation

The sample size involved in qualitative research is typically small and the power of purposive sampling is based on selecting information-intensive cases for in-depth inquiries (Galvin, 2015). Moreover, as earlier explained, qualitative studies that use in-depth interviews and multiple data collection methods often require fewer participants per method or data source (Lee, Woo & Mackenzie, 2000). I, therefore, carried out in-depth individual interviews of purposively selected serving narcotics control officers until there was theoretical data saturation or informational redundancy, that is a point when no novel information is yielded by additional interviews (Mason, 2010). After interviewing 15 participants made up of 11 serving and four retired narcotics officers, I was no longer getting fresh information or new perspectives, which was indicative of attainment of data saturation. In a phenomenological case study like this, the sample size must not be too large to ensure the deep case-oriented analysis that is the hallmark of a qualitative study, where emphasis is on meaning rather than the magnitude of experiences (Sandelowski, 1995).

Data Collection Procedures

My qualitative case study made use of semi-structured interviews to gather data from the research participants. In addition to in-depth interviews, to provide contextual depth to my data, I also conducted analytical reviews of relevant official documents, useful public records and archival materials on cannabis prohibition in Nigeria.

To adequately prepare for the interviews, I designed and continually refined a comprehensive interview protocol, the informed consent form, and other relevant documents (see documents attached as Appendix A: Interview Protocol, B: Consent Form, C: Expression of Interest, and D: CITI certificate). The interview guide approach, also called the semi-structured interview technique, is more structured and systematized than the informal conversational interview mode; it retains the flexibility that allows modification of questions as the situation demands (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Unlike the structured (rigid) interview, the strength of this approach, despite the perceived inconsistency in the way the interview questions are posed, is that it gives the researcher the needed freedom and flexibility during the gathering of information from the interviewees while guaranteeing that the same kind and depth of information are collected from each respondent (Kvale, 2007; McNamara, 2009). Thus, the interview protocol keeps the researcher on the driving seat to properly manage the direction of interview, whilst flexibility takes precedence based on perceived prompts from interviewee, to ensure a delicate balance between systematization and the flexibility that would generate appropriate answers to research questions (Turner, 2010).

While interviewing, as provided in my attached Informed Consent Form, I took notes as well as sought the permission of each research participant to tape-record the questions and answers. While securing appointments with my pre-qualified participants, I had negotiated a minimum of one hour from each participant for an interview at a mutually convenient time in a suitable environment (in an office, a residence, or any other appropriate venue). The protocol questions were used to kick-start the interview session with each participant (see Appendix A for the Interview Protocol). While the pre-determined lead questions gave clear direction to the interviewing, there was ample room for follow-up questions (probes) which facilitated in-depth discussions during information exchanges.

To ensure the availability and the readiness of my participants, following IRB approval, I gave enough notice to my prospective research participants and send constant reminders via telephone discussion and SMS messages. My interview protocol contained short, sharp, and easily understandable questions, which I pretested. Moreover, I included the pre-interview briefing (including assurances of confidentiality and privacy) as well as post-interview comments in my interview protocol. Furthermore, I engaged my research participants in relevant follow-up discussions, sent text messages and Whatsapp reminders when necessary, and got them to authenticate and validate the resulting transcript from interview sessions to guarantee accurate reflection of participants' perspectives and experiences.

Data Analysis Plan

Given the triangulation of methods and sources in this study, involving interviewing and review of relevant public documents and available useful records, data analysis was conducted on interview transcripts, and additional data gleaned from documentary analyses. My method of data analysis in this case study was content analysis, considered one of the most appropriate and preferred analytical techniques for qualitative data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I developed meanings and relationships by coding and analyzing the content of datasets from my various sources. I did simultaneous data collection and analysis because the interweaving of data collection with analysis in a concurrent process usually ensures that the results of the formative (initial) data analysis can feed into and guide subsequent data collection process (Miles, Huberman, &Saldaña, 2014). Given the iterative, recursive, and cyclical nature of qualitative research, qualitative data analysis is better treated and conducted as an ongoing and continual process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

There are three major approaches to content analysis, namely conventional, summative, and directed forms (Saldaña, 2013). All three procedures can be employed to extract meaning directly out of the text data, thus conforming to the naturalistic tradition. Differences among the approaches relate mainly to coding plans, origins of codes, and possible ethical challenges (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). I used directed content analysis, where coding was preceded by the definition of theory while the defining of codes took place prior to and during the process of analyzing the data. As expected, the directed content analysis started with the use of formal theory and relevant findings to

guide the identification of initial codes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The theory and relevant findings thus facilitated the pre-listing of codes. To aid the directed content analysis, I deployed QDA miner software to code my qualitative data. The data outcomes of my qualitative case study were analyzed through the directed content analysis of the datasets derived from the response to my interview questions and interpreted from the data protocol (detailed in the Appendix). The insights gleaned from respondents facilitated the understanding of their experiences and perceptions about the implementational difficulties and inherent demerits of the narcotics prohibition policy. At the completion of the in-depth interviews and document reviews, I did a comparative analysis of the responses from research participants in accordance with emergent themes and patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014), guided by the theories that formed the theoretical foundation of this study.

The datasets collected from my research participants (narcotic control officers) and methods (in-depth interviews and document reviews) were analyzed. The qualitative data analysis process involved three main steps or phases, namely: coding of the data, categorizing the coded data, and thereafter generating themes in line with the research questions being addressed as well as the underlying theories (Saldaña, 2013). Coding was treated as an integral part of the qualitative analysis process; it helped in the data collation, organization, and thinking process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldaña, 2013). To obtain the themes from the transcript, I pre-coded (hand-coded) the transcripts to deduce patterns or description of labels which are created from each line of thought, sentences or phrase of the participant (Rubin & Rubin, 2013). Ravitch & Carl (2016) stated that the

codes will provide an understanding of the phenomenon or situation from the participants' perspective in a way that is distinct for each of them.

I used the gradual and iterative coding cycle technique popularized by Saldaña (2013); which involves two major stages, the first cycle coding, involving mainly descriptive codes and the second cycle coding, involving summative coding. To guarantee fidelity to the ideas and feelings of research participants, I adopted inductive coding with the aid of QDA miner while sticking to words and short phrases that are close to the actual statements and expressions of research participants (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The use of directed content analysis meant there were some preliminary codes influenced by the research question and the theoretical framework though most of the codes gradually emerged from or were derived from the data.

After I had personally transcribed the tape-recorded semi-structured interviews and the analytical notes and extract from documentary review, I subjected the ensuing transcript to member-checking by research participants to authenticate and validate the responses before textual transcribed data are hand-coded. The pre-coded word document was uploaded into QDA miner software to generate systematically collated and better-organized data that could be grouped into categories and themes. Miles and Huberman (2014) stated that the determination of a plan, no matter how tentative or flexible, for data gathering, collation, organization, and storage is a key step before the commencement of data collection and subsequent phases of the dissertation process for better time management. As planned, the properly developed data collection framework and analytical schema informed the use of collected data and should serve as a veritable guide

and landmark for future researchers. Fakis et al (2014) reasoned that the case study approach enhances the qualitative analysis of data as it has a protocol that is appropriate for the identification of themes that provide meaning to the research question. The data analysis process and the entire qualitative study were linked to and guided by the central research question: What are the experiences and perceptions of Nigeria's narcotic agents (NDLEA officers) of the country's cannabis prohibition policy?

During and throughout the data analysis, I meticulously, repeatedly, and iteratively read through and critically reflected on the interview scripts and document review drafts to ensure my prolonged immersion and engagement with the raw data that was eventually needed for informed analysis and interpretation of data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Social construction is the creation of knowledge by interactions of individuals within society; it is based on the belief that knowledge and truth are creations of communicating and interacting with people through cooperative constructions of meanings and shared understandings of concepts as a basis for shared beliefs and assumptions of reality, rather than pre-existing and static realities waiting to be discovered by the mind (Berger and Luckman, 1991). The social constructionist theory was later deployed by Nadelmann (1989) and Klantschnig (2015) to explore and interrogate the media framing, social creation and societal acceptance of the idea of narcotic drugs as evil, dangerous and addictive substances that must be stamped out and banned for the sake of the good health of individuals, the safety of neighborhoods and the security of nations. Hammersley (2017) asserted that addiction as well as the perception

of drugs as addictive, harmful and undesirable substances is socially situated and culturally constructed.

Social constructionist theory helps to explain the moral panic, health anxieties, and religious fears about narcotics as socially created and culturally constructed rather than based on rational analysis or predicated on empirical facts (Gablin, 2015). The training, socialization, and practice guidelines of drug police officers influence their perception of drug use and other offenses; it is reasonable to conclude that how this drug interdiction agents view drug offenses invariably influences how they implement and enforce these drug laws. Worrall and Kovandzic (2008) reasoned that the police might be favorably disposed to harsh enforcement of drug laws and higher punishments for drug offenses because they feel such offenses are directly harmful to society or that drug use is the catalyst to more serious crimes. On the other hand, the police may favor strict enforcement of drug laws because of selfish interests such as profit arising from asset forfeiture or the career advancement and promotion through pumping up of arrest figures and seizure numbers (Worrall & Kovandzic, 2008).

From the theoretical framework of this study, largely based on social construction theory, and my interview questions (in appendix A) concerning the experiences of Nigeria's narcotic control agents in the implementation of the country's cannabis prohibition policy, I anticipated the preliminary codes in the simple coding framework below. However, given the qualitative nature of my inquiry which emphasizes inductive coding, most of my codes (just as the categories, patterns, and themes) gradually and progressively emerged from my data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Researchers, especially those of the positivist school, often express a series of reservations about the quality (the validity and the reliability) of qualitative research. While some of these views arise out of reasonable concerns about the thoroughness of qualitative research, most of the reservations are pedantic claims and unrealistic expectations by positivist researchers who crave to pigeon-hole qualitative research and shackle it to the same conditions and criteria of validity as quantitative research (Merriam, 1998). Though qualitative research, like every sound research tradition, must guarantee a degree of rigor that conforms to its assumptions and beliefs, qualitative research practitioners should not be apologetic about the much-criticized inability of the qualitative research to demonstrate so-called reliability (repeatability and replicability) and generalizability, which are essentially limitations and peculiarities imposed on qualitative inquiry by its philosophical assumptions and beliefs as well as its inescapable link to particular social locations, unique cultural contexts, and specific circumstances (Gabi & Lincoln, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

Quoting Merriam (1995), Patton (2015) reasoned that notions, beliefs and standards of validity must necessarily be anchored to the worldview of qualitative research and thus recommended that researchers should strive to deploy appropriate methodologies and relevant strategies to ensure trustworthiness which is compatible with a qualitative study. Considering that qualitative research is based on the philosophical notion that reality is largely socially constructed, multidimensional, and fluid depending on specific research actors and contexts, and that "there is nothing like a single

unchangeable reality waiting to be discovered" (Merriam, 1995), it is logical to realize

that there are "multiple realities" as well as several versions or variants of the "truth"

about a particular situation because realities are largely and essentially socially-created

and culturally-constructed (Merriam, 1995, 2009; Gabi & Lincoln, 1985). The leading

lights of qualitative research tradition, Guba and Lincoln (1985) -- rather than acquiesce

and subscribe to the positivist assumptions and criteria of validity, reliability, objectivity,

and generalizability -- innovatively introduced the multidimensional construct called

trustworthiness. Trustworthiness, they explicated, comprise credibility (internal validity),

dependability (reliability), confirmability (objectivity), and transferability (as distinct

from generalizability), as the set of criteria for assessing the soundness and standard of

qualitative studies (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

Against this backdrop, trustworthiness is of critical importance in every

qualitative inquiry because the researcher is the primary and principal instrument for the

research process (Porter, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the researcher, I was the sole

agent and driver of the data collection, analysis, interpretation, and the reporting

activities, each of which was open to bias and subjectivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I

promoted trustworthiness through intentionally and transparently ensuring a rigorous and

systematic process and employing a deliberately critical research methodology (Morse,

Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated that the

qualitative research design must be deliberately critical and rigorous for it to be credible

and dependable while Patton (2015) reasoned that reliability and validity could be

substantiated by credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The whole

gamut of approaches, methods, and strategies used in the entire research process were consciously made critical, transparent, and rigorous through member-checking, peer debriefs, and authentication of results for the research outcomes and conclusions to be considered trustworthy (Murphy & Yielder, 2010; Roberts, Priest, & Traynor, 2006; Morse et al., 2002; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As planned, I used triangulation of data sources and methods, and member checking to enhance the trustworthiness of my study.

Credibility

Believing that ensuring the credibility of qualitative research is one of the most fundamental strategies for establishing trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocated and promoted the adoption of well-grounded and proven research methods in qualitative research. A study is rated credible when the methodology generates relevant and adequate rich data that reflects the reality of the people's experience and perspectives (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) advocated the use of appropriate operational measures for the constructs being studied. Yin (1994) recommended the use of severally tried, tested, and trusted procedures, urging that the methods used in data collection and analysis, should (where applicable) be largely based on those that have been successfully employed in similar projects (Yin, 1994). To ensure credibility, Lincoln & Guba (1985) prescribed prolonged engagement of the researcher with the research participants and settings (environment) to ensure that the researcher gains an adequate understanding of the organization to be investigated and to establish the needed rapport and trust between the parties in the research process.

Familiarity with the nuances, culture, and practices of the participating organizations prior to the data collection exercise is considered very important and it could be achieved through the relevant document and archival information reviews or/and preliminary visits to the organizations concerned (Patton, 2002). Researcher bias as reflected in selective perception and lack of fidelity to the data, people's experiences, and the research setting are common threats to credibility. I employed the triangulation of several data collection methods and sources including in-depth interviews of drug control officers (narcotic agents), the review of relevant documents, and archival information sources. Comparative analysis of the information provided by one method or source against what is provided by another could be used to enhance the rigor and credibility of the research process and findings (Patton, 2002, 2015). The use of different data collection and analytic methods in concert will compensate for the limitations and shortcomings of the individual methods and sources while combining their respective benefits and strengths (Guba, 1981).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) stated that member checking constitutes a critical provision that could boost a study's credibility. Such checks concerning the accuracy of the data may take place during the data collection process or at the end of data collection engagements (Yin, 2013; Patton, 2015). Along this line, I involved key informants (interviewees) in reading and checking transcripts of dialogues that involved them to ascertain whether their captured words and expressions match the views they intended to articulate. Member Checks were also used to verify the appropriateness of the researcher's tentative theories and inferences formed during the engagements (Shenton,

2004). A further bolstering of the credibility of qualitative research was also achieved through a rich, thick, and detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Shenton (2004) reasoned that comprehensive and detailed description can be a critical provision for promoting credibility as it enhances accurate portrayal of the actual situations investigated as well as the specific cultural or social contexts which surround them (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, I leveraged the experiences of former United Nations colleagues, who are knowledgeable and experienced in drug policy matters, to bolster the credibility of my study through engaging them in analytic discussions on my research project (Patton, 2002; 2015).

Transferability

Transferability is simply the degree or the extent to which research findings can be applied or projected beyond the boundary of the study (Merriam, 2008). To improve the transferability of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) reasoned that the responsibility of the researcher is to present necessary and sufficient information about the phenomenon studied and provide vivid, detailed, and enough description of the context of the fieldwork and sites to enable the reader or research consumer relate findings to other possible locations and then make an informed decision about the transfer of usable research findings if they [reader or research consumer] believe those locations to be similar or identical to the situation presented in the earlier study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Since the researcher may know only the sending context, he or she could not be saddled with the responsibility of making transferability inferences (Shenton,

2004). In this light, I deliberately employed full and vivid description to guide and enhance the transferability of my research outcomes (Yin, 2013).

Enhancing transferability is about taking possible steps to increase the degree or the extent to which research outcomes can apply or be projected beyond the boundary of the study (Merriam, 2008). According to Moustakas (1994), transferability connotes external validity while Guba (1981) perceived transferability as essentially a view of the applicability of a study. Applicability specifically relates to the extent to which the outcomes of the research can be applied to other settings or other locations with similar communities (Bhattacherjee, 2012). While applicability is not identical to generalizability, a qualitative study is distinctive because it can be used to examine a phenomenon in-depth in a targeted or specific natural environment, yet its key features might still be transferable (or applicable) to [culturally] similar research locations (Guba, 1998).

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is used to address how the research questions produce the same or similar findings each time the study is repeated (Moustakas, 1994). Addressing dependability (the qualitative research equivalent of reliability in the quantitative realm) is perhaps the most challenging for qualitative researchers because the very nature of qualitative research does not promote or enhance replicability or repeatability (Merriam, 1998). Nevertheless, Lincoln and Guba (1985) contended that the close ties between the credibility of a research process and its dependability implied that a vivid demonstration of credibility in practice goes a long

way to show some degree of dependability, which could be done through the use of "overlapping methods" such as focus group discussions and face-to-face in-depth interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, Shenton (2004) recommended that addressing the dependability issue more directly entailed reporting in full detail all the processes and phases (or steps) within a qualitative study, thereby empowering future researchers with enough information to repeat the essential steps of the research process almost the same way, even if not necessarily with the hope of getting the same results.

Meeting the dependability and confirmability criteria involves presenting vividly all the essential details that will enable future researchers to follow the researcher's audit trail through checking and assessing records of actions and steps that were taken including the raw data collected; records of the process and outcomes of data reduction, analysis, and synthesis; methodological notes, field reports, researcher's reflections, and analytical notes; as well as instrumentation and piloting techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

At any rate, the greatest strength of qualitative research is its fidelity to research participants and the context, which makes it possible for this research tradition to thrive where there is a need to obtain information that is culturally nuanced and appropriate about the norms, idiosyncrasies, values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of specific communities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability can be compromised if the interviewing protocol is inconsistent or if the researcher fails to follow the interview protocol or if there is an error or inaccuracy in the transcription of the recorded interview (Patton, 2002). For my case study, I used semi-structured protocol

questions to kick-start the interview to ensure consistency. Moreover, I did the verbatim recording of all in-depth interviews and personally transcribed the recorded interviews to guarantee the accuracy of transcripts and the usage of credible data to ensure the dependability of outcomes.

Confirmability

Confirmability is often regarded as the qualitative equivalent of the "objectivity" criteria in quantitative context (Guba, 1981). I addressed the issue of confirmability by purposefully and intentionally using firmly established data collection and analytical methods as well as by recruiting only reputable, sincere, and candid participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To achieve this, I prequalified and selected only participants that were known, tested, and trusted and acknowledged to be knowledgeable and experienced on drug policy matters to enhance the credibility of the research process and confirmability of its outcomes. To guarantee confirmability, research results must reflect the experiences and perceptions of participants and not the biases of the researcher (Anney, 2014; Sieber & Tolich, 2013). I, therefore, deliberately worked towards ensuring transparency, openness, deep discussions, and criticality during the interview process through acknowledging and addressing all my layers of subjectivity and possible biases (Miles et al., 2014). As noted by Yin (2013), trust and mutual confidence between the researcher and the research participant are critical elements of qualitative research. I deliberately respected and showed deference and fidelity to research participants. I ensured that research findings are clearly reflective of the feelings, perceptions, experiences of

research participants who are considered authentic experts in their own experiences

(Glesne, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Hammersley, 2008).

Ethical Procedures

Conducting a trustworthy and people-centered qualitative research entails giving

meticulous attention to ethical procedures and relational protocol; it also involves taking

a critical, reflexive, relational, and inquiry stance (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The

maintenance of ethical standards begins with ensuring voluntary participation and

autonomy as well as protecting participants from foreseeable harm (O'Sullivan, et al.,

2008). To ensure ethical standards, I clearly communicated the purpose and expectations

of my study to prospective research participants immediately after IRB approval before

interviews were carried out to inform, alert, and protect them from possible harms and

promote ethical and professional behavior (Cope, 2014). I briefed the participants about

the informed consent and other ethical processes to secure their voluntary participation

prior to conducting the individual interviews. As a researcher, it was my duty to protect

research participants from possible risks and harm (Flicker et al., 2013). Yin (2014)

admonished that special considerations must be given to all critical human factors of the

research process, especially participants themselves and the individual records.

Participants' rights and freedoms were prioritized throughout the entire research process

as I consciously ensured ethical standards in the use of human samples and made sure

that the data collection and analysis were done in an open and transparent manner

understandable by all the research participants.

My participant recruitment was an open and detailed selection process with clear provisions and efforts made towards mitigating the negative effects (possible bias and lack of rigor) of a single data source or method through triangulation of data sources and methods. Prior to interviewing, I briefed research participants of their right to participate or decline participation in the research without any negative consequence. I also clearly stated in the Expression of Interest Form, and the Informed Consent Form respectively, the right and freedom of participants to withdrawal at any time from the interview process without any penalty (O' Sullivan, et al., 2008). Each participant was given assurance of the safety and protection of data collected through the coding of the files and the locking up and safe custody of all paperwork related to the study. Everything was done to reduce the risk of data theft or leakage to the barest minimum.

Informed consent. The first consideration in protecting research participants from harm was to secure their informed consent and ensure voluntary participation. This involved negotiating their participation in the research process, securing their permission to take notes and tape-record the interview, and academic use of the data so that it is not interpreted as stolen data (Ritchie, et al., 2013). The consent sought extended to the transcription and coding of the ensuing data from the recorded interview. Negotiations with the research participants also included the duration of the interview and securing time commitment as well as notifying participants of their subsequent involvement in *member checks* (authentication and validation) on the transcript of the interview to ensure factual accuracy (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After emailing the Expression of Interest Letter and the Informed Consent to potential research participants immediately after IRB

approval and several days before the commencement of data collection, I deliberately repeated these steps towards ethical compliance during the actual interviewing and data analysis to ensure that I have an audio record of the interviewee's consent to the data collection and analysis. As earlier planned and agreed, once recorded interviews were completed and transcribed, I sent to each participant the appropriate interview transcript to get their feedback on content accuracy and quality (Patton, 2002, 2015).

Confidentiality. Confidentiality is basically about an individual's privacy and involves decisions about how and what data of interest to participants could be disseminated or distributed (Anney, 2014). However, protecting the privacy of participants goes beyond confidentiality and extends to ensuring anonymity (Cope, 2014; Ritchie, et al., 2013). It is my duty as a researcher to assure research participants that their contributions are truly safe and secure. Promoting confidentiality may involve the use of pseudonyms and altering information identifiers as situations demand (Bojanc & Jerman-Blazic, 2013). In this study, I used numbers (P1… to P15) to label participants and showed the utmost respect and ensured strict compliance with protocols to protect the privacy of research participants. I took deliberate steps to prevent any compromise of their confidentiality by encouraging them to confidentially provide follow-up feedbacks or revisions to the transcript via emails and other means of feedback. I further ensured the confidentiality of research participants' records and data by storing them in a secured computer that was password-protected and kept in a safe.

Protecting Participants From Harm

I took all reasonable measures and essential steps to safeguard the autonomy of research participants and to ensure that they engaged voluntarily from a position of strength. I briefed all participants individually on the purpose of the study and ensured that they properly understood the possible risks as well as the expected benefits of the research. I ensured that communication channels were kept open and made participants aware of their right to withdraw from the study if and anytime they felt uncomfortable with their continued involvement in the research.

Protecting Participants From Risk

Research ethics and standards demand that, in case there are potential risks in the research processes, participants must be well-informed about the mitigating strategies against such risks and be treated with utmost consideration and respect. I operated with cultural competence to manage the cultural differences and similarities between myself and research participants. In cross-cultural research settings where social gaps seem important, there might be a need to address these power differentials to facilitate the achievement of research goals (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In my study, research participants were adequately motivated to engage in interview sessions through the cultivation of a rapport that fosters open and interactive interviews (Shenton, 2004). Yin (2013) asserted that mutual trust between a researcher and the research participant(s) is a key ingredient of qualitative research. In handling queries by participants, I recognized the participant's rights and privileges by clearly showing empathy or changing the line of questioning and discussion as occasions demand (Seidman, 2013). I was consciously guided by the net-

benefit rule in my study to ensure that maximum benefits possible accrue to research participants for the minimum risks.

Summary

Chapter 3 contains an overview of my research design and a description of the qualitative methods that underpinned and guided my study. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore, describe, and analyze the course, costs, and consequences of the cannabis eradication and interdiction strategy principally used in implementing Nigeria's narcotic criminal prohibition policy since it was decreed into existence in 1989 by the then ruling military government and have been enforced since 1990. Chapter 3, subdivided into several sections, including highlights of the role of the researcher, the sample population, the data collection, analytical strategies and the techniques that were used to maximally enhance credibility and dependability. The chapter includes essential details on strategies for achieving trustworthiness through ensuring the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative research. This chapter made adequate provisions for ensuring the credibility and ethical soundness of the research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and describe the implementational challenges and difficulties of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy while employing a social constructionist lens in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. As specified in the NDLEA's (2016, 2017) vision and mission statements, the cannabis prohibition policy is aimed at suppressing supply, reducing demand, and curbing the trafficking of cannabis through continuous interdiction and pursuit of total eradication of the cultivation and illicit trafficking of cannabis sativa using all resources at its disposal. The NDLEA Act, Cap N30 LFN, 2004, formerly Decree 48 of 1989, was a wholesale adoption and application of the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic substances (1988 Vienna Convention). In this study, I collected and analyzed data on the experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers (NDLEA agents) in the implementation of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy with a view toward examining the effectiveness and the persistence and resistance to change of the militarized repressive approach. This chapter contains a description of the setting, demographics of participants, data collection techniques, data analysis approach, and findings. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Setting

The organizational setting was the NDLEA, which is the leading implementation agency and the organization tasked with coordinating narcotics drug control activities and operations, including campaigns to check the production, trafficking, and abuse of

cannabis in Nigeria. Abuja and Lagos, which constitute two major areas of NDLEA drug control operations, were the sites where I conducted my in-depth interviews between December 8, 2019, and January 4, 2020. I also conducted analytical reviews of documents and public records relevant to the cannabis prohibition policy.

Abuja was declared the federal capital of Nigeria on December 12, 1991. Located at the epicenter of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja has an estimated area of 713 square km (Federal Capital Development Administration, FCDA, 2018). Abuja replaced Lagos as the official government city and administrative capital. Abuja is geographically defined by the popular Aso Rock, a 400-meter stone hill created by water erosion (FCDA, 2018). The most recent census conducted in 2006 indicated that Abuja had a population of 776, 298, which made it one of the first 10 most densely populated cities in the country (National Population Commission, 2006). Abuja is remarkable for its demographic centrality, the plain landscape, and its deliberate creation to be home to every Nigerian of all ethnic groups, religions, and cultures. Renowned for its large number of hospitality homes, Abuja has numerous hotels, motels, and brothels of various sizes and standards where nightlife was not only active but riotous before the advent of Boko Haram terrorism, which is believed to have had a calming and moderating influence on the bustling city (Abuja Enquirer, 2015). Abuja retains its many social establishments and entertainment clubs where cannabis and other hard drugs are freely sold, shared, and consumed.

The current study was conducted in Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, with the largest economy. Nigeria has become a producer of drugs, including *Cannabis*

sativa and methamphetamines, a transit route for narcotic drugs, and a scene for organized crimes including human trafficking, money laundering, arms smuggling, terrorism, and banditry. The data collection for this study took place soon after Nigeria, the European Union, and the UNODC jointly released the first comprehensive National Drug Use Survey on January 30, 2019. The survey results indicated the number of drug users in Nigeria to be 14.4%, or 14.3 million people between 15 and 64 years of age, which suggested that the prevalence of past-year drug use in Nigeria was more than twice the 2016 global average of 5.6% among adult populations. The survey report indicated that 10.6 million people use cannabis in one form or another in Nigeria, and added that cannabis retained the prize for being the most consumed, most produced, and most trafficked psychoactive drug in Nigeria (Shenton, 2004).

The current study took place within the research setting at a time when the recruitment of new drug control officers by the NDLEA, which had been in the pipeline since 2014 and had been started and suspended more three times in the past, was reportedly inconclusive and stalled by lack of funds for training and installment of the officers. As of December 2019, the NDLEA had a total staff of about 4,500 comprising about 2,750 senior and middle cadre officers and 1,750 junior staff. The ongoing recruitment exercise has been targeted at increasing the staff by about 5,000 officers, 4,500 of whom would be junior and middle cadre officers while 500 would be of senior management. Currently, a total of 4,500 NDLEA staff comprising mainly top-heavy bureaucrats are saddled with the drug policing of Nigeria's 200 million people who are scattered in 36 states and the federal capital territory. NDLEA, which recently relocated

its administrative offices to a borrowed temporary office in Abuja to join other law enforcement and security agencies, does not own national headquarters and its debt-distressed state commands around the country operate in rented apartments or old abandoned political party offices. The NDLEA lacks barracks to accommodate its staff members, thereby leaving its narcotic officers and general staff to live among the general public, some of whom are the drug offenders that narcotic agents are enlisted to combat daily.

Data collection was carried out at a time of serious budgetary cuts and a chronic financial crisis at the NDLEA that had made the agency unable to fund its imprest account at the headquarters or pay running grants and operational allowances to the 36 State Commands and the 11 Special Area Commands to carry out daily operations. Data were collected during a period of acute shortage of operational vehicles and lack of funds to fuel the few functional operational vehicles, leading to a situation in which only high priority and urgent assignments are given any consideration.

Demographics

There were 15 individuals who participated in this study, all of whom were NDLEA drug control agents. Participants were between 45 and 67 years of age; 12 were men and three were women. All 15 participants were at one time or another involved in the implementation of Nigeria's drug control policy between 1990 and 2019. The inclusion criteria were specialized experience in and exposure to cannabis prohibition (interdiction and eradication). The drug control officers selected were current or former state/zonal commanders of NDLEA who had been involved in the implementation of the

cannabis prohibition policy. Preference was given to officers and former commanders

who had served in the leading cannabis-growing states/areas of the country (Ondo, Ekiti,

Osun, Oyo, Delta, and Edo). Three of the 15 participants were selected because they

combined experience in cannabis interdiction and eradication with considerable exposure

to and involvement in drug demand reduction programs. With regard to analytical review

of documents and public records on Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy, a holistic

approach was adopted to review and code all relevant and appropriate materials from

purposively selected credible sources relating to programs, interventions, and activities to

curb cannabis production, trafficking, and consumption, while priority was given to

reliable official current documents, reports, and public records of NDLEA or publications

from other credible sources, which were relevant to the purpose of this study (see Bowen,

2009; O'Leary, 2014).

Data Collection

As provided for in my data collection plan, I used two methods for data

collection, namely in-depth interviews with drug control officers to gather primary data

and documentary analysis of public documents and relevant official records of NDLEA

and other appropriate documents to gather secondary and contextual data.

In-Depth Interviews

Following the receipt of my Walden University IRB approval, number 11-27-19-

0663708, I started the recruitment of participants for my study by contacting the Director

of Personnel and Administration of NDLEA to forward me a list and the email addresses

of their serving and retired drug control officers who had served the Agency for at least

10 years. From the list, I prequalified 20 prospective participants that met all my inclusion criteria and sent the Expression of Interest (EOI) Letters and Informed Consent Forms to them. I fixed interview appointments with the first 15 prequalified participants who expressed interest and signed the Informed Consent Form to take part in my study. I planned for not less than 45 minutes of social interaction and an in-depth face-to-face interview with every participant. The entire interview per participant, including time for pre-interview introductory formalities and post-interview remarks, ranged from 40 to 50 minutes' duration. The process of data collection, inclusive of follow-up phone calls and WhatsApp messages to fill information gaps and clear grey areas, took me about six weeks. Most of my participants preferred to host me in their various offices, only three chose to come to my office. The venues used were conducive offices, which provided the environment for social interaction, free discussion, and open communication.

The semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) served as the guide for the interview process. I deployed all the interview questions in the protocol across all the 15 study participants because all the questions were crucial to collecting adequate and relevant data that can answer my research question. I typically opened with a question from the interview protocol and, as and when necessary, followed up the initial question with probes and subsidiary questions improvised to get specific details. I generally employed a conversational style to encourage rapport, free exchange, and flow of information. While similar questions were posed across study participants, the probes and follow-up questions varied according to the grey areas that needed clarification and the information gaps that needed to be filled. The order of asking the questions depended on

the flow of information but all the interview protocol questions were asked across the 15 study participants. The follow-up relevant questions were posed as and when needed to elicit further information and contextual details for a rich, thick, and vivid description. As the data collection and initial analysis were carried out concurrently, the themes and concepts emerging from the data gathered in earlier interviews influenced decisions about further sampling and data collection, particularly regarding the sequencing and ordering of interview questions in subsequent interviews.

I took interview notes and, with the consent of my research participants, audio-recorded the face-to-face in-depth-interviews using a sensitive and clear digital IC Recorder. To leverage fresh memories immediately after interviews to increase the descriptive validity of my interviewing process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), I made sure that I promptly converted my jottings during interview sessions into field notes, while I personally transcribed verbatim and typed every individual interview within 48 hours of concluding each session.

Being a professional journalist and used to media interviews, I did not expect transcription to be so energy-sapping and mentally tasking. However, qualitative interviews proved to be more demanding and intellectually tasking than media interviews because of the need for more factual accuracy and contextual depth, which makes verbatim reporting (word-by-word account) almost mandatory. Media interviews rarely require verbatim transcription, and the transcription of recorded press interviews could be delegated without negative consequences. However, interview transcripts are vital and of central concern to qualitative research. Transcription, a process by which the spoken

word is transformed into the written word, is not just considered as a necessary and fitting conclusion of the data collection process, it is equally seen as the commencement of formative data analysis and an interpretive act (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Transcription equally provided the opportunity for prolonged immersion and engagement with the interview recording to listen to and hear the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), thus facilitating the open coding process. I had to play the audio recordings of each in-depth interview many times, listened attentively, and thereafter typed directly unto my laptop for easy correction and editing as I checked and rechecked to ensure accuracy and completeness of each individual interview transcript. Despite transcribing and typing directly into my word processor, every 40-minute interview required more than four hours to transcribe verbatim and yielded an average of six pages of double line-spaced typed transcript. The exercises would have been more laborious, tedious, and time-intensive if I had transcribed verbatim and written down the interview long-hand before typing to produce a transcript.

I saved the individual interview transcripts as a word document on my laptop and sent by email to each to the appropriate respondent to read them and confirm their correctness and completeness as part of my participant validation and member checking process. I requested the participants to provide feedback on the transcript within one week, especially if changes were needed. Most did not get back to me while those who did confirmed that the interview transcript that they received was a true reflection of their earlier responses to my interview questions. I have stored the data collected in a passworded desktop computer and I will keep it for at least five years before destruction.

Documentary Analysis for Mining Supplementary Data

As earlier planned, to get contextual data to supplement the primary data from my in-depth interviews, I conducted the analytical review of selected relevant existing public documents and appropriate public records of NDLEA. The documents that were chosen for analysis were relevant materials, especially those published by NDLEA or the UNODC, that relate to Nigeria's drug (cannabis) prohibition policy. The basic documents, such as the NDLEA Act and Annual Reports of the NDLEA, were publicly available and accessible on the website of the Agency while specialized publications like the NDLEA Institutional Assessment and Nigeria's Drug Threat Assessment were collected from the Abuja Liaison Office of the NDLEA and the United Nations Office of Drug and Crime in Abuja. Documentary analysis was conducted on the NDLEA Vision and Mission Statements; NDLEA Act (the enabling law of the Agency); Recent Annual Reports of the NDLEA; National Drug Control Master Plans (1999-2007; 2008-2011; 2015-2019); Policy Manuals of NDLEA; NDLEA Institutional Assessment; and Nigeria's Drug Threat Assessment.

The above documents for analytical review were selected after evaluation for pertinence based on relevance to the research question, the authenticity and credibility of the source, the quality of the study that resulted in the document, the recency of publication, and usefulness or fitness for purpose. After identifying the appropriate documents and records that could provide needed secondary data that would answer the central research question or some of the interview questions, the documentary analysis process involved skimming, reading, and studying each of the documents and records and

treating them as research participants and asking them the same questions that were

posed to human respondents. The analytical review of appropriate documents, records

and reports yielded secondary data in the form of analytical notes, summaries, and

extracts that were subsequently subjected to the same coding and analytical procedures as

the interview data.

While I sourced most of the documents from the office of the United Nations

Office of Drug and Crime in Abuja and the NDLEA Headquarters in Abuja and

operational base in Lagos, I got some of the basic information like mission and vision

statements and recent annual reports from relevant official websites. Though I literally

pored over documents on Nigeria's drug prohibition everywhere and anywhere after my

IRB approval, much of the studying and reading between the lines and the documentary

analyses took place in the comfort of my study room. I was particularly fascinated by the

sheer variety and deluge of relevant information available on Nigeria's drug control

policy. It was a Herculean task trying to limit the documents to the few most pertinent

ones that could be accommodated within the tight schedule of a doctoral study. The

amount of time spent analyzing each document naturally varied widely with the volume,

complexity, relevance, the information intensity, and density, as well as the consonance

between a document and the research question or the theoretical framework of the study.

In the end, between skimming, studying, and analytical reflections on relevant data in

each document and jotting down appropriate contextual data and information that could

help to answer my research question, I spent over 90 hours, spread across three weeks, on

documentary analysis alone despite my familiarity with the issues, facts, and trends of

psychoactive drugs prohibition, having been involved for over 30 years as a media practitioner, former United Nations information officer, and former drug control administrator.

Unforeseen Variations in Data Collection

My data collection largely followed the plan detailed in Chapter 3. Following the receipt of my Walden IRB Approval, I called the NDLEA Director of Personnel and Administration to collect the list of senior Drug Control Officers. I did not plan to use the snowball technique as part of my purposeful sampling procedure. I had thought it would be easy to get 15 participants who satisfy my inclusion criteria. However, after interviewing my first ten participants, it became difficult getting commitment to early dates from most of the remaining people who had initially expressed an interest to participate either because of movements and preparations for the Christmas festivities or perhaps a change of mind for other reasons. As my data collection had not attained theoretical data saturation or information redundancy, I had to rely on the prequalified participants already interviewed to suggest names of other information-intensive drug control officers. With the introduction of this snowball technique, I secured more committed drug control officers who were willing and ready to discuss my research question. Thereafter, I continued my interview process until I felt I was no longer getting any new information from additional participants after in-depth and interactive discussion on my interview questions with 15 research participants.

Unusual Experiences During Data Collection

Given the defined and specific nature of my sample population (Nigeria's drug control officers), I had assumed that recruitment of participants (essentially NDLEA's drug control agents) would be as easy as chewing a piece of cake. I was surprised to find out that some of the Commanders of Narcotics of NDLEA that I contacted to participate in my in-depth interviews developed cold feet after initial expression of interest. This compelled me to resort to snowball technique (as described above) after interviewing my first ten participants from the prequalified participant list.

With regards to documentary analysis, despite my supposed or assumed familiarity with information on Nigeria's Drug Prohibition Policy, having been involved in reporting, promoting, and implementing Nigeria's drug control policy for about 30 years, the analytical review on the subject, though intellectually stimulating, still proved to be a laborious and intellectually exerting task. It consumed more time and energy than I had envisaged. To start with, there was an unlimited number of data sources on Nigeria's drug control policy, the concept of drug prohibition, and the challenge of cannabis interdiction and eradication; it was, therefore, difficult to exhaust all the relevant documents and publications as well as go through the deluge of information on the concept, theory and research question on my subject of investigation. Each additional document available for analytical review had something significant to contribute to the sense-building and meaning-making of the qualitative study, thus making the attainment of data saturation difficulty to determine. At the end of the day, time became the ultimate limiting factor to the continuation of the seemingly endless search for more themes from

public documents on Nigeria's drug prohibition since new perspectives perpetually

continued to emerge.

Data Analysis

Having been trained by the Walden University to conceive qualitative data

analysis as an iterative, recursive, and on-going process throughout qualitative research, I

started my data analysis during and as soon as I collected my first piece of data. As I

transcribed and typed the audio-recordings of my in-depth interviews into my laptop and

throughout the data collection and analysis, I intentionally took note of the repeated

words, ideas, and concepts; and the recurring trends and patterns in the perspectives and

experiences of my research participants. I also noted the relationships, similarities, and

differences in the data. My data analysis thus entailed both the initial coding and

formative analysis as well as the ongoing and summative analysis that continued

throughout the meaning-making process of my research.

Before the commencement of my coding, in order to get prolonged and immersive

engagement with my data, I read non-stop the full interview transcript of each participant

about three to five times depending on their depth and complexity to understand the

individualized experience of the respondent. After reading all the interview transcripts

individually to get an impression of what each drug control officer said about their

experiences while implementing the cannabis prohibition strategy, I de-anonymized and

combined the answers of all the 15 research participants to my 10 interview protocol

questions and follow-ups on question-by-question basis. After combining the answers to

the interview questions and follow-ups, I read answers to each interview question across

the 15 participants at least five times before starting the formal coding of my interview data.

I started with first-level open line-by-line inductive coding in order to obtain a full feel and get a general impression of what the research participants said and the bigger picture and hear the story being told by the data sets. As much as possible, I used the words of the research participants and only used close alternatives to their words, where necessary, to correctly capture their expressed feelings. I intentionally kept the codes descriptive and close to the very words and ideas of research participants. I resisted the temptation to assume meaning or make sweeping inferences or overestimate what I learned from my engagement with respondents. I was conscious of the fact that research participants are experts of their own experiences and therefore the best tellers of their own stories (Maxwell, 2013). I combined inductive and deductive approaches (thus using both inductive and deductive reading and coding techniques) as the situations demanded. Throughout the coding process, memos were written to record and track the emerging concepts and ideas as well as to identify issues and questions that needed follow-up. My second level coding involved the grouping and regrouping of emerging concepts into categories, guided by their features and properties, types, dimensions, contexts, and conditions. Finally, I explored the data to identify and describe the relationships among the categories and concepts in order to explain the phenomenon.

While I had planned to use the directed content analysis that typically starts off deductively with preliminary codes, mainly derived from pre-data collection literature reviews, interview questions, and theoretical framework, and concluding with inductive

coding and analysis, I found that my coding and analytical activities involved practically

moving back-and-forth in an iterative and recursive manner that is cyclical rather than

linear. Rather than doing pure conventional content analysis, I used a combination of

directed content analysis with reflexive thematic analysis to guarantee a thorough and

comprehensive analysis of my qualitative data sets (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

The complementary deployment of reflexive thematic analysis was predicated on its

reported methodological compatibility with social constructive stance in qualitative study

(Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thus, while my analysis was guided by the preliminary

analytical framework (initially based on my literature reviews, interview questions, and

theoretical framework), my analytical process was flexible and responsive as I

complemented my predominantly inductive approach with bits of deductive reasoning

where necessary in a process called thematic content analysis (Burnard, Gill, Stewart,

Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). In the process, I moved from topic summary themes which

were derived from data collection questions before data coding to shared-meaning themes

that were built from combining codes with shared central ideas and concepts.

Emergence of Themes

Topic summary themes were derived largely from interview questions and

pertinent codes that emerged from the literature review and the theoretical framework

prior to the formal coding process. These topic summary themes, however, gave way to

shared-meaning themes, which were created through the back-and-forth sense-building

process of clustering, merging, splitting, and refining of codes around similar concepts

and ideas. For instance, codes such as shortage of operational vehicles, lack of helicopters

and drones, and lack of access to fast boats for seaport operations were merged together under the theme, logistics challenges; while codes relating to day-to-day planning, the organization, and running of programs and processes including the funding of the agency, working conditions, coordination of activities and programs, declining of budgetary allocation to the agency, the unexpected loss of employees and unforeseen increased workloads were grouped together under administrative challenges. On further subjecting the resulting sub-themes and themes to logical framework analysis for purposes of rationalization, streamlining, refinement, clustering of codes and consolidation of themes with shared concepts and meanings, I arrived at three broad themes viz: Nature and content of the policy, Poor Policy Implementation, and Cannabis control environment. Details of the process of emergence, refinement, and consolidation of themes are as discussed later in this chapter.

Discrepant Cases

Certain discrepancies were noticeable in answers to interview questions on indicators of successful performance or policy effectiveness. In most cases, high arrest figures of drug offenders, large quantities of cannabis seizures, high prosecution numbers and conviction figures are interpreted as signs of policy exploits, breakthroughs, and successes by the NDLEA in the war to eradicate cannabis. However, cases of decrease in cannabis seizures and fall in the arrest figures are equally celebrated by respondents (drug control agents) either as indications of the deterrent effect of repressive cannabis prohibition or the outstanding success of the operation-burn-the-weed before the farm gate policy where a greater chunk of cannabis are destroyed in the farms before it every

gets into circulation. While I took judicious notice of significant discrepant cases in my analytical process, there were so few and far between that they did not have any significant effect on the overall perception or trend with regards to the prevailing experiences and perspectives of drug control officers.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The strategies earlier highlighted in Chapter 3 were consciously and meticulously applied to enhance credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As spelled out in the methodology, I gathered interview data from NDLEA drug control officers who had participated for at least 10 years in the implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy since the enactment of the NDLEA Act in 1989. The research participants included both serving and retired drug control officers of the NDLEA, male or female, who were involved in the fieldwork of executing the interdiction and eradication activities of the Agency. The purposive and criterion sampling approach was targeted at ensuring that information-intensive individuals with a good understanding of the phenomenon and who had experienced and were exposed to all the difficulties and challenges as well as the prospects of the cannabis policy were selected to answer the research question regarding the experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers of the country's cannabis eradication strategy. I audio-recorded all the interviews and personally transcribed and typed them. I also reviewed them several times to ensure completeness and data accuracy. With a few modifications and adaptations, as necessitated by circumstances, including the ordering and sequencing, I deployed all the

major questions in the interview protocol to ensure some level of uniformity in the data

collection process.

Credibility

Credibility is the qualitative equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research

(Guba, 1981). Essentially, guaranteeing internal validity consists of ensuring that the

researcher can make valid inferences from research instruments that measure what they

were designed to measure (Toma, 2011). Though conscious of the fact that credibility in

a qualitative study cannot be achieved by following a checklist of procedures in a

cookbook fashion, I made deliberate efforts to implement certain validity strategies. I

used purposive and criterion sampling techniques to select information-rich and

information-intensive individuals by deliberately choosing officers who earlier served in

cannabis growing areas and made sure that participants included those who were engaged

in drug demand reduction activities.

Moreover, I interviewed serving drug control agents whose perspectives were

likely to be colored by the bias of self-reporting as well as retired drug control veterans

who were free from the burden of presumed self-assessment. I had prolonged

engagement with study participants and the phenomenon in order to establish rapport

with the interviewees and gain their confidence and trust as well as a good understanding

of the dissertation subject. Towards promoting credibility, I designed my study so that the

data set is rich by using multiple data sources (interviews and documents) and multiple

methods (interviewing of participants and document analytical reviews) that complement

and strengthen each other. Participants were also engaged to do member-checking to

authenticate the accuracy of transcripts and their interpretations by the researcher.

Moreover, I personally did the verbatim transcription and typing of the information from

the audio-recorded in-depth interviews to ensure an accurate representation of the

participants' perspectives and experiences, thus promoting descriptive validity. I took

field notes during interviews and used same to guide my transcription. Furthermore, in

my coding and conceptualization, I generally stuck to the words, terms, concepts, and

expressions of the research participants and used my own constructs sparingly and only

when the context suggests that it represents and sums up the experiences and perspectives

of the participants more than any of their own expressions. Every action was largely

geared towards enhancing the interpretive validity of my study.

Transferability

I used the approach laid down in Chapter 3 to promote transferability. By

detailing the steps involved in my research process through rich, thick descriptions of

research design and the audit trail of research conduct process, as well as the specifics of

the context of the study, I empowered the audiences of my research (readers, other

researchers, and sundry stakeholders) with enough information to apply the research

design and findings to similar contexts. I provided and largely used a detailed interview

protocol for my data collection and clearly described the process that I used to connect

my findings to the context that shaped them. While not claiming generalizability, I

provided detailed and thick descriptions of both the data sets and the context of the study

so that readers can make comparisons to other contexts in order to be in a position to take

informed decisions regarding transferability and applicability to broader contexts while still maintaining the context-specific relevance (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Dependability

Given my interest in the circumstances surrounding perceived policy failure and ineffectiveness, I needed to explore the implementational challenges of the drug prohibition policy and this led to my choice of drug policy implementers in Nigeria (NDLEA drug control officers) as research participants. By looking at the implementation of Nigeria's drug policy through the eyes of field-level narcotic agents, thus documenting and analyzing their views and experiences, I should be well-positioned to get reliable and dependable data to answer my research question. Interview of drug control officers and analysis of NDLEA public documents on cannabis prohibition policy were the appropriate methods that I used to conduct my study to get the needed information from the principal actors. I also leveraged appropriate and time-honored techniques and the correct sequencing of methods. To prevent deductive codes gleaned from analytical reviews from unduly influencing the outcomes of in-depth interviews, I conducted and concluded most of my in-depth interviews before commencing my focused documentary reviews and analysis. In the same vein, I coded and analyzed my interview data before the coding and summative analysis of my documentary data. This sequencing of processes and the gradual means of familiarizing myself with the ideas, concepts, emerging themes, and recurrent patterns guided the meaning-making and sense-building process of my study. To enhance the dependability of my study and its findings, I vetted and subjected my research design as well as the transcripts and data resulting

from my study using participant validation, peer review mechanisms, and intellectual

oversight by critical friends and advisers.

Confirmability

I followed the steps that I enumerated out in Chapter 3 as strategies towards

promoting confirmability. By challenging my positionality/ social identity and

interrogating my multiple layers of subjectivity in relation to my research topic as well as

by using the triangulation of multiple sources and appropriate methods of data collection

along with using participant authentication, peer review mechanism, and experts' audit to

validate my study, I enhanced the confirmability of my research process and outcomes.

Why accepting the inherent subjectivity of qualitative inquiry, I provided an in-depth

account and rich detailed description of the data collection and data analysis process of

my study, showing rigor, transparency, neutrality, and fidelity to the experiences,

perspectives, and expressions of my research participants while reducing any

unacknowledged researcher biases and prejudices.

Research Results

The following themes represent the experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers

in the implementation of the country's cannabis prohibition strategy, thus providing

plausible answers to the ineffectiveness and failure of the cannabis prohibition policy to

achieve the minimum goals of cannabis supply suppression, demand reduction, and

trafficking abatement. These themes include the social construction of the cannabis

challenge and policy response, inadequate, defective, and wrong-headed policy,

ambitious policy goals, poor legislative framework, and inadequate implementation

guidelines. Others are disjointed and uncoordinated efforts, operational challenges, administrative and bureaucratic constraints, poor interagency collaboration, poor engagement of relevant stakeholders, perfunctory border management, poor interagency coordination, poor engagement of relevant stakeholders, and poor sub-national devolution of cannabis control. The remaining themes are unfavorable development issues, lack of alternative development strategy, resource deficits, poor working conditions, narcotic agents' ethical deficits, and occupational hazards. Following further thematic analysis combined with logical framework analysis, the themes were refined, streamlined, and consolidated into three broad and overarching themes, viz: nature and content of the policy, poor policy implementation, and cannabis control environment.

Table 1 visually depicts the linkages and stages of evolution of themes used by participants to describe their experiences and the root problems as well as associated challenges hampering effective cannabis control.

Table 1

Stages of Evolution of Themes

Initial subthemes	Final themes
Social construction of cannabis problem & policy Defective and wrong-headed policy Poor legislative framework Ambitious policy goals Lack of specific implementation guidelines	Nature and content of policy
Disjointed and uncoordinated efforts Operational challenges Administrative bottlenecks and bureaucratic constraints Poor interagency collaboration Poor border management Poor engagement of stakeholders (local, media & NGOs) Poor subnational devolution of cannabis control	Poor policy implementation
Unfavorable development issues Resource deficits Lack of alternative development strategy Poor working conditions Narcotic agents' ethical deficits Occupational hazards	Unfavorable cannabis control environment

Theme 1: Nature and Content of the Policy

The content, basic features, and qualities of the cannabis prohibition policy could largely contribute to the ineffectiveness and the failure of cannabis control. Research participants blamed the failure of cannabis control on an inherently draconian policy that has ambitious and fantastic goals but is weakened by its poor legislative framework and inadequate implementation guidelines. The draconian content and repressive features of

the cannabis control policy are largely linked to the negative perception of cannabis sativa and the social construction of cannabis control. The in-depth interviews and documentary analyses showed that the training, socialization and the orientation of NDLEA drug control officers to a large extent influenced narcotic agents to uncritically accept and dogmatically practice the social construction and characterization of cannabis as a menace and scourge that must be stamped out at all costs.

Participant 1 stated,

Cannabis eradication will help to curb criminality and other social vices in our society, reduce the rate of ill-health, especially mental health caused by consuming cannabis, and prevent the infiltration and compromise of critical national institutions by cannabis planters and merchants through their ill-gotten wealth, thereby compromising our national security.

This negative perception or labeling of the drug problem was corroborated by Participant 3:

Many crimes are believed to be committed under the influence of cannabis. Such crimes include robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism. Cannabis is always recovered during the arrest of such gangsters and criminals. The upsurge of youth militancy, abduction of oil workers, and banditry in the Niger Delta region and the advent of insurgency and terrorism in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria can be linked to the increased availability and consumption of cannabis and other psychoactive drugs by jobless, idle, and misguided youths.

In the NDLEA Annual Reports (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013), cannabis was portrayed as a health challenge, social menace, and a threat to food security, agricultural self-reliance, and national security. Several NDLEA Annual Reports since the inception of the Agency reported cannabis eradication projects, such as Operation-Burn the-Weed, Operation Zero-Tolerance-for-Cannabis, and War-For-A- Cannabis-Free-Nigeria, which were carried out to free arable and fertile agricultural lands from illegal cannabis farmers for the cultivation of food staples like yam, cassava, rice, maize, plantain, and beans as well as cash crops including cocoa, cashew, cotton, coffee, and kola-nut. Cannabis cultivation is thus largely seen as a health hazard, food security challenge, obstacle and barrier to national agricultural self-reliance, social menace, and national security threat. The social construction of psychoactive drugs as a health challenge, social menace, and a threat to national security is, therefore, the greatest challenge to rational and evidence-based cannabis control and the effective implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy in Nigeria because it makes narcotic officers fanatically committed to repressive implementation and militarization of cannabis eradication and interdiction.

The setting of fantastic and unrealistic goal is a direct effect of the negative labeling and characterization of cannabis as a menace and scourge that needs to be wiped out at all costs. The NDLEA goals/policy objectives of cannabis control, as enunciated in its annual reports are the eradication of illicit cultivation of cannabis sativa; the elimination of illicit demand for cannabis or cannabis abuse; and the eradication of illicit trafficking of cannabis through coordinated preventive and repressive measures (NDLEA, 2016, 2017). Participant 5 affirmed

One of the major operational challenges is the setting of unrealistic goals and targets of cannabis control. Drug control needs to be guided by the SMART acronym, that is: S–Specific, M–Measurable, A- Achievable, R- Realistic, and T- Time-bound. When we talk of "eradication", it is not only unrealistic, but it is also not achievable.

Participant 4 noted "the meager resources of the agency are devoted to pursuing fanciful and ambitious but practically impossible to achieve goals like total eradication of cannabis, elimination of cannabis use, and stoppage of cannabis trafficking."

Clearly, spending limited funds and deploying the inadequate manpower to the ineffective and unproductive pursuit of cannabis eradication and the dream of a cannabis-free society diverts attention from achievable goals such as cannabis demand reduction and supply reduction as well as interventions such as drug abuse preventive education, counseling, and drug treatment.

Drug Control Officers' preference for repressive law enforcement and severe sanctions distracts their attention from use of rational soft power options like drug abuse preventive education, sensitization, and socialization. Most drug law enforcement agents tend to be perpetual advocates of draconian laws, heavy sanctions, and repressive implementation. More than 10 of the 15 drug control officers interviewed considered the sentences passed by judges "too light and non-reflective of the huge dangers of drug crime". Participant 7, a pioneer drug state commander asserted:

Given the seriousness of the crimes of cannabis cultivation and trafficking as well as the huge amount of efforts and risks that are taken to investigate, arrest, and

successfully prosecute, the sentences passed on people convicted for these crimes

are mostly "mere pats or taps on the wrist.

Participant 12 categorically concurred:

The sentences are too light to deter drug offenses to the extent that they might

discourage drug control officers from going into all the energy-sapping troubles,

the long-winding processes, and risky activities before convictions of drug

offenders can be secured.

The fanatical fascination of NDLEA drug control officers for draconian

legislation and extreme measures made them disregard more rational options like

behavior change communication that could be used wean people away from drug

consumption to reduce the impact of ever-increasing local demand on the cultivation and

supply of cannabis. Fanaticism usually consists of redoubling your efforts when you have

forgotten your aim; rather than use attitude modification and behavior change

communication techniques to enhance the effectiveness of cannabis control, NDLEA

agents limited use of the balanced approach to cannabis control limits the achievement of

policy objectives.

The wrong criteria for policy evaluation constitute another critical challenge

identified by participants that was linked to the defective nature and content of the policy.

Closely related to the social construction of drugs as a threat to individuals, societies, and

nations, that must be wiped off by all means and the consequent resort to the use of

draconian laws to achieve this objective, the NDLEA from inception uses the magnitude

of arrest figures, the quantity (the volume, weight or street value) of drugs, the

prosecution rates, and conviction records as the critical criteria for evaluating policy

outcomes and assessing the performance of drug control officers and the overall

effectiveness of the country's drug control efforts. The analytical reviews of NDLEA's

annual reports reveal how large drug hauls and high arrest figures are conspicuously

documented and celebrated as huge successes and breakthroughs by the law enforcement

agency while efforts geared towards drug demand reduction such as drug abuse

prevention education, counseling, drug treatment, syringe-and-needle exchange programs

and rehabilitation services are either ignored or tucked in obscure corners in official

reports. Participant 2 said that the higher priority and preference accorded supply

reduction (using draconian law enforcement) is evident and unmistakable in the lopsided

and generous allocation of resources and the incentives and rewards for successful arrests

and drug seizures compared to the paltry sum devoted to drug demand reduction and

harm reduction programs.

The lack of standard and credible monitoring and evaluation framework makes

performance assessment dependent on the whims and caprices of field-level bureaucrats,

who are often more favorably disposed to law enforcement operations that could pump

up arrest figures, yield drug hauls, and boost prosecution rates at the expense of

presumably soft operations like public enlightenment, drug abuse prevention education,

or counseling services.

The poor legislative framework for cannabis control is another challenge that

stems from the defective nature and content of policy. Some of the rules and regulations

for drug control are largely inadequate, often uncertain and unclear as revealed by

participants during the in-depth interviews. Participant 5 drew attention to the yawning gap between the provisions of the written law for drug control and the law in practice (the policy being implemented) regarding cannabis use and possession. According to him, while the subsisting written law, the NDLEA Act of 1989, regards all cannabis use and possession as a criminal offense and prescribes a jail term of not less than 15 years for those found guilty, the current decriminalist policy permits cannabis users and those found with less than 100 grams of cannabis to be cautioned and told to desist from their misdemeanor. The sizable gap between formal legal provisions and the policy as implemented translates to lack of uniformity in the implementation since drug control officials may opt for either a more punitive or more permissive approach depending on their personal disposition or other considerations. The large latitude for the exercise of discretionary powers by drug control officers makes the application of the law non-uniform, unpredictable, and uncertain, thereby making it difficult or impossible to assess the actual level of enforcement of these laws and their associated policies.

The retention of defective and outdated drug control laws contributes to poor policy outcomes. The recurrent failure of legislators to amend the NDLEA Act, the enabling law of the Agency, and the apparent resistance to policy change or lack of commitment to policy reform by heads of narcotic agencies translate to the perpetuation of the cannabis prohibition policy despite its ineffectiveness in the achievement of expected outcomes. Participant 6 situated the institutional persistence and continuity of failed policies within the context of the lack of interest to change or reform weak and ineffective counternarcotic laws; she asserted that the political will to sufficiently tackle

the drug problem was grossly inadequate, citing "the abortion at the National Assembly of several NDLEA-sponsored draft bills and initiatives to change and reform the NDLEA Act of 1989". Nigeria appears to be stuck with the NDLEA Act of 1989, which remains largely in its original form as the Decree 48 of 1989 (now CAP N30 LFN 2004), which was full-scale domestication and uncritical adoption of the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988 by General Sani Abacha's military regime. Despite the successive civilian political dispensations since then, the NDLEA management had on three different occasions taken proposed amendment to the House of Representatives and the Senate of the National Assembly, all the three times the proposed amendments had not survived the politics of interests as well as the complex and expensive lobbying that it takes for executive bills to become laws in Nigeria's cash-and-carry democracy.

Moreover, by its nature and content, Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy is not need-driven or based on local drug problem analysis. Participant 6 asserted that "Nigeria's drug control policy is neither homegrown nor specifically designed to address the major drug challenges and concerns of the society; being largely focused on how to check the importation or trafficking of cocaine and heroin but lacking robust provisions to cope with the deluge of the most locally produced and consumed cannabis sativa." Nigeria's counternarcotic strategy appears mainly targeted at satisfying the international community rather than solving local drug consumption and production challenges. By refusing to tinker with the imported international drug control policy, there is a failure to tap the returns on experience of Nigeria's drug control officers who daily implement the

policy to improve drug control strategies. Extant policies are, therefore, not predicated on or reflective of the lessons learned from the implementational challenges and experiences of NDLEA agents, who are the main policy implementers. This constitutes a big obstacle to policy change as well as hampers the effectiveness of drug control efforts.

Lack of standard implementation framework for cannabis control further exacerbates the uncertainty and unpredictability of the tactics, strategies, and methods for the execution of the cannabis prohibition policy. Close to a third of the research participants spoke of the lack of clear policy implementation guidelines to direct targeted execution of cannabis control. Participant 15 said "there is lack of coherent operations plan and standard operating procedure (SOP) for cannabis eradication". He recalled that "cannabis farm destruction procedure varies from one state command to the other". The broad latitude for the exercise of discretion given to commanders naturally leads to a situation where the law in practice (policy execution) frequently varies from command to command, thus creating uncertainty and lack of uniformity in the policy that is implemented at the local levels with varying negative consequences for policy outcomes.

Theme 2: Poor Policy Implementation

The success or failure of policy largely depends upon the degree, the quality, and consistency of its implementation. This is notwithstanding the above factors which mainly relate to the inherent disabilities and defects in nature and content of the cannabis prohibition policy. Notwithstanding the nature and content of the policy, research participants identified main implementation barriers to cannabis control as operational challenges and institutional constraints, administrative bottlenecks, poor community

relations and orientation, disjointed efforts and poor coordination, the multiplicity of agencies in narcotics controls and the poor inter-agency collaboration, poor local funding and reliance on foreign financing, perfunctory border management, and the inadequate subnational decentralization and devolution of drug control duties.

Operational challenges and institutional constraints affect the day-to-day functions and operations of the NDLEA and its capacity to deliver on the goals of the cannabis control policy. More than two-thirds of participants fingered operational constraints such as shortage of manpower, monetary, and material resources; poor training and capacity-building of officers; inadequate logistics including operational vehicles, insufficient equipment and outdated technology, insufficient arms, and ammunition; poor intelligence gathering and the retention of reactive law enforcement. The level of available resources in the form of shortage of manpower, monetary, and materials largely determines whether cannabis activities are carried out or not. Participant 6 recalled

> My last state command had to decide on which priority operations to carry out while suspending the less urgent drug control assignments because of an acute shortage of experienced personnel as well as the lack of functional operational vehicles. It was the availability of resources such as personnel, the functionality of operational vehicles, and the availability of funds for the fueling of the vehicles that determined what drug control activities the state command could embark upon.

Under the circumstance, there was no certainty of action or uniformity of implementation of cannabis control because the number of operations embarked upon and the rates and levels of execution depended on the availability of funds to provide logistical support and operational budgets to drug control officers to engage in cannabis eradication operations and interdiction activities. Chronic shortage of manpower is a major operational challenge that undermines effective cannabis control. Participant 8 decried a situation where

> NDLEA's less than 5000 drug control officers are burdened with the challenge of covering and policing the whole of Nigeria's vast land and drug-police 200 million people; this is a tall order without the needed smart technologies and other critical resources. Successful cannabis eradication would be a mirage if surveillance of cannabis plantations remains manual and if the slash-and-burn technique is retained as the mode of destruction of cannabis farmlands.

The shortage of manpower is mainly due to inadequate budgetary allocation for the recruitment, training and emolument of new staff and partly owing to NDLEA's strict and laborious recruitment process, attrition and high turnover of staff, and the poor retention rate of experienced and qualified personnel as well as inadequate and limited training opportunities available to rank-and-file officers of the agencies. Participant 9, who had served for several years in the human resources department before been posted to the field to participate in drug interdiction and cannabis eradication asserted that "there is no evidence that Nigeria is serious about successfully curtailing the cannabis problem not to talk of eradicating it". She observed

Nigeria's space is difficult to police by drug control agents given their low

numbers and poor technology vis-à-vis the vast expanse of the country's territory.

There are numerous and a plethora of porous, difficult and ungoverned routes,

uncountable number of entry-and-exit points, borders, and boundaries. Moreover,

there is the daily proliferation of drug sin streets, centers, and drug dark spots

/corners, in cities and local communities. How much can the NDLEA do with its

less than 5000 drug control officers do?

Given Nigeria's landmass and population, there is no way the NDLEA can

effectively carry out its cannabis control programs in the country with its current staff

strength and the poor technology base. Inadequate logistics severely limits the number

and extent of cannabis eradication operations and interdiction programs that the

Commands can execute at any point in time. Majority of the drug control officers

reported that cannabis eradication operations are hampered by inadequate logistics,

including lack of helicopters and drones for aerial surveillance and chemical (herbicide)

spraying of cannabis farms.

Participant 7 said

NDLEA's operations are scuttled or delayed by the Agency's lack of appropriate

and modern logistics which leads to its undue dependence on the Nigerian Air

Force or the Aviation Department of the Nigeria Police Force for helicopters to

conduct aerial surveillance and spraying of the large expanse of cannabis

plantations from the sky. NDLEA does not have a quarter of the operational

vehicles that it needs to be effective and even lacks the funds to maintain and fuel

the few that are functional; the Agency is compelled to rely solely on better-equipped sister agencies like the Nigerian Police Service and the Nigeria Air Force for the speedy and successful execution of its air surveillance and air spraying cannabis eradication assignments.

The tracing, tracking and discovery of cannabis could be hampered without the use of low-flying helicopters for aerial surveillance just as drug control officers would be forced to rely on the energy-sapping and burdensome manual clearance and destruction of large expanses of cannabis using the slash-and-burn technique if there are no helicopters for the aerial spraying to use herbicides to destroy large cannabis plantations or alternatively the availability of tractors for mechanical destruction and clearance of the drug plant.

The reliance on outdated equipment and poor technologies limits achievable targets. Given the underlying issue of setting fantastic and ambitious but unrealistic goals, the use of rudimentary, outdated equipment, and obsolete technology instead of modern and appropriate technologies constitutes a major operational challenge to effective cannabis control, and thus a serious obstacle to effective cannabis control. Many of the DCOs spoke about cannabis eradication been hampered by the deployment of obsolete counter-narcotics technical equipment and weapon and the use of crude methods or techniques of cannabis farms destruction that make comprehensive destruction of large farms impracticable or unachievable.

Participant 1 explained

Cannabis eradication is practically impossible if we solely rely on manual slash-and-burn technique because lack of modern tools like helicopters and drones for surveillance and aerial herbicidal spraying of cannabis. The agency is thus frequently compelled to delay or suspend time-bound surveillance or eradication activities until the support of the aviation department of the Nigerian Police Force or the collaboration of the Nigerian Air Force can be secured. In a political clime where seamless inter-agency collaboration cannot be taken for granted and where sharing of resources and expertise is problematic, perpetual and undue dependence on other departments or agencies with different priorities and philosophies is a serious impediment to the timely and successful execution of cannabis eradication programs.

Cannabis eradication using the conventional approach is labor-intensive and herculean task. It is boring, burdensome, and demotivating as well as difficult to sustain given the remote and inaccessible areas where cannabis farms are located. The cannabis plantations are often difficult or impossible to locate and trace without aerial surveillance. Cannabis eradication is a very challenging task even with the aid of modern tools that are needed for aerial surveillance and biological control of the weed; it is practically impossible and unsustainable without the appropriate technology and adequate logistics.

Administrative challenges in the drug policy environment also contribute to poor policy implementation thereby negatively impacting on cannabis control. Administrative challenges fingered by most research participants as contributing to ineffective policy execution by the NDLEA include low staff strength (limited manpower), chronic poor

funding, budgetary cuts or poor budgetary allocations, staff attrition or high turn-over,

poor staff welfare, inequitable and opaque promotion policy, unfair transfer practices,

poor monitoring and evaluation mechanism, and poor work environment or conditions.

Twelve out of the 15 research participants spoke about low morale and mass discontent

due to poor working conditions which promote staff attrition and high neglect of the

safety, health, and social welfare of drug control operatives, non-provision of basic items

such as uniforms and personal protection equipment (bulletproof vests and jackets), and

the lack of barrack accommodation that exposes drug control agents to the vagaries and

hazards of living close to the people they are fighting anti-drug wars against. Participant

13 succinctly described administrative problems that could demoralize and demotivate

drug control officers and contribute to policy implementation failures; she stated:

> Most NDLEA staff members faced administrative problems like delayed
>
> promotion; some officers have been stagnated in one rank for over a decade; there
>
> is also the challenge of poor remuneration and allowances. Another area of
>
> concern is the Agency's poor compensation policy. When an officer dies in active
>
> service, there is no life insurance policy to cater for deceased officers; the next of
>
> kin and family members wait indefinitely, sometimes up to 10 years for the
>
> meager benefits of the deceased officer to be paid.

The lack of life insurance or reliable death benefits provisions for relations of

deceased officers as well as other critical welfare challenges of the Agency including the

poor compensation policy for exceptional drug interdiction operations are sources of low

staff morale and demotivation that have contributed to attrition, high staff turnover, and

the poor personnel retention rate of NDLEA. The disabling working conditions and poor welfare negatively affect the commitment and productivity of drug control officers and thus hamper cannabis control outcomes.

The top-down centralized bureaucracy, with the undue concentration of power in the Chief Executive of the Agency is both an administrative challenge as well as an operational limitation to cannabis control. The UNODC-sponsored Institutional Assessment of the NDLEA conducted by Roger Jaspar (2014) spoke about problems of top-heaviness and too many powers, responsibilities, and decision-making roles concentrated on the NDLEA Chairman/Chief Executive. The Report indicated that every routine activity, report, or request is usually routed the Chairman's office (Gaspar, 2014). Participant 12, who served as a State Commander and retired as Director, affirmed:

> The top-down structure that concentrates power in the Chairman/Chief Executive and the little or no horizontal relationship of consultation and cooperation between state commands and special commands obstructs and severely limits what can be achieved in cannabis control. The negligible delegation of authority and devolution of operational powers from the Chairman/Chief Executive to directors at headquarters and commanders at states and special command levels perpetuates a top-down command-and-control culture that lacks the necessary inter-directorate linkages and exchanges.

The near-absence of inter-directorate consultation and command-to-command communication, cooperation and collaboration hampers the sharing of information, intelligence, equipment, and other resources that are needed for effective policy

implementation. Communication and consultation that could be engendered only through

free and institutionalized horizontal relationships among commands and departments of

the NDLEA are the lubricants necessary to oil and boost effective and sustained

programs and operations.

Poor inter-agency collaboration detracts from the coordination and synergy that is

needed for effective cannabis policy implementation thus undermining cannabis control.

Poor coordination was a recurring theme in the narratives of all my research participants.

Participant 13 observed that despite all the lip-service paid by heads of law enforcement

outfits to the need for fruitful collaboration, a cut-throat competition among security and

drug interdiction agencies persists. He explained

> The multiplicity of agencies as well as the conflict of roles and responsibilities
>
> makes fruitful collaboration and productive synergy difficult to achieve among
>
> the many agencies involved in drug control, including the National Agency for
>
> Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the Nigeria Customs Service,
>
> Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria Navy, and the leading narcotic control Agency,
>
> NDLEA. The reflex action among most security agencies and law enforcement
>
> organizations is rivalry and cut-throat competition for resources and the attention
>
> of political leadership rather than cooperation, collaboration, and consultation
>
> among government agencies with similar mandates to share resources and work
>
> together to achieve synergy and effectiveness.

Despite the efforts of the government (through the National Planning

Commission) and the moderating influence of international development agencies and

donor bilateral agencies to promote synergy and coordination, most of the agencies prefer to compete rather than collaborate with the NDLEA, the official main narcotic drug control agency, to ensure coordination of initiatives, sharing of intelligence, information and other resources. Whatever inter-agency cooperation agreement is secured at the Head of Agency level are rarely implemented at the level of field officers, who often believe that competition and attention-grabbing exploits are necessities for professional survival and the name of the game. Poor community relations and orientation on cannabis negatively affects the execution of cannabis eradication and interdiction programs, thereby undermining effective cannabis control. Participant 3 stated

> One of the major impediments to cannabis eradication is the unwillingness of the public to provide information on cannabis farms to narcotic agents, probably due to ignorance of the danger and the menace constituted by cannabis or perhaps a deliberate conspiracy of silence, or the social acceptance of cannabis consumption as a habit and the cultivation of cannabis as an occupation and a means of livelihood. It could also be an indication of the non-acceptance of the cannabis control legislation or its mode of enforcement.

There is no doubt that poor community engagement leads to mutual misunderstanding and antagonism between narcotic agents and the local population in cannabis growing areas. However, what the research participant did not disclose that was a recurring theme in the analytical review of documents on NDLEA activities is that cannabis eradication operations by NDLEA narcotic agents are oftentimes very combative, coercive, and not people-friendly, thus alienating the people of cannabis-

growing areas and other sympathizers. The implementation of cannabis destruction in

flagrant disregard of human rights and fundamental freedoms of the community people

expectedly exacerbates mutual misunderstanding, exposes the NDLEA and its agents to

public odium, and makes many people unfavorably disposed to assisting NDLEA in its

counternarcotic operations. Moreover, the poor engagement with other critical

stakeholders, particularly the non-governmental organizations, civil-based associations,

and the mass media creates poor reputation and negative public image for drug

interdiction officers. This situation worsens the implementational difficulties of the

cannabis policy. Cannabis eradication would always be problematic when and where

there is little or no buy-in of the people into the cannabis control legislation or the

community involvement and ownership of the cannabis control programs and processes.

It is oftentimes difficult, if not impossible, to enforce a law that does not stimulate the

law habit of a critical mass of the people or law that the people do not accept or believe

in. Poor border control undermines cannabis control. Participant 10, a veteran drug

interdiction officer who has served in several border communities both as a narcotic

agent and later as State Commander recalled:

> There are numerous, if not countless, number of entry and exit points in Nigeria's
>
> long and convoluted stretch of borders and boundaries shared with several
>
> neighboring countries, with populations of people having similar linguistic, ethnic
>
> and cultural features to Nigerians. Moreover, there is a chronic lack of reliable
>
> mode of identification or universal national identity card to separate authentic
>
> Nigerians from impostors. There is also no reliable population census or head

count of authentic Nigerians. The drug policy environment in the country is not just diverse and complex but largely uncharted and ungoverned.

Nigeria's borders and boundaries are notoriously porous and leaky. The challenge is not just the difficulty of coping with the numerous entry and exit routes, given the grossly inadequate number of drug control officers, the lack of modern technologies for proper environmental surveillance and real-time monitoring that are required for effective border management makes it difficult to keep criminals out or track them. Policing or guarding an indeterminate territory is obviously an uphill task. When the above reality is compounded by the proliferation of small and light weapons in the country, the picture is that of a vast, largely ungoverned, and dangerous terrain that might be difficult to police or secure using any kind of policy or security architecture. The Nigerian policy environment would make effective cannabis control difficult notwithstanding the nature of policy or its design.

Poor subnational devolution of cannabis control responsibilities in a federation compromises nationwide and uniform implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy. The varying levels of political commitment to counter-narcotic policies at sub-national levels could be a major challenge to effective cannabis control. Most drug control officers observed that the effectiveness of drug control depends on the levels of interest of the state government or the local council official in the war on psychoactive drugs since there is no law that makes it mandatory for subnational entities to commit scarce public resources to cannabis interdiction and eradication. Participant 13 reported on the prevailing situation at subnational levels:

Of the 36 state governments in the Nigeria, only five state governments have established State Cannabis Control Committees; and just three of these Committees are well-funded and up-and-doing, while the remaining 31 states have never constituted a cannabis control committee or just established the committee to fulfill all righteousness without giving it any cash-backing to ensure functionality and impact. For most state governments, cannabis control is not a top priority or the first-line item for budgetary allocation. As it is, most state governments do not appear to consider cannabis control of critical importance enough to deserve a separate budget line in their financial plan in the light of several issues competing for the meager resources of this level of government.

Despite plenty of movement without motion of the federal government on substance abuse control, there is limited decentralization of drug control responsibility in Nigeria. There is apparent apathy towards cannabis control which might not be unconnected with many development priorities competing for severely limited funds and other resources of subnational governments. Many state governments and a few resourceful local councils in the Nigerian federation just make token donations of operational vehicles or occasional petty cash support to the NDLEA without giving any consideration to the more financially challenging option of setting up and funding their own Cannabis Control Committee.

Poor intelligence the gathering is another critical challenge that condemns NDLEA to reactive law enforcement, which severely limits the effectiveness and efficiency of cannabis control. Besides the many disabling operational challenges and

administrative constraints, most of the research participants identified perennial failure of intelligence as a major contributor to the ineffectiveness and failure of cannabis eradication and interdiction operations in the country. Participant 11, a veteran drug control officer who recently retired as Assistant Commander-General of Narcotics pointedly said,

> Without adequate and credible intelligence gathering potential and the boosting of the capacity and opportunities for strategic planning, there is little chance of the NDLEA being proactive. The NDLEA would thus remain a conservative and reactive law enforcement agency rather than become preventive, preemptive, and innovative as modern policing circumstances demand. NDLEA cannot, therefore, continue to rely on intelligence gleaned from foreign sources or the occasional clues and nudges from sister security and local law enforcement partners for the vital and timely information to plan and execute its drug control operations.

Given the increasing sophistication of cannabis traffickers and producers, NDLEA operations needs to be information-based and intelligence-led in order to transit from its current reactive approach to the proactive and preventive modern mode of drug management. Such operations and programs need to benefit from strategic thinking and strategic planning that are predicated on up-to-date empirical data (facts and figures) gathered from its own implementation activities and experiences. To carry out timely and pre-emptive cannabis interdiction, NDLEA also needs to be more self-reliant and less dependent on token intelligence supplied by foreign allies or local security partner agencies.

Gross neglect and non-mainstreaming of DDR also severely limits the effectiveness and impact of cannabis control efforts of the NDLEA. Given the obsession of the NDLEA for the use of criminal justice approach to effect supply suppression while downgrading drug demand prevention and reduction options, most research participants attributed the poor outcomes of Nigeria's cannabis control policy to what has been described as the 'one-handedness' of NDLEA's drug control implementation. According to Participant 13,

Rather than embracing the international best practice of a balanced approach to cannabis control that entails using an appropriate mix of supply suppression with demand reduction approach, NDLEA has tended to devote a lion's share of its manpower, material, and monetary resources to law enforcement (for supply suppression) while paying little or no attention to cannabis demand reduction. Drug demand reduction (DDR) is largely seen as a distraction while law enforcement is treated as the real deal. NDLEA, as both the coordinating and sole implementing agency for psychoactive drug control is paying lip-service to the international best practice of a balanced approach to drug control. Mainstreaming DDR is just a slogan, distant dream, and pious promise or hope that has not consistently and forcefully implemented in the nearly 30 years' existence of the NDLEA.

The preference for law enforcement over drug demand reduction is openly shown in NDLEA's prioritization of activities, allocation of funds to programs, and the performance appraisal and reward system which manifestly favors supply suppression

through law enforcement at the expense of drug demand prevention and reduction. Though rightly blaming poor funding and inadequate manpower and other resources as a constraining factor, the NDLEA has unfortunately abdicated its DDR responsibilities instead of trying to maintain a delicate balance in the allocation of funds between law enforcement for supply reduction and drug demand reduction activities.

Theme 3: Unfavorable Cannabis Control Environment

A series of unfavorable factors in Nigeria's drug policy environment combine to frustrate functional policymaking and implementation of the drug control policy and programs thereby militating against effective cannabis control. Twelve of the 15 research participants mentioned one negative factor or the other in the drug control context that conspire to scuttle cannabis policy outcomes. The disabling factors in the drug control environment include unfavorable development issues (pervasive poverty, mass unemployment and exploding youth population), the absence of a robust alternative development strategy, the lucrative nature of the cannabis business, the poor funding and harsh working conditions of the drug control agency, and narcotic agents' ethical deficits. The harsh and unfavorable development situation in Nigeria undermines cannabis control. Participant 3 stated

> The widespread poverty, mass unemployment and exploding youth population in the country translate to the availability of a large reservoir of cheap labor that is able, willing and ready to be recruited into the cannabis cultivation, trade, and trafficking. Many idle but able-bodied young and old, male or female are engaged

in the illegal cannabis production and distribution process either as farmhands,

farm guards, security personnel, and spies.

Despite the illegality and criminal prohibition of cannabis cultivation and trade,

the reality of abject and pervasive poverty and mass unemployment, especially among

able-bodied adults and ambitious youths, and the need to put food on the table creates the

temptation to seek or accept jobs offered by cannabis farmers, traders, and traffickers.

The daunting situation is compounded by the ever-increasing population of idle and

disempowered highly educated and adventurous youths. The easy co-option and

recruitment into the underground economy (of illegal cannabis business) is in consonance

with the sociological imperative for survival by fair and legal means if possible and by

any other means if necessary.

The absence of a robust and sustainable alternative development strategy

translates to lack of viable options to engaging in cannabis farming or business and other

illegal activities for survival. Majority of research participants said that a lot of lip-service

have been paid to the desirability and potentialities of cannabis crop substitution without

any cogent policy being enunciated or implemented along this line. Most of them

reported that the apparent lack of interest of political leaders to introduce and fund drug

crop substitution, alternative livelihood schemes, poverty eradication projects, and other

alternative development initiatives largely contribute to the failure of cannabis

eradication strategies. More than 10 of the 15 drug control officers interviewed were of

the view that the neglect and non-implementation of alternative development strategy

severely limits the impact of cannabis eradication policy. Participant 5 stated that the lack

of viable alternatives to cannabis cultivation leads to the stiff opposition and desperate

resistance of cannabis farmers to cannabis eradication and interdiction operations. He

noted that alternative development and crop substitution programs, which had reportedly

helped in reducing coca poppy production in Afghanistan, "are yet to arrive at the shores

of Nigeria for the cannabis cultivators to consider, thus leading to non-availability of

alternative income-generating activities while farmers are being forcefully compelled to

stop cannabis farming without the provision of alternatives".

Participant 12 put the situation in bold perspective:

The eradication of cannabis farms without providing alternative livelihoods or

viable cash crops or food staple options makes cannabis cultivation a do-or-die (a

matter of life-or-death) for most cannabis farmers. This situation to a large extent

explains the limited impact and ineffectiveness of cannabis eradication operations

in cannabis-growing communities where basic survival, the training of children

and wards in schools, as well as the acquisition of the indices of societal approval

like cars and owning of houses, and taking care of other critical needs and wants

are dependent on continued cannabis farming and trade.

Idle hands and minds of youths and able-bodied adults constitute the devil's

workshop. Where there is abject poverty, mass unemployment, and widespread

disempowerment and there is a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities and gainful

employment or other income-generating activities, the people are easily attracted to

anything that could offer them survival and sustenance. Where and if this happens to be

illegal cannabis cultivation and trade, it would be considered fair game by desperate and

deprived people. The lack of a robust and functional alternative development strategy is thus an obstacle to the successful implementation, meaningful impact, and sustainability of the cannabis control policy.

The high returns-on-investment (ROI) in cannabis business evidently makes cannabis cultivation and trafficking very attractive thus making cannabis eradication a difficult mission and cannabis interdiction to suppress supply and stem trafficking more difficult. Most research participants reported that the cannabis market is booming just as the retail price remains affordable to consumers because cultivation (production) is soaring to meet up with the ever-increasing demand to earn illicit profits from cannabis. Despite the desperate efforts at cannabis eradication, Participant 10 asserted:

> As a part-time food crop farmer and the offspring of a successful cash crop farmer, I can tell you that growing cannabis is much easier and more attractive to most farmers than growing other cash crops, including cocoa and cashew. Cannabis is hardy, drought-resistant, and weed-suppressant; cannabis cultivation also requires smaller labor, investment, and time and involves little or no risk of crop failure as it easily grows in most parts of the country.

Cannabis cultivation, trade, and trafficking, like other illegal economic activities, are largely fueled by the general underdevelopment, pervasive poverty, and mass unemployment in the rural communities vis-à-vis the lack of viable alternative livelihoods for income-generation and wealth-creation. In their desperation to sustain their means of livelihood, desperate farmers readily offer a monetary inducement to indigenes of forested communities to secure available arable land for cannabis

cultivation; unemployed youths of these communities are easily swayed and recruited into the illegal crop farming as farm laborers or security officers of cannabis plantations, while some of the villagers get involved in transporting finished cannabis products from the forests to towns for onward movement to warehouses or markets. In the same vein, house owners provide warehousing facilities for storing cannabis herbs to cultivators in return for fantastic fees. There are, therefore, willing buyers and takers for the critical parts of the value chain for cannabis cultivation and trade.

Participant 9 painted a picture of the level of desperation of cannabis cultivators, traders and the youth population of cannabis growing communities:

Current punishment and penalties alone are not enough to discourage drug offenders or deter them from the lure of drug cultivation, trade, and trafficking. Without the introduction and promotion of any crop substitutes and other alternative development schemes, it would be difficult to dissuade cannabis farmers to stop growing cannabis as there is no alternative source of income or survival. While stringent rules and regulations might deter or dissuade the privileged elite class, who have alternative means of survival, it cannot work or have much impact on the impoverished poor majority.

Given the lucrative nature and the high returns on investment in the cannabis business, even the relatively draconian laws and corresponding punishments appear not severe enough to dissuade poor people of cannabis growing communities from going into the illegal weed business, especially when there is no provision of alternative crop substitutes or other employment-generating schemes. The reality is that desperate youths

might consider it better to go to jail for illegal cannabis cultivation than to die of hunger and starvation. Most youths obviously fear death from starvation than arrest and incarceration over cannabis cultivation or business. The synergistic effect of cannabis' high returns on investment and the lack of competitive legitimate alternatives means of livelihood employment and wealth creation is, therefore, the trigger for unemployed and disempowered youths and able-bodied to turn to illegal but quick money-generating vocations and ventures like cannabis farming and trade.

The poor funding and resulting harsh working environment have several disabling consequences that hamper cannabis control. Poor funding was identified by all the research participants as a cross-cutting issue and recurring challenge that has both operational and administrative consequences that could hamper effective cannabis control. Most drug control officers observed that the lack of financial resources has crippled the activities of the NDLEA and rendered it almost helpless and ineffective in the discharge of its drug control duties. Drug control officers unanimously decried poor funding as an unfortunate daily reality given the enormity of the tasks and responsibilities that drug control officers are saddle with.

Participant 14 revealed

The funding situation is really very bad. Most commands sometimes do not receive the usually meager imprest money and operational allowances for months or years. Poor funding exposes narcotic agents to corruption to make ends meet personally as they are not well-remunerated or even given enough resources to deliver on the outrageous law enforcement targets…. Some drug control officers

resort to sourcing money from illegal sources, including taking gratifications from drug users and petty drug peddlers, to fund emergency operations in order to meet monthly and quarterly targets (figures) of arrests and seizures.

Drug law enforcement is not cheap, rather it is cost-intensive; among several other things, it involves recruiting and paying informants and confidential information sources, fueling and maintaining limited and old operational vehicles, and taking care of sundry operational and administrative matters. If Nigeria must experience effective cannabis control, the government must provide adequate funds for the needed tools, logistics, and accessories to facilitate effective implementation of the cannabis policy.

Moreover, the perennial poor funding of the NDLEA compels the undue and perpetual dependence of the Agency on uncertain and unpredictable funds from bilateral partners and international organizations that constitutes a challenge to uniform and sustained implementation of cannabis eradication. More than two-thirds of research participants linked the seeming foreign dependency and lack of independence of action of the NDLEA on the almost total reliance on bilateral partners to fund and power the execution of its drug 30-year-old drug control policy. Participant 15, a pioneer NDLEA staff who had served as Commander of Narcotics in more than five different states of the federation before retirement said

The perpetual dependency of Nigeria and NDLEA on foreign sources for foreign sponsorship and basic tools such as luggage and body scanners as well as sniffer dogs is a sore point and a major weakness of the country's drug control. All the scanning machines and sniffer dogs have been donated to Nigeria by bilateral

partners and international drug agencies. Nigeria, after several years of carrying

out control of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances relies solely on foreign

sources for capacity-building, training, and equipment support for anti-drug law

enforcement. Since the NDLEA is always poorly funded, it survives largely on

the goodwill of international donors.

As a result of this perpetual dependence on foreign governments, it is the foreign

sponsors that largely determine the agenda, the direction, and the drug of emphasis and

the concern of Nigeria's drug control activities. Little wonder that NDLEA is largely

perceived as a Nigerian agency preoccupied with the interdiction of imported drugs such

as cocaine, heroin, and methylamphetamines at the expense of cannabis eradication. Until

the Nigerian government develops the political will to adequately fund the NDLEA and

generally increase its resource profile, the NDLEA might not have any option but to

continue to thread the beaten path of foreign dependence with all the negative

consequences of chronic incapacity, wrong priorities, and divided attention. The undue

reliance on foreign sources of funds at a time of chronic donor's fatigue translates to the

lack of consistency and epileptic implementation of cannabis control programs.

Inaccessible and ungoverned cannabis farm terrain is a developmental challenge

that hampers cannabis eradication operations. Cannabis plantations are always located on

the vast expanse of land in distant and inaccessible forest reserves and other terrains

beyond the prying eyes of law enforcement officials. Participant 11 said "Cannabis

cultivation is deliberately done on dangerous and remote land locations. Cannabis farms

are carefully situated at inaccessible places with non-motorable roads that inhibit early

detections and easy access."

From all indications, given their location in distant locations of remote forest

reserves and national parks, cannabis eradication is a difficult and almost impossible

target to achieve given the logistics inadequacy, reliance on manual clearance, and lack

of surveillance equipment and aerial chemical-spraying facilities by the NDLEA.

Narcotic agents' cultural and ethical deficits largely contribute to ineffective

cannabis control and poor policy outcomes. Most research participants blamed cultural

and ethical deficits of narcotic agents for the increasing incidence of sabotage of cannabis

interdiction or eradication programs by the drug control officers that are linked to

inducement or compromise of narcotic agents. Participant 13 witnessed that drug control

officers have generally become susceptible to bribery and corruption, and that some

unscrupulous narcotics control agents actively solicit for unofficial benefits and

gratifications, which undermine the effective discharge of drug control duties and

compromise overall cannabis control projects and programs.

Participant 6 corroborated the above, as he observed

There is currently a rash of drug protection rackets by cultivators and cannabis

merchants who are buying protection from compromised NDLEA agents,

commands, and informants. There is an increasing tendency of corruption and the

cooption of drug control officers and the payment of protection fees to forge

alliances with drug control officers. Compromised officers leak information on

planned drug interdiction programs and cannabis eradication operations. This

does not just affect the successful implementation of programs and operations but might have disastrous consequences for the safety and lives of narcotic agents who could be ambushed, wounded and even killed to frustrate cannabis eradication or interdiction operations.

Poor funding might be the easiest way to explain the ugly phenomenon of some otherwise dedicated drug control officers getting compromised and sucked into drug offenders' protection rackets and unholy alliances with drug barons. However, despite narcotics agents' tendency to blame poor funding and general resource deficits for the increasing incidence of corruption, compromise, and co-option of narcotic agents into illegal drug activities and offenders' protection rackets, one cannot disregard the reality of the increased vulnerability of law enforcement officers that is partly due to the gradual erosion of cultural values and traditional norms, thus culminating severe ethical deficits. The predominance of the proclivity for self-help among the new breed of law enforcement officers seem to have increased the mercenary tendency and corruptibility of agents on sensitive and cash-glutted beats like the drug regulatory environment. This might be partly responsible for the recent upsurge of sabotage of cannabis eradication programs, leakage of planned sting operations, and fatal ambush of drug control officers by armed cannabis farmers and traders in the country. The post-colonial phenomenal erosion of cultural values and the general breakdown of ethics that is prevalent in the Nigerian society seem to have had a corrosive and damaging impact on professional adherence and the commitment of drug control officers to law enforcement ethics.

Occupational hazards in the drug regulatory and control environment also constitute a major impediment to effective cannabis control. The plethora of occupational risks and professional hazards that plague drug control agents negatively affect the outcomes of cannabis eradication and interdiction operations**.** There was a consensus among research participants that drug control officers face several and complex occupational hazards and operational risks that make the drug control environment looks very much like a minefield or battleground. During the interview, research participants enumerated several forms of occupational hazards including deaths (loss of lives), physical hazards (accidents, severe injuries, and incapacitation), and emotional hazards (stress, depression, detachment from family) suffered by NDLEA narcotics agents in the line of duty. Participant 4 spoke about:

> Frequent occupational hazards such as bites and attacks by poisonous and neurotoxic snakes, scorpions, and other dangerous animals; falling into iron metal traps set by aggrieved cannabis plantation owners; direct gun attacks and cutlass attacks by cannabis farmers; ambush by drug barons and cannabis farmers following leakage of information prior to drug raids and sting operations; double-crossing, betrayal or sabotage by sister security agents or law enforcement organizations; emotional trauma due to long separation from family leading to stress and depression; and the loss of lives and limbs during drug control operations. The number of severe occupational hazards are unfortunately swelled by the lack of personal protection equipment, especially lack of bulletproof vests and bulletproof jackets and helmets, of most drug control agents who are

consequently exposed to the superior firepower of drug barons and cannabis farmers and merchants.

Occupational hazards are a daily reality for law enforcement agents in a country like Nigeria. The dangers and fatalities are exacerbated in the narcotic drug control field by the poor state of logistics like faulty operational vehicles leading to accidents or failed firearms leading to accidental discharge or increasing the possibility of being overpowered and captured by cannabis farmers. Drug control personnel are also exposed to inestimable health hazards, including drug intoxication and subsequent dependence, during the physical destruction of cannabis farms because of the outdated and harmful method of cannabis destruction through public incineration of cannabis herbs. Moreover, with the advent of narcoterrorism, drug control officers are frequently exposed to intimidation, the threat of or actual abduction of family members, kidnapping or outright death by desperate traffickers or drug farmers who routinely use violence and force to frustrate the enforcement of anti-drug laws. Visual representations of findings pertinent to the research question are displayed in Appendix F.

<center>**Summary**</center>

This chapter presented the findings from the primary data gathered from the interview of fifteen research participants on the experiences of drug control officers (policy implementers) of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy as well as from the secondary data derived from the documentary analysis to answer the research question. Three broad themes capture the factors highlighted by research participants as largely responsible for the ineffectiveness and failure of the cannabis prohibition strategy,

namely: the defective nature and inadequate content of the cannabis control policy; poor policy implementation; and an unfavorable cannabis control environment.

The most fundamental reason for the ineffectiveness of the cannabis prohibition strategy is the defective nature and inadequate content of the policy. The policy is inherently deficient and dysfunctional because of the social construction of cannabis sativa as a menace and an existential threat and the consequent securitization and militarization of the cannabis control policy; the poor and inadequate legislative framework that is neither need-driven nor result-oriented; the ambitious goals and unrealistic objectives; and the lack of specific implementation guidelines and procedures. The second major reason for the ineffectiveness and apparent failure of the cannabis prohibition is the poor policy implementation as manifested in the disjointed and uncoordinated efforts; operational challenges; administrative bottlenecks and constraints; poor interagency collaboration; poor engagement of local community and other relevant stakeholders; poor border management; and perfunctory subnational devolution of cannabis control. The third major reason for the policy ineffectiveness and failure is the unfavorable cannabis control and the regulatory environment that results from a combination of several related factors including unfavorable development issues; chronic resource deficits; lack of alternative development strategy; poor working conditions; narcotic agents' ethical deficits, and occupational hazards. Owing to the above challenges, the cannabis prohibition strategy is unfit-for-purpose and has largely failed to achieve the stated objectives of supply suppression, demand reduction and trafficking abatement, and so have not attained the much-desired goals of promoting public health,

ensuring public safety, and safeguarding individual and national security. Rather, cannabis control has given rise to illegal unregulated markets, which has contributed to the spread of diseases (including HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B & C), associated with the consumption of adulterated drugs and the use of contaminated needles and syringes as well as prohibition-related environmental challenges and the escalation of violence, crimes, and human rights abuses. In Chapter 5, I will provide the interpretation and explanation of the findings of my study, highlight the limitations of the study, make recommendations and suggestions for future research, state the implications of the study and draw conclusions from the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore and describe the implementational challenges and difficulties of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy. Little was known about the experiences of drug control officers regarding the implementation of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy. The research question focused on the experiences of NDLEA drug control officers of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy. To answer this question, I collected data using interviews and review of public documents to analyze the experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers (NDLEA agents) in the implementation of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy. The objective was to seek insights into why cannabis prohibition has failed to achieve the minimum objectives of reducing demand, suppressing supply, and abating trafficking, not to mention the ambitious goals of total eradication of cannabis, elimination of its consumption, and cessation of its trafficking. The experiences of NDLEA narcotic control agents (as cannabis policy implementers) may benefit policymaking reforms by providing insights regarding the ineffectiveness and poor policy outcomes of cannabis prohibition. In this chapter, I provide an interpretation and explanation of my findings, highlight the limitations of the study, make recommendations, and offer suggestions for further research. I also state the implications of the study and draw conclusions from the research.

Summary of Findings

The major findings on the experiences of Nigeria's drug control officers with respect to the implementation of the cannabis prohibition strategy can be grouped under three broad themes: factors about the defective nature and inadequate content of the cannabis prohibition policy, factors relating to poor policy implementation, and restrictive cross-cutting factors in the cannabis control environment. The first theme, nature and content of the policy, comprises the social construction of the reality of the cannabis challenge and cannabis control policy, fantastic goals and unrealistic objectives, poor legislative framework, and inadequate implementation guidelines. The second theme, poor policy implementation, speaks to disjointed and uncoordinated efforts, operational challenges, administrative and bureaucratic constraints, poor interagency collaboration, poor engagement of relevant stakeholders, poor border management, poor interagency coordination, poor engagement of relevant stakeholders, and poor subnational devolution of cannabis control. Jun (2012) situated the poor articulation and implementation of public policies within the context of faulty social construction of public administration, which unduly emphasizes administrative control and management by the governing elite over and above democratic inclusion and citizen empowerment, thereby leading to poor stakeholders' participation, lack of teamwork, and cutthroat professional rivalry, which could derail and undermine the effectiveness of public programs and interventions. The third theme, cannabis control environment, encapsulates national development challenges, lack of alternative development strategy, poor working conditions, narcotic agents' ethical deficits, and occupational hazards. In short, the

ineffectiveness and apparent failure of the cannabis prohibition strategy to achieve the minimum objectives of cannabis supply suppression, demand reduction, and trafficking abatement could be attributed to the inherently defective nature and inadequate content of the prohibition policy, the poor policy implementation process, and the unfavorable cannabis control environment.

Interpretation of the Findings

To study the ineffectiveness of the cannabis prohibition policy to achieve the minimum goals of drug supply suppression, demand reduction, and trafficking abatement, aside from conducting the analytical review of public documents and records of the NDLEA, I interviewed 15 research participants (policy implementers) and analyzed their experiences and challenges in the execution of the cannabis control policy. The theoretical framework of social construction of reality was used to interpret the inadequate nature of the policy, its functionality and level of execution, and the role of the environment on policy outcomes. In the next sections, I discuss the overarching themes and subsidiary themes and interpret the results to answer the research question.

Theme 1: Defective Nature and Content of the Policy

This theme speaks to how the inadequate content and basic features of the cannabis policy contribute to the ineffectiveness and failure of cannabis control. The inherent defects of the Nigerian cannabis prohibition strategy, comprising the social construction of the drug challenge and response, ambitious goals, unrealistic objectives, poor legislative framework, lack of specific implementation guidelines, and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanism, constitute critical determinants of the degree and

level of success that could be achieved through crop eradication and interdiction efforts

to resolve the challenges of cannabis cultivation, supply, trafficking, and consumption.

Reinarman (1994) argued that the subtle but deliberate association of *Cannabis sativa* (marijuana) use with social problems (addiction, drug-related road accidents, violence, and crimes) and its linkage to disfavored and disadvantaged minorities and immigrant populations were tactics of lawmakers and the complicit news media that influenced the preference of public administrators, policymakers, and drug control agencies for absolute prohibition (criminalization) of cannabis rather than heavy or light regulation. This negative construction of the drug problem and the consequent repressive drug policy influenced the social construction of public administration in relation to the governing, managing, and control of drugs. Jun (2012), in an interpretive and critical reflection on the social construction of public administration, highlighted this tendency of undue focus on administrative management, governing, and controlling rather than devoting needed attention and resources to social interactions, interrelations, discussions, effective communication, and dialogues among stakeholders and with target groups of the policy. Jun reasoned that the neglect of democratic practices, including stakeholders' engagement, citizens' empowerment and inclusion, and interactive dialogue with policy targets, deprives public administrators of the opportunity to find alternative possibilities for correcting mistakes through critically reflecting on their assumptions and norms. The shared reality from the common knowledge, shared perspective, ideas, beliefs, and views are gained through interaction, interrelating, dialogic communication, and exchange of experiences. This reality transforms the citizens from ordinary clients or customers who

are beneficiaries of policies to authentic participants in the development process, while public administrators change to partners in the development rather than mere service providers (Jun, 2012).

The social construction of the drug problem and the response militates against effective cannabis control. The negative social construction of drugs, the drug problem, and the cannabis control by drug control officers lead to the demonization of drugs and the stigmatization of the drug activity, drug users, producers, and traffickers as scourges and threats to individual health, societal welfare, and national security (Crick, 2012). The negative social construction of drugs presents cannabis control as a war of survival and self-preservation against public enemies (drug offenders) that must be fought and won with vigor, with deadly weapons, and at all costs (Crick, 2012; Jun, 2012). Drug offenses and their consequences are exaggerated and magnified in a manner that gives the impression that they are more heinous and serious than rape, murder, armed robbery, and other violent crimes (Reinarman, 1994; Crick, 2012). The negative framing and social construction of drugs, the drug problem, and drug offenders, as well as the drug control response, is the reason most drug control officers are advocating more draconian laws (stringent rules and regulations); it is the reason these drug policy implementers are demanding more sophisticated arms and ammunition for cannabis control, as well as calling for repressive measures and increased militarization or intensification of cannabis control, and decrying the use of light sentences or fines in the place of higher imprisonment terms (Jun, 2012). The social construction of drug policy is also largely responsible for the obsession for law enforcement rather than embracing

more evidence-based and effective policy options to drug prohibition and the

mainstreaming of drug demand reduction and alternative development strategies (Jun,

2012). The negative media characterization of drug offenders as public enemies, the

media acquiescence to institutionalized prejudice, and the public tolerance of mass

incarceration and the war on drug offenders created the social ambience for the social

construction of not just policies but also public administration that privileged the

managing, governing, and controlling of the drug challenge using enforcement while it

relegated citizens participation, empowerment and engagement in addressing the

multifaceted challenge of psychoactive drugs (Langner & Zajicek, 2017) This is the

reason behind the securitization, militarization, and increasing intensification of the war

against drugs as well as the persistence and continuity of the cannabis prohibition policy

despite its perceived ineffectiveness and apparent failure to achieve expected outcomes.

This scenario and trend are consistent with the social construction of reality as proposed

by Berger and Luckman (1991). It is the perception and the construction of reality of the

drug problem that determine the response, the proposed solution and even the method and

means of implementation of the remedy to the problem of drug use, supply, and

trafficking just as it influences the characterization and the treatment that is given to

target populations either as people needing benefits (such as counseling, healthcare,

treatment, or rehabilitation) or deserving punishments (fines or incarceration) from the

cannabis control policy.

In addition, the social construction of target populations (Schneider, Ingram, and

DeLeon, 2014) supports this scenario as well. Narcotics control populations including

users, producers, and traffickers, are socially viewed as public enemies, criminals, outlaws, and security risks. -- contributes to the marking out of such drug offenders for suppression, repression, fines, incarceration and other forms of punishment. It is a major reason why the criminal punishment of cannabis producers and traffickers is allocated higher priority and funding than the provision of healthcare, drug treatment, counseling, and rehabilitation services to drug-dependent users. The prioritization of law enforcement and criminal punishment of cannabis trafficking and cultivation at the expense of drug demand prevention and demand reduction, and harm reduction is, therefore, consistent with the social construction of target populations (Schneider & Ingram, 2014). It is, therefore, not surprising but understandable that severely limited resources and funds are not allocated to funding provision of benefits (such as healthcare, drug counseling, and treatment) to drug offenders but rather devoted to financing enforcement operations to punish unrepentant drug offenders, who are disadvantaged and unfavored targets of the drug policy. This perspective is in consonance with Otu's (2013) report that because successive governments in Nigeria share the belief that there is a need to eliminate dangerous crimes supposedly caused by narcotic drugs in the country and promote moral uprightness, legitimate economic activities, stability, and security, they fund NDLEA to target those who produce and distribute these psychoactive drugs as well as those who use them (Otu, 2013). The social construction of drugs and the consequent prohibitionist policy response to the challenges of drug use, production, and trafficking easily results in the securitization and the militarization of drug control vis-à-vis the relegation of soft,

people-friendly, human-rights-based, and evidence-based approaches to drug control and management.

The obsession for repressive law enforcement and the general preference of drug control officers for severe rather than proportionate and implementable sanctions contribute to poor policy outcomes. Most NDLEA drug control officers advocate severe and extreme sanctions for drug offenses whether small (such as drug consumption) or serious (production and trafficking of drugs) and openly decry light or mild sentences which they describe as mere "taps or slaps on the wrist of offenders". They routinely canvass for a "strict and no-nonsense cannabis control policy", "giving legal teeth to the policy", and that "NDLEA must be able to bite, not just bark". There are several possible reasons for this fanatical fascination for more firepower and the drive for intensification of violence and crackdown policy in drug control. Drug control officers naturally resent drug offenders whom they consider irritants, deviants, spoilt brats, or even outright criminals who pollute the city. As earlier explained, this is a consequence of the social construction of drugs, drug abuse, and drug users as and the training, indoctrination, and socialization of drug control agents towards this tendency and perceptive. Drug control officers may also prefer extreme measures, including arrests and incarceration of drug offenders, in the bid to pump up the arrest, prosecution, and conviction figures in order to increase their chances of promotion for outstanding performances. Moreover, most NDLEA officers are skilled in law enforcement and nothing else. Since all that NDLEA and its agents are equipped to do is law enforcement, they cannot get over reading criminality into every drug offense. This is understandable

and consistent with the popular saying: "If all you have is a hammer; you tend to see every problem as a nail". Thus, despite the current implementation practice and policy of de facto decriminalization of cannabis consumption, many Nigerians are still being punished for cannabis consumption rather than assisted with counseling, treatment, or rehabilitation to mitigate their drug problem.

The preference for law enforcement and the undue militarization of Nigeria's drug control can be partly attributed to the perpetual appointment of police and military officers by governments to serve as the Chief Executive Officers of the NDLEA since the inception of institutionalized drug control in the country. The perpetual and unremitting intensification of repressive law enforcement is a self-limiting and counter-productive process that has made the criminal prohibition of cannabis at once appear unfair, unreasonable, and disproportionate when compared with the more serious crimes. Klantschnig (2015) stated that successive Nigerian governments have been unduly draconian in both their conception and implementation of drug control and that the repressive drug policies largely lacked local support, legitimacy, transparency, and accountability while Csete and Sanchez (2013) earlier observed that the war on drugs stigmatized Nigerian citizens as enemies of the state that must be fought and defeated by a concert of security agencies to enforce drug prohibition. The prohibitionist and the punitive outlook of cannabis (drug) policy in Nigeria, as acknowledged by majority of research participants in this study corroborates earlier findings of Klantschnig, 2015; Obot, 2004; Otu, 2013; and UNODC, 2013. In Nigeria today, drug offenses (including drug production, trade, and trafficking) are treated worse than violent rape and willful

killing of human beings. The obsession for repressive drug law enforcement and preference for severe and extreme sanctions leads to the neglect of more rational, soft power interventions, and more evidence-based approaches to drug control, such as alternative development schemes and drug demand reduction activities, thereby contributing to failure of cannabis control programs.

  The defective nature and inadequate content of the cannabis prohibition policy undermine cannabis control. The cannabis prohibition policy is extreme in nature, punitive in intent, and draconian in content; it is not homegrown, predicated on systematic problem analysis, or based on scientific need assessment. It lacks the qualities of a good policy, namely predictability, people-orientation, utility, and proportionality. Not being evidence-based or need-driven, it is inherently incapable of achieving the goals of cannabis control, namely supply suppression, demand reduction, and trafficking abatement. The defective nature and inadequate content of the cannabis policy as experienced and perceived by research participants are manifested in forms of its fantastic and unrealistic objectives, poor legislative framework, inadequate implementation guidelines, and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Analytical review of the drug prohibition policy showed that it is high on draconian sanctions but low and inadequate on legal provisions to ensure effective execution. It has little or provisions on staffing, training, staff deployment (transfers and postings). Too many important things are not provided for but left to discretion. This finding is consistent with the earlier observation of the West African Commission on Drugs (2014) that decried the

foreign content and lack of cultural relevance and nuances of most drug control policies in Africa, including Nigeria.

Ambitious goals and unrealistic objectives. The ambitious goals and unrealistic targets make the cannabis control appear like an uphill task if not an impossible mission. When the goals being pursued are outright eradication of cannabis, total elimination of cannabis consumption, stopping the cultivation and supply of cannabis, and ending the trafficking of cannabis products, the scarce manpower resources and funds are literally being devoted to pursuing unattainable goals and impossible targets. The dogmatic stating of fantastic goals and the fanatical pursuit are obstacles to effective cannabis control. Rather than adopt realistic indicators, such as supply reduction, drug demand reduction, and trafficking deterrence, the use of the current fantastic but unachievable targets and indicators makes the goals of cannabis control a mission impossible. Participants experiences and views are consistent with Obot (2004) who described Nigeria's policy response to cannabis consumption, cultivation, and trafficking as generally extreme, disproportionate, and outrageous as well as the West Africa Commission on Drugs that noted that the drug laws in Nigeria were repressive, draconian, and contrary to the human rights commitments of the country (WACD, 2014).

Poor legislative framework. The extant laws are still largely uncertain, disproportionate, and unpredictable as the parliamentary oversight of drug control by the Senate and House of Representative's Committees has been perfunctory and unable to achieve the much-desired reconciliation of the official drug law (NDLEA Act) with the law in practice (policy) with regards to cannabis consumption and possession. Just as

most participants pointed out this uncertainty and conflict between law and policy, Alemika (2018) underlined it as one of the major factors that hamper the effective implementation of the cannabis prohibition policy. The refusal or failure of the National Assembly to pass the executive bill containing the amendments to the NDLEA Act as thrice proposed and presented by the NDLEA management remains a disabling weakness in the country's response to the cannabis cultivation and trafficking challenge. The apparent docile disposition of the legislature has given rise to conspiracy theories regarding the possibility of a pro-narcotics lobby being sponsors or benefactors of many of the lawmakers in the country's National Assembly. At any rate, the drug control policy remains high on draconian laws but low on legal provisions to ensure effective execution.

Inadequate implementation guidelines. There is a lack of robust and standard policy implementation framework that creates a situation where there are often no clear policy guidelines. The lack of standard operating procedures makes the resort to the use of discretion imperative. There is ample room for discretion at the level of NDLEA State or Special Commands or even Area Commands as drug command officers assume and exercise the discretionary powers of street-level bureaucrats while implementing rules and regulations. A case in point is the NDLEA decriminalist policy that allows the use or possession of cannabis quantities less than 100 grams. This decriminalization of consumption or possession of little quantities of cannabis is potentially problematic because the lack of specific details makes the practice to differ from command to command and even vary among drug control officers within some commands. The fact that the NDLEA Act (the written enabling law of the Agency) still regards cannabis

consumption as illegal and prescribes imprisonment or fines for such misdemeanors increases the latitude for use or even abuse of discretionary powers among state commanders. Since the policy (law in practice) grants NDLEA commanders the power to exercise their discretion to release any drug suspect arrested with less than 100 grams of cannabis, after appropriate warning and brief counseling, some commanders use their discretion to briefly detain drug users in possession of below 100 grams cannabis, ostensibly for counseling purposes, while some commanders, as the need arises, reportedly levy such drug users or anyone caught in possession of less than 100 grams of cannabis small administrative fines to raise extra funds for running commands. In the same vein, several officers reported that there is a lack of clear and detailed guidelines or standard operating procedures (SOP) for cannabis eradication. The lack of detailed guidelines leads to a broad latitude for discretion thus contributing to a scenario where cannabis farm destruction procedure varies widely from one state command to the other. This prevailing lack of robust and standard policy framework with clear policy guidelines or detailed operational procedures creates too much latitude for discretion and some level of uncertainty, thereby affecting the uniform application of the law and thus limiting the effectiveness of cannabis control.

The outcomes of cannabis policy largely depend on the extent of implementation of the formal policy, which in turn depends on to what extent the implemented policy differs from formal policy (MacCoun & Reuter, 2001). The varying use of discretion in the implementation of the cannabis policy leads to situations where some drug control officers are stricter in their application of rules and punishment of offenses while some

are more permissive. Therefore, any notion or assumption of uniform or the same level of

implementation of policy at the local level is highly optimistic; the varying use and extent

of discretion indicate a wide gap between formal policy and the policy as implemented in

Commands and even among drug officers within Commands. The reality on the field is

that officers may decide to use more punitive or more permissive approach depending on

their own personal beliefs or whims or their differential interpretation of the NDLEA

policy agenda.

Lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The lack of standard,

transparent and reliable monitoring and evaluation template affects the cannabis control

outcomes in several ways. First, the lack of a predictable and credible monitoring and

evaluation framework means that it is difficult to measure real progress as there are no

definite or valid indicators formally identified for purposes of performance evaluation.

This leads to the use of questionable criteria such as arrest figures, quantity or the volume

of drugs seized, prosecution or conviction rates for the assessment of the outcomes of the

Agency's drug control. This tendency of using wrong indicators to assess the success of

cannabis eradication and interdiction operations as revealed by research participants in

this study was earlier documented by Csete and Sanchez (2013) who noted the tendency

of drug interdiction officers to celebrate increased arrest figures and higher amounts of

drug seizures as breakthroughs in drug prohibition. However, high arrest and prosecution

figures and volumes of drugs seized or confiscated could be dubious success as increased

arrest figures and higher drug hauls are also equally attributable to a change of personnel,

more input of resources, better logistics, increase in drug cultivation or trafficking or

even pure coincidence. Lack of appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework could also lead to the illusion of success or misplaced belief in or assumptions of organizational efficiency or effectiveness, thus diminishing the drive to improve or change cannabis control strategies. Beyond the above factors, which are all largely about the defective nature and inadequate content of the cannabis control policy, there are those critical factors which are about the faulty and poor implementation of cannabis policy as discussed below.

   Uncertainty and conflict of laws compromise effective policy implementation. The uncertainty arising from the conflict between the written law and the prevailing policy regarding the decriminalization of cannabis consumption breeds policy confusion and inconsistency which negatively affects cannabis policy implementation. For laws and policies to be effective, both in their implementation and their impact, they must be understandable, predictable, and clear to the targeted population and the public. The decriminalist policy of the NDLEA regarding cannabis use does not fulfill these conditions for effective laws and policies. Participant 3 decried the conflict between the NDLEA Act, that expressly proscribes cannabis consumption and prescribes a 15-year jail term as maximum punishment, and the current decriminalist policy that permits the consumption and possession of little quantities of cannabis, less than 100 grams. There is apparent policy hypocrisy or policy confusion, or a bit of both, within the NDLEA and among Nigeria's drug policy elites with respect to the legality or otherwise of cannabis consumption. NDLEA also seems to be living in denial regarding the NDLEA's decriminalist policy with respect to possession of little quantities of cannabis for

consumption. From the documentary review, NDLEA Chairman/Chief Executive, Col

Abdallah (retired) at a meeting of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs reportedly

underlined the staunch opposition of the Agency to the legalization and decriminalization

of cannabis. He said that the status quo ante position against the decriminalization of

cannabis for recreational use would be sustained. Col Abdallah categorically affirmed

that the NDLEA remained committed to the eradication of cannabis and the prohibition

of its consumption, except for medical purposes. While promoting abstinence and

shouting slogans of 'Zero-tolerance to drugs' and 'Towards a drug-free nation' in its

public statements and official publications, NDLEA is at the same time practically

promoting safe and responsible drug use by supporting counseling, healthcare treatment

for drug-dependent users, and establishing rehabilitation centers. Obot (2004) earlier

identified this yawning gap between the strict criminal prohibition policy in the NDLEA

Act and the liberal decriminalist policy recently being applied, albeit inconsistently, by

many NDLEA commands in recent years. The contradictions in both speech and actions,

as well as the ambivalence on the part leadership of the Agency and the conspicuous

inconsistencies in the field practice of drug control officers, are making nonsense of and

imperiling the cannabis control efforts. This is an avoidable consequence of the lack of

clarity and the gulf between the written law and the law in practice (policy) on cannabis

consumption.

Theme 2: Poor Policy Implementation

      **The success or failure of a policy is largely determined by the level, quality,
and consistency of its implementation.** This is without prejudice to the significance of

nature, content, and quality of the policy to the achievement of objectives. Participants

identified the main implementation barriers of cannabis control policy as operational

challenges, administrative bottlenecks and bureaucratic constraints, poor interagency

collaboration, poor border management, poor engagement of stakeholders, and

perfunctory subnational devolution of cannabis control duties.

Operational challenges affect the day-to-day activities of the NDLEA and

largely influence the rate and level of carrying out the functions and operations of

the Agency and thus the capacity to deliver on the goals of the cannabis control

policy. Even if the cannabis prohibition policy was not inherently defective and

inadequate, the majority of participants asserted that poor logistics, including lack of

helicopters and drones for aerial surveillance and chemical mass spraying of cannabis

farms would always be a limiting factor given the large expanse of cannabis plantations

that the NDLEA has to contend with in the country. The participants also unanimously

identified the paucity of information and intelligence gathering to guide cannabis

eradication and interdict operations as a barrier to effective policy implementation. This

corroborates the perspective of Udama (2014) that cannabis control is largely undermined

by ill-equipped, undertrained, and embattled law enforcement officials who are

sometimes expected to make omelets without breaking eggs. Policy outputs and

outcomes would always be largely dependent on the level, consistency, and quality of

implementation of operations and programs, which would in turn depend on the quality

of inputs such as skilled manpower, quality logistics, and needed funding. It is unrealistic

to expect successful cannabis control without efficient and effective implementation of

operations, and a mirage to hope for effective implementation without adequate logistics as well as enough manpower and monetary resources.

Poor technology, lack of appropriate equipment and inadequate logistics are obstacles to effective implementation. NDLEA, according to its drug control officers, lacks helicopters and drones that are needed for aerial surveillance to detect, trace, and locate cannabis plantations usually hidden in remote and distant forest reserves, ancestral forests, and native virgin lands, thus forcing NDLEA drug control agents to trek many kilometers to access far cannabis farms, while also relying on the manual slash-and-burn technique to clear large cannabis plantations. This finding resonates with the Report of the Institutional Assessment of NDLEA (Gaspar, 2014) and the United Nations Drug Day lecture of Alemika (2018). The sole reliance on slash-and-burn manual clearance severely limits the number of farms and the hectares of cannabis plantations that could be eradicated by the NDLEA. Shortage of arms and ammunitions, according to the eyewitness account of narcotics agents, sometimes lead to the failure of cannabis eradication operations as the obsolete and poorly maintained guns of narcotic agents refuse to fire, and drug control officers are easily over-powered by the usually better-equipped cannabis farmers. Despite the environmental consequences of the aerial spraying of herbicides to effect large-scale eradication of extensive cannabis plantations after their successful discovery and location through helicopter-assisted aerial surveillance, the partial eradication of cannabis remains a mirage or an elusive target, if not an impossible task, without the use of smarter technologies, better equipment, and the right logistics. Little wonder that the UNODC Report (2015) indicated that the use of

armed and unarmed state security agents to destroy narcotic crops and intercept trafficked

substances in producing countries have neither prevented the availability of the weeds nor

curbed their consumption anywhere. The shortage or outright lack of operational vehicles

continue to frustrate important cannabis interdiction and eradication operations while

routine drug control efforts are scuttled by the chronic shortage of basic law enforcement

tools and logistics materials, including tear gas, handcuffs, leg cuffs, hand chains and leg

chains. Research participants revealed that they are oftentimes forced by circumstances of

critical logistic gaps to 'buy and sow' their own uniforms; store official information in

their own private laptops; use their personal vehicles to carry out interdiction operations,

including conveying sensitive exhibits; use their personal mobile phone for official

communication and investigation; or alternatively use their personal resources to acquire

walkie-talkies for operational communication. The negative effect of logistics

inadequacies on effective drug control was succinctly driven home by the *Report of the*

Institutional Assessment of the NDLEA, which stated

> In an Agency solely dependent upon information and with significant needs to
>
> ensure confidentiality and integrity, such use of private mobile telephones [for
>
> official business and communication] would normally be considered outside of
>
> the normal security tenets. Use of personal laptop computers is also ignored [and
>
> overlooked]by the NDLEA Order (Gaspar, 2014, p.54).

> The Institutional Assessment Report also documented

> NDLEA Commands suffer an acute shortage of arms and ammunitions. Most of
>
> the guns still being used are so old (decommissioned in the Army around 1967)

and outdated that they frequently fail to fire during crucial drug-busting operations (Gaspar, 2014, p.80).

These extracts from the *Report of the Institutional Assessment* resonate clearly with study research participants' views of the perennial shortage of basic tools and the critical challenge of outdated equipment that is hampering the effective execution of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy.

Administrative bottlenecks and bureaucratic constraints impact negatively on cannabis policy outcomes. The administrative barriers to effective policy execution identified by research participants include low staff strength, chronic poor funding, poor budgetary allocation, staff attrition, poor staff retention or high staff turnover, poor staff welfare, inequitable and opaque promotion policy, and unfair transfer practices. The participants' perspective on administrative barriers to cannabis control is a clear affirmation of the observation of Otu (2013) who attributed the ineffectiveness of the war against drugs to the bureaucratic bungling and administrative challenges that limit the commitment of staff and the consistency of Agency's efforts to the overall objective of cannabis eradication and interdiction of cannabis offenders. There is no doubt that the working conditions described above would be psychologically demoralizing and at the same time physically obstructive and disruptive to cannabis eradication and interdiction activities. The non-provision of uniforms and personal protection equipment (bulletproof vests and jackets) and the lack of barrack accommodation that exposes drug control agents to hostile drug offenders are inimical to the success and sustainability of cannabis control.

The chronic shortage of manpower hampers effective cannabis control.

NDLEA suffers from a perennial shortage of manpower, creating a situation where a staff strength of less than 5,000 are currently drug-policing a country of about 200 million people. This view, that was echoed by most research participants in this study, was also highlighted by Alemika (2018) while addressing the challenges and consequences of illicit drugs on health and safety in Nigeria. NDLEA's critical staff shortage could be the product of several factors, including strict recruitment requirements and procedures; low staff retention rate; high staff attrition rate due to resignation, retirement, and deaths; high staff turnover due to sacks, terminations, and desertions; as well as limited training, re-training, and capacity building opportunities to enhance capabilities and replace lost staff members. The high staff turnover and attrition as well as the poor retention rate traceable to the poor working conditions and staff welfare, poor compensation policy, and lack of career prospects were recurring themes in most drug control officers' narratives. Obot (2004) and the UNODC Report (2015) earlier lent credence to the critical manpower challenges and limited training opportunities in Nigeria and West Africa. Given the reality of Nigeria's vast, expansive landmass, the challenging geological features, the huge population, the many official and unofficial borders and boundaries, and the countless entry and exit points, the shortage of manpower considerably contributes to the ineffectiveness of cannabis control.

Chronic poor funding of NDLEA scuttles whatever prospects crop eradication and interdiction have of suppressing supply, reducing demand, and stemming the trafficking of cannabis. Most drug control officers observed that the lack

of financial resources has crippled the activities of the NDLEA and rendered the Agency

almost helpless and ineffective in the discharge of its drug control duties. Drug

prohibition is a cost-intensive process; funds are needed to cover the general running of

the Agency, carrying out operations, buy, maintain and fuel operational vehicles, carry

out investigations, prosecutions, gather intelligence, and other critical agency activities.

Given the enormity of the tasks and responsibilities that the NDLEA and its officers are

saddled with, it is unrealistic to expect NDLEA to be effective given that its perennial

shortage of funds has degenerated to a full-blown financial crisis, thereby affecting all

agency activities. The critical funding situation of the Agency, that was a recurring theme

in the responses of drug control officers during interviewing was affirmed by the Report

of the Institutional Assessment of the NDLEA, that stated, "the funding crisis is evident

in the lack of basic and critical resources; it is taking its toll on the maintenance of

objective policy…" (Gaspar, 2014, p. 116). The Report further stated:

> The Agency has not paid the [paltry] monthly imprest (Operational Grant) to its
>
> 47 State/Special Area Commands since October 2013 as the monthly overhead
>
> being paid to the Agency (for operations and sundry expenses) is insufficient and
>
> was not even paid in December 2013…Most of the commands have been forced
>
> to scale down their drug busting activities due to the perennial shortage of funds
>
> for operations.

The chronic shortage of funds at the NDLEA is largely due to low annual

budgetary allocations, poor budgetary releases, limited cash-backing of government

allocations, undue reliance on foreign donors' support, and dwindling foreign financial

support due to donor's fatigue, as well as the advent of more critical challenges and priorities competing with the drug (cannabis) control for scarce natural resources. Nothing perhaps more pointedly illustrates the financial crisis of the NDLEA and the unsustainability of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy than NDLEA's debt profile; the agency is downright debt-distressed with a debt overhang that runs into hundreds of thousands in naira. The UN-sponsored Institutional Assessment of NDLEA, painted a graphic and worrisome picture:

> NDLEA owes a debt of about 550 million naira, being unpaid DTA of staff, outstanding transport claims of prosecutors and exhibit officers, burial entitlements of relations of deceased staff and debt for completed projects owed contractors. For all practical purposes, NDLEA is unable to pay its bills and carry out its interdiction and prosecution duties because of chronic underfunding. If the NDLEA were a private concern, it would be due for declaration as a bankrupt entity! (Gaspar, 2014, p.80).

Against this backdrop, the chronic shortage of funds, which has since degenerated to full financial crisis, limits the capacity of the NDLEA to provide the operational tools, supply the needed logistics, pay its bills to staff members and contractors, and create the enabling environment for drug control officers to be capable and willing to implement cannabis eradication and interdiction operations. The undue reliance on foreign funds and equipment support also allows the foreign influence of Nigeria's drug control agenda and creates a situation where more manpower and resources are devoted to the interdiction of

imported drugs such as cocaine and heroin at the expense of devoting attention to cannabis, incontrovertibly Nigeria's main drug challenge.

The gross neglect of drug demand reduction often owing to poor funding severely limits the effectiveness of cannabis control. Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) is supposed to be the second pillar of the NDLEA drug control. The focus on cannabis supply reduction (using law enforcement) with little or no attention paid to cannabis demand reduction is tantamount to a bird or an aircraft flying with just one functional wing. Over the years, DDR has been plagued by the shortage of manpower, material, and monetary resources, partly due to chronic shortage of resources at the NDLEA and mainly because DDR is not considered a top priority and key component necessary for the achievement of the overall goals of effective cannabis control. There is ample evidence that the drug demand reduction is considered a distraction and appendage to the real work of the NDLEA, that is law enforcement. The choice of military leaders and police bosses to be Chairman/Chief Executive of NDLEA, the devotion of the meager resources of the Agency to law enforcement, and the reward system that clearly favors exploits and successes in the areas of cannabis seizures and arrests of cannabis cultivators and traffickers at the expense of DDR activities such as counseling, treatment, or rehabilitation are eloquent testimonies to this. The reality of the above scenario and tendency has impelled many researchers and organizations, including Obot (2004), Alemika (2018), and UNODC (2015) to advocate a balanced approach to tackling drug problems, including the supply of and demand for illicit drugs.

The top-down bureaucratic structure, with the consequent concentration of Agency powers in one person as the Chairman and Chief Executive of NDLEA, affects the efficient running of the organization and execution of the cannabis prohibition policy. NDLEA's Chairman is the Chief Executive Officer of the Agency, the Chairman of the Governing Board of the Agency (that performs oversight and supervisory roles to the NDLEA), and the Chair of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (that monitors the implementation of the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP). As revealed by majority of research participants, the top-down structure constitutes both an administrative obstruction and operational challenge to effective implementation of the cannabis control policy. The top-down structure and concentration of powers in the Chairman/Chief Executive inevitably limit inclusiveness and teamwork as well as horizontal consultation and exchange of information between Commands, thereby affecting Agency-wide consultation, cooperation, and collaboration among drug control officers. Moreover, it places too many powers and too much authority on the head of one person, which means the failure or success of the Agency, that is saddled with various implementation, investigation prosecution, and drug demand reduction responsibilities, rests largely on the decision of one man. The Report of the UNODC-sponsored Institutional Assessment of the NDLEA clearly puts the situation in perspective:

> This line of command places a heavy personal burden on the Chairman. All operational reports, routine returns, and specialist business is routed through his office and this limits the opportunity for the devolvement of responsibility and maintains a very steep hierarchy (Gaspar, 2014, p. 43).

The fact that literally everything revolves around the all-powerful and all-knowing Chairman and Chief Executive of the NDLEA means that the Agency sinks or soars depending on his capacity, commitment, character, competence, and charisma. The above Report, stated, "this structure does not permit any real sense of participation of [drug control officers] in the top-level strategic decisions and may well now be contributing to the difficulty of the Agency to expand and thrive". The institutional weakness and stunted growth of the NDLEA, as a result of the concentration of powers, authority, and responsibilities in one person hamper the efficiency and effectiveness of the NDLEA in its cannabis control and limits the possible policy outcomes.

Poor security and protection arrangement for Drug Control Officers negatively affects cannabis control and interdiction results. Notwithstanding the dangerous terrain and the risks attached to cannabis eradication, research participants had reported during interviews that most drug control officers engage in such operations without the needed personal protection equipment such as bulletproof vests and jackets, safety helmets, and eye goggles. The security concerns of drug control officers also extend to the lack of barrack accommodation for NDLEA staff who are thus forced to live among the populace which may lead to the officers staying in the same vicinity as the very drug offenders that they are fighting the drug war against. The safety worries of NDLEA staff are further compounded by the unfenced Commands and unsecured offices where many of them work as well as the lack of standard and secure cells for confining convicted drug traffickers, cultivators, and traders. Effective implementation of cannabis control programs and operations could be practically impossible in a drug control setting

like the NDLEA, where there is no official provision of personal protection equipment and where security-conscious narcotic agents are compelled by the parlous financial crisis of their Agency to buy their own bulletproof vests, jackets, and safety helmets. It is highly unlikely that drug control officers will always take the risks needed to ensure positive policy outcomes of cannabis control where there are no safety provisions or life insurance covers.

Poor intelligence gathering and inadequate crime database hampers information-led cannabis control. The poor intelligence gathering capability and lack of adequate information base to engage in intelligence-led policing lead to the retention of reactive law enforcement instead of the transition to the more productive, pro-active, and preventive information-based law enforcement. The reactive law enforcement approach is inadequate and ill-equipped and lacks the flexibility and resilience, to tackle the complex criminal business of the contemporary narcotics industry. Reactive law enforcement lacks the robust intelligence collection systems, collation and analytical capacity, and the communication backbone to cope with the intricate networks of drug barons, drug traffickers, and distributors of drugs. The *Report of the Institutional Assessment of NDLEA* confirms the lack of intelligence base and robust information and communication backbone as a major impediment to effective cannabis control and the efficient identification of illicit money flows and the chasing of assets (Gaspar, 2014). The absence of information technology, communication equipment, and robust intelligence gathering system is thus crippling the ability of the staff and the agency to perform effectively.

Poor inter-agency collaboration militates against effective cannabis control.

The apparent lack of sufficient consultation, cooperation, and coordination between sister

security agencies and relevant regulatory organization of government, including the

Nigerian police, Nigeria Security Organization and Civil Defense, the Nigerian Customs

Service, the Nigerian Immigration Service, the National Agency for Food and Drug

Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the NDLEA, the coordinating and the main

implementing agency for narcotics drug control has been impacting negatively on

successful cannabis control. Given the chronic shortage of manpower at the NDLEA and

its limited firepower and inadequate logistics, cooperating and collaborating with sister

security agencies and relevant regulatory bodies are not a choice but a survival strategy

for NDLEA if it must achieve sustainable success in cannabis interdiction and

eradication. The current lack of synergy because of the poor coordination between

NDLEA and its sister agencies and fellow regulatory organizations as well as the cut-

throat competition among security and regulatory agencies in the sphere of cannabis

control does not augur well for positive policy outcomes. The rampant availability and

conspicuous consumption of cannabis in security personnel's barracks around the country

is a daily reality that detracts from the seriousness of Nigeria's policy to eliminate the

consumption of cannabis and eradicate the cultivation, supply, and trafficking of cannabis

sativa in the country.

Poor community relations and negative orientation of the citizenry affect

successful cannabis control. Drug control officers like other security agents need the

support of the local community for successful drug law enforcement. Effective cannabis

control thus requires successful consultation and orientation of the local people by drug

control officers if they are to secure the buy-in and support of the community to carry out

cannabis eradication and interdiction operations. The misunderstanding and non-

cooperation between drug control officers and the local community constitute a serious

handicap for cannabis control. The lack of community support of cannabis eradication

activities could be partly due to improper briefing and community neglect by government

and the poor consultation and interaction of narcotic agents with the local populace; it

could also be due to their different cultural beliefs and perspectives about the benefits and

harmful consequences of cannabis consumption and production. Hostility towards

cannabis control could also be generated or exacerbated by the repressive and crackdown

implementation of cannabis control by drug control officers without any consideration for

the feelings and welfare of the community. With poor community relations and lack of

community buy-in and support of the cannabis control process, the local populace could

be unwilling to provide drug-related information and withhold vital native intelligence

from narcotic control officers. Worse still, the youths of the community could be

employed as laborers (farmhands), farm guards, or spies to cannabis cultivators who

could assist plantation owners to escape the watch of the drug control officers who are

largely seen as interlopers who have nothing to offer the community. Poor community

relations and negative local people's attitude could, therefore, contribute to failed

cannabis control operations as the local community could work against successful

implementation by actively colluding with cannabis cultivators and merchants to frustrate

the efforts of drug interdiction and eradication agents.

Theme 3: Unfavorable Cannabis Control Environment

 The harsh and unfavorable factors in the cannabis control environment militate against successful cannabis control. The daily harsh development manifestations, including pervasive poverty, massive unemployment, exploding youth unemployment, and disempowerment vis-à-vis gross lack of alternative development strategies, chronic resource deficits, poor working conditions, narcotic agents' ethical deficits, and occupational hazards do not constitute an enabling environment for effective cannabis eradication and interdiction operations. This recurrent theme of the unfavorable cannabis control environment in the narratives of the majority of research participants corroborates earlier findings by Udama (2014) who reported that poor and hopeless citizenry, massive misery arising from mass unemployment and youth disempowerment, and disillusionment are prerequisites for profitable illegal economic activities including drug production, trade, and trafficking. However, the entrenchment of illegal economic activity (like cannabis cultivation, trading, and trafficking) does not depend on profitability alone, it also requires weak laws and permissive social environment, a situation where laws and policies are flouted or evaded and societal norms that permit or tolerate such conduct.

 The lack of a robust and reliable alternative development strategy is a major obstacle to the successful implementation and sustainability of cannabis control. While plenty of lip-service has been paid to the potential of cannabis substitution and other alternative development schemes, research participants reported that there has been no cogent policy, program or project enunciated or implemented in Nigeria till date along

this line. The drug control officers noted that the few available alternative livelihood schemes and poverty eradication projects are not just poorly implemented and without any noticeable impact, there have also been no conscious and deliberate attempt to link such laudable projects and initiatives to the quest to draw people away from the illegal drug crop cultivation and trade in cannabis. A credible crop substitution program must involve a government-backed introduction of a prolific and high-profile crop that is almost as lucrative and attractive as cannabis sativa, including the provision of improved high-yielding and early-maturing varieties of cash crops such as cocoa, cashew, and olive trees. The massive and violent eradication of cannabis without providing competitively lucrative alternative cash crops that are readily income-generating and employment-creating cannot wean people away from cannabis farming and trade, the time-honored occupation and acknowledged means of survival and wealth creation. Earlier, Otu (2013) underlined the ineffectiveness of law enforcement activities such as arrest, seizure, and drug crop eradication to stamp out cannabis cultivation, supply, and trafficking without alternative livelihood schemes and functional crop substitution projects to address the needs for employment opportunities, income-generation, and wealth creation. Making provisions for the basic needs and welfare of cannabis-producing areas as an integral part of drug control interventions and policies might be a way of increasing their democratic content as well as making them more people-focused, pro-poor, and possibly more result-oriented and sustainable as canvassed by Jun (2012) in his social construction of public administration. Until there is a viable and sustainable crop substitution to cannabis as was to coca poppy in Afghanistan that reportedly helped in reducing coca poppy production,

cannabis eradication and interdiction alone cannot force farmers and traders out of cannabis business because it is a matter of live-or-death and survival.

Cannabis sativa yields high returns on investment, which is a formidable impediment to cannabis control. Cannabis cultivation and trade is very attractive to farmers and merchants because of the high returns on investment. Growing cannabis is easier and more attractive to most farmers than growing food staples and conventional cash crops because cannabis is hardy, drought-resistant, and weed-resistant, and, therefore, able to flourish in the fertile soils in most geographical regions of Nigeria. Cannabis trade is equally a lucrative business compared to other forms of agribusiness owing to the fact that while 50-kilogram bag of rice costs about 12,000 naira, the same quantity, and weight of dried cannabis sativa herbs could attract prices between 120,000 to 200,000 naira depending on whether the sale is during or off planting season. Moreover, cannabis farming and business generates enough revenue stream to make it a reliable source of income, a major source of employment for unskilled labor, and the golden crop that delivers huge profits to fund scholarships and build mansions in cannabis growing areas of the country. In the absence of equally lucrative crops that could yield the high returns on investment of cannabis, this drug crop would remain the preferred choice and jewel of most farmers because of its high comparative advantage over food crops like cassava and rice as well as cash crops, including cocoa, cashew, and kola nut. At any rate, for as long as the monetary gains and benefits of the lucrative farming and business of cannabis easily outweigh the uncertain punishments and

penalties attached to this illegal underground occupation, cannabis control would

continue to be an uphill task that yields only poor outcomes.

The largely inaccessible, expansive, ungoverned, and difficult nature of the

cannabis plantation terrain makes cannabis control a difficult task. Majority of

participants painted the picture of a vast, inaccessible, distant, geologically challenging,

and ungoverned terrain of cannabis plantations, "most of them are difficult to locate or

trace, not to talk of eradicate". The above finding is consistent with what Alemika (2018)

reported on the overwhelming number and distance of expansive plantations of cannabis

in largely ungoverned and unpoliced jurisdictions. The reality is that given the sole

reliance on the manual and labor-sapping slash-and-burn technique by NDLEA, before

one cannabis plantation could be located, tracked, and destroyed by the Agency, five

more like it are probably being cultivated. The criminal prohibition of cannabis

production compels those who see cannabis cultivation as a do-or-die affair to seek

remote locations beyond the prying eyes of the law enforcement agents, which they find

in government forest reserves, unmotorable native ancestral forests, and distant

abandoned national parks. The apparently uncontrollable proliferation of cannabis

plantations across Nigeria because of the sheer hardiness and fecundity of the cannabis

plant vis-à-vis the favorable agronomic conditions make total eradication of cannabis

sativa a difficult task to accomplish on a sustainable and permanent basis.

There are countless pervasive and debilitative occupational hazards that

discourage and demotivate drug control officers from effective implementation of

cannabis control policies, thereby leading to poor policy outcomes. The persistent and

unremitting exposure to needless and avoidable occupational hazards could be attributed

to the outright abdication of responsibility of the NDLEA, and by extension the Federal

Government of Nigeria, for the safety and well-being of the daily embattled drug control

officers who are daily saddled with the daunting tasks of cannabis eradication and other

drug-busting operations without official provision of personal protection equipment,

secured offices, and barrack accommodation. The Report of the UNODC-sponsored

Institutional Assessment of the NDLEA (2014) succinctly put this situation in

perspective: "NDLEA narcotics operatives routinely face heavily armed drug barons

without safeguards offered by protective devices like bulletproof vests/jackets and

bulletproof vehicles" (Gaspar, 2014, p. 80).

Regarding working offices and environment, the Institutional Assessment Report

stated

The buildings of NDLEA National Headquarters (inherited former Nigeria

Intelligence Agency Lagos office) and many NDLEA State Commands (most of

which are inherited abandoned offices of defunct political parties) are in a state of

disrepair with leaking roofs, broken windows, and collapsing wall/fences.

(Gaspar, 2014, p. 80)

The pathetic plight or precariousness of drug control officers comes into bold

relief when the above daily reality of several occupational hazards and professional risks

at the NDLEA is juxtaposed with the lack of *Life (or Death) Insurance Policy* and the

absence of a standard and reliable Workmen's Compensation Act in the event of injury,

incapacitation, or death to safeguard the welfare of narcotics officers and their

dependents. The poor working conditions and the total lack of safety provisions amidst

many occupational hazards and professional risks contribute to the low morale and mass

discontent among many drug control officers, thereby leading to attrition and high

turnover of staff at the NDLEA which constitute a major barrier to effective cannabis

control. This scenario leads to the poor retention of good and experienced staff with the

institutional memory and culture of the Agency and translates to the challenge of constant

recruitment, training, and refresher courses. The high level of attrition and the poor

retention rate of NDLEA was confirmed by the Report of the UN-sponsored Institutional

Assessment of the Agency (2014), which stated:

> The Agency has lost 213 agents or around 4 % of its workforce since January
>
> 2011…; yet requested training fund is yet to be released so NDLEA's 2000 "new"
>
> recruits, who were employed in July 2011, are yet to receive basic training and so
>
> are not deployable!...[Despite the high turnover of experienced staff], there is no
>
> budget allocation for retraining and specialized training of serving officers (most
>
> of whom received only basic training) to enhance their technical and managerial
>
> ability. (Gaspar, 2014, p. 80)

An unsecured security officer cannot secure the lives and properties of

others or the community, while an embattled, ill-equipped, and undertrained law

enforcement officer cannot be relied upon to check and control illegal drug

activities. Nothing demonstrates the lack of commitment of successive

governments to drug control than the scant regard for the protection of drug

interdiction officers from needless occupational hazards through the provision of basic personal protection equipment.

Narcotic officers' ethical challenges such as the corruption, compromise, and capture of drug control agents are obstacles to effective implementation and successful outcomes in the high stakes game of cannabis control. Corrupted, compromised, and coopted drug control officers usually serve the interests of illicit drug barons, cannabis cultivators, and traffickers through divulging secrets and leaking sensitive information on planned drug busting, raids, and sting operations and through sabotaging major drug interdiction and eradication projects. The increased incidences of leakage of information on high profile counter-narcotics operations leading to failed or aborted outings, the ambush, gun attacks and willful killing of drug control agents are due to the tragic reality of rampant corruption and regulator capture in the drug regulatory environment.

In summary, my interpretation of the findings of this study is that the cannabis prohibition policy is inherently defective in nature and inadequate in content (lacking required provisions) and is hampered by poor implementation and severely constrained by unfavorable policy control environment. Cannabis control would be more effective with an evidence-based and need-driven policy, clear implementation framework, adequate allocation of resources towards a balanced drug control approach using a combination of law enforcement, behavior change communication, and alternative development strategies.

Limitations of the Study

The design of this qualitative case study was to collect primary data from drug control agents, both serving and retired, who are/were involved in the implementation of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy, and supplement with secondary data from documentary review and analysis. However, a holistic study of the difficulties and challenges of effective cannabis control might require interviewing other critical stakeholders beyond implementation agents, including policymakers (legislators) as well as policy targets (the Nigerian public, particularly drug offenders), which is not achievable within an academic project with limited and defined time of this nature. This study was also limited by the inability to conduct participant observation because it was near-impossible to anticipate all those who could be involved in cannabis eradication and interdiction operations in order to obtain their informed consent to guarantee voluntary participation in the research as required by the Institutional Review Board. The sensitivity of the law enforcement situation makes participant observation too precarious and unsafe and it was unrealistic to seek the consent of unknown would-be drug offenders. Nonetheless, I mitigated the impact of this constraint by leveraging in-depth eyewitness accounts of veteran drug control agents as a substitute for participant observation reports. Moreover, being the qualitative researcher, I was the primary instrument of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, the findings of this study might thus be colored by unavoidable bias and subjectivity despite my deliberate efforts to interrogate and address my layers of subjectivity. Furthermore, given the illegal and underground nature of drug activities, there was understandably paucity of scientific data

on drug use, supply, and trafficking, thus limiting the quality of the evidence on which this study was based.

Recommendations

Based on my earlier literature review and the findings of this qualitative case study, I wish to suggest the following measures to improve the outcomes of cannabis control in Nigeria: There is a need to make cannabis control policies more evidence-based, humane, human rights-driven, public health-friendly, effective, and sustainable. Cannabis control policy must be accompanied by a comprehensive policy implementation framework to guide effective execution of projects and program interventions. In the same vein, Nigeria's decriminalization of drug use and the associated possession of small quantities for consumption needs to be properly articulated to ensure that it achieves targeted policy outcomes.

The reality of mass unemployment and pervasive poverty as driving forces and catalysts to cannabis cultivation and trafficking indicates the need for a preventive development approach to at least supplement the current criminal justice and law enforcement approach. This study clearly exposed the huge capacity gaps of the NDLEA. NDLEA obviously lacks the core competence, the psychological temperament, and enabling working environment for effective drug demand reduction. The transfer of DDR responsibilities to the Health Education Department of the Ministry of Health and possibly the National Orientation Agency of the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture should be given due and appropriate consideration so that NDLEA can be properly funded and supported to concentrate on its area of comparative advantage: law

enforcement. Public health-oriented drug policy must be geared towards effective prevention (through mainstreaming drug use preventive education), drug demand reduction, and paying attention to unmet needs for care, drug counseling, treatment, and rehabilitation services. There is also an urgent need for a more robust, adequately funded, and effective DDR policy mainstreamed within a balanced and holistic national approach to cannabis control. At this juncture, Nigeria's cannabis control is being planned and implemented without reliable and adequate data, there is a need for a comprehensive and nationwide cannabis cultivation survey.

Experience during the course of this qualitative study indicated that the quality of evidence available on cannabis control is at the best patchy, sketchy, and unreliable, being largely based on drug seizures, arrest figures, and estimates of drug consumption, one is, therefore, not in a position to make far-reaching and valid recommendations regarding the implementation of the policy. My recommendations are, therefore, mainly targeted at how to know more about the relationship between cannabis policy, implementation, and policy outcomes, especially as this reality is affected by the negative portrayal of psychoactive drugs and the faulty construction of the drug control policy as a war instrument for the suppression and repression of drug abusers and other drug offenders who are largely treated as public enemies.

Getting a more balanced view and holistic picture of the challenges of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition strategy would require more than the interviewing of drug control agents; there is a need for further research studies on this subject that involves interviewing policymakers (legislators) and, by any means possible, mining the views of

policy targets (general public, including drug users and producers). Moreover, there is a need to spend more time and money on the acquisition of basic and reliable information on cannabis cultivation and trade, including conducting scientific surveys on cannabis use, cultivation, and trafficking. With adequate and sustained efforts, enough understanding can be obtained to guide much-needed rational policymaking and implementation.

Implications

This study draws attention to the ineffectiveness and poor outcomes of the cannabis prohibition strategy despite its increasing intensification and militarization. It indicated that increased severity or perpetual application cannot guarantee the effectiveness of a wrong-headed and inadequate policy. The study will hopefully contribute to throwing light and promoting scrutiny, and open debate on a policy issue that is generally treated as a taboo for public discussion and a top-secret treated as the exclusive preserve of high-security officials.

By highlighting the implementational challenges and difficulties experienced by policy implementers, which contribute to policy failures and unintended negative consequences, it indicates the need to try alternative policy measures that are predicated on the returns-on-experience of drug control officers and greater collaboration with other critical stakeholders in the drug control policy environment. This study throws up clues on how to leverage the returns on the experience of drug control officers to rethink, retool, and recalibrate the control and management of cannabis use, production, and trafficking.

Despite the stated limitations of this qualitative case study, largely because it is a documentation of the self-reporting of drug control officers, the reality of study findings being a faithful record of the field experiences of drug policy implementers, who are deemed to be experts of their own experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), is that it could contribute some insights that could be used to inform professional practice and possibly improve cannabis control policies. By drawing attention to the potential of regulatory measures rather than repressive prohibitive approaches and through highlighting the desirability of public health-oriented and human rights-driven alternatives to coercive cannabis eradication and interdiction, the study could ultimately contribute to improving the social condition of cannabis control targets.

Conclusion

Nigeria's drug control policy is neither evidence-based nor informed by scientific evidence or reflective of the country's socio-cultural and economic realities; it is a mere continuation and blanket application of the decree that domesticated the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. There is an urgent need to focus more research attention and more policy implementation efforts on cannabis sativa, being the most consumed, the most produced, and the most trafficked psychoactive drug in the country. There is also an urgent need for further research to seek more reliable information about how the cannabis control policy affects drug behavior, drug demand, drug supply, and how policy affects prevalence and the consequences of the policy. Nigeria, like other drug-afflicted and affected countries, needs to reckon with and squarely face the reality that the total eradication of cannabis is

practically unachievable and so there is a need to pragmatically consider regulatory

mechanisms for managing the challenge.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

My **central research question** is:

What are the experiences of Nigeria's narcotic control agents in the implementation of the country's cannabis prohibition policy?

Interview Questions

1.   What do you think of NDLEA's campaign for the eradication of cannabis? What are the operational challenges associated with the eradication of cannabis sativa in the country?

2.   What are the problems, obstacles to effective implementation and prospects of current Cannabis control policies?

3. What are your experiences regarding the implementation of Cannabis prohibition on (a) cannabis cultivation, (b) drug trafficking, (c) consumption, and (d) cannabis-related violence?

4. What do you think of the persistence (continued use) of the crackdown (prohibition policy) and its impact on cannabis demand reduction and supply in the country?

5. What has been the impact or consequences of setting stringent rules and regulations on cannabis use and other drug offences?

6. What do you think of policy options such as administrative fines and seizure of driver's license of drug abusers as well as emphasis on drug counseling and drug abuse preventive education (DAPE) as alternatives to criminal drug prohibition?

7. Apart from the predominant law enforcement approach to cannabis control, how much effort is being made to use alternative policy options to ensure drug demand reduction and suppress supply as well as limit the trafficking of cannabis?

8. How do you consider the level of training, and working tools in the implementation of the cannabis policy in Nigeria?

9. Are there any occupational hazards to officers that are associated with the execution and enforcement of the cannabis prohibition policy?

10. What other experiences do narcotic agents have while implementing the Cannabis prohibition policy that we have not discussed in the above questions?

Appendix B: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in an academic research on Nigeria's Cannabis Prohibition Policy 1990 till date. This researcher is inviting individuals who have played or are playing crucial roles in the implementation of the policy. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Olufemi Ajayi, who is a doctoral student of Public Policy at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore, understand and describe the consequences of the mode of implementation of Nigeria's cannabis prohibition policy and draw attention to alternatives policy options. I will be interviewing both serving and former personnel of Nigeria's National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) who played active roles implementation of the policy (interdiction or/and drug crop eradication) of the agency. I will adopt a friendly but inquiry stance and take field notes during my interview sessions with research participants to guarantee a better understanding of issues under exploration. I will request that you candidly share with me your understanding and knowledge on this crucial subject of my research. I plan to use the knowledge and understanding gained through our discussion and interaction during the interview to explore, understand and describe Nigeria's Cannabis Prohibition Policy since 1990.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a face-to-face interview requiring no more than one hour of your time.

- Agree to have the interview recorded manually and/or electronically for later transcription and analysis by the researcher.

- Agree to a follow-up meeting to review the initial findings, and to provide the researcher with feedback on the accuracy of the findings and conclusions. This will take up one hour of your time.

- As the researcher, I will be conducting interviews at a time suitable and most convenient for you. I will provide you with a copy of the typed transcript of your interview for your review and concurrence before any analysis, coding and extraction of patterns and themes. At the end of the study, I will provide you with an executive summary (of between two to three pages) highlighting the research findings, recommendations, and conclusions from the study.

Here are some sample questions for my study:

- Could you tell me about Nigeria's drug control policies that you are familiar with?

- What do you think of NDLEA's Operation-Burn-The-Weed campaign for the eradication of Cannabis?

- What are the operational challenges associated with the manual or chemical eradication of cannabis sativa in the country?

- Tell me your assessment of the effectiveness of Nigeria's narcotic policies, including the Cannabis eradication project, the "Operation-Burn the Weed". I mean how far are they achieving set goals and targets? What are the problems, obstacles to effective implementation and prospects of current policies?

- What has been the effect of the cannabis prohibition policy and the associated strategy of arresting and incarcerating drug offenders on drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking, harm reduction, health promotion, crime prevention, public safety, social welfare, and respect for human rights in the country?

- What has been the effect of cannabis prohibition on drug-related violence?

- What has been the outcome of the vast expenditures and resources invested in implementing cannabis prohibition (drug eradication and interdiction of offenders) in Nigeria? What has been the impact on cultivation, trafficking and consumption?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop participating at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as fatigue, stress or becoming upset should sensitive topics arise for discussion. Being in this study would not pose risk to

your safety or wellbeing and your participation in the study is separate from any personal role or attachment.

Participating in the research provides an opportunity to share your thoughts, knowledge, and experience on the subject matter. This study may promote drug policy consciousness, draw attention to more liberal and people-oriented alternatives to the cannabis prohibition policy, and promote better drug control practices.

Payment:

Participation is voluntary; ***you shall not receive any monetary compensation for your role in this study***.

Privacy:

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants. Details that might identify participants, such as the location of the study, will also not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure by the researcher through backup procedures to avoid data loss. I will daily back-up the data throughout the research process. Only me as the researcher will have access to the data and I will ensure I protect it in my home. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via cell phonexxxx, or e-mail @waldenu.edu. If you

want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research

Participant Advocate at my university in the USA at +1612-312-1210. Walden

University's approval number for this study is ………. and it expires on……

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study well enough to decide about it, please

indicate your consent by replying to this email with the words, "I consent", and I

will follow up to set a time for the interview. Best regards.

Appendix C: Expression of Interest Letter

Doctoral Research Study

My name is Olufemi Ajayi and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. My field of focus is in Public Policy and Administration. The research is supervised by Dr. Tim P. Fadgen of the faculty of Public Policy & Administration.

You have been identified as one of the 15 participants in this study that would be restricted to knowledgeable individuals purposively selected for their information-intensity, institutional memory, experience, and readiness to discuss Nigeria's narcotics policy and alternative policy options.

What is the research about?

The purpose of this study is to explore, describe, and analyze the mode of implementation of Nigeria's cannabis criminal prohibition policy as well as its perceived failures and demerits.

What does participation in this research study involve?

Participation in this study are limited to 15 individuals. All assessment results will be kept confidential. The interview process would take 40-50 minutes to complete. You are not compelled to participate in this study. You have a right to participate or not. Should you initially agree to participate, you still have the right to withdraw at any time through the study.

Guarantee of confidentiality

All information obtained in this study is completely confidential unless disclosure is required by law. None of the individual interview results are made available to participating organizational leaders or the organization. The results of the study may be used, at an aggregate level, in reports, presentations and publications.
Individual participants will **not** be identified.

 I am happy to respond to any questions or concerns you have about the research. I can be reached at xxxxx or cell-phone on xxxxxxxx.

Appendix D: CITI Certificate

Appendix E: Document Review/Analysis Guide

Like all instruments used in qualitative inquiry, the document analysis guide is

very flexible. There is thus no one rigid template that fits all document reviews and

analyses.

I will use document review and analysis to complement in-depth interviews and

participant observation for purposes of triangulation of methods and sources to improve

the rigor and trustworthiness of my study through corroboration, cross-validation, and a

confluence of evidence to enhance credibility (Bowen, 2009). Since document analysis is

just one of my three data mining methods for this study on drug control policy, I would

not be reviewing all documents and records of the NDLEA, rather I will be restricting my

analysis to foundational documents and fundamental records that are relevant to policy-

making and implementation such as the NDLEA Act, the Organization's Vision, Mission

Statement, Annual Reports, Strategic Plan, National Drug Control Master Plan, Annual

Reports, Bulletins, NDLEA Order, and Newsletters.

Against this backdrop, my analysis would be targeted at only those public records

and documents that situate, contextualize and relate to the making and implementation of

drug policy and the role of the NDLEA as the main implementing and sole coordinating

agency of narcotics drug control in Nigeria.

Data analysis would involve processes such as

1. Finding and identifying pertinent information with the above-stated inclusion
   criteria.
2. Collecting the naturally occurring facts in the documents.

3. Organizing the facts.
4. Reviewing such 'soft data'
5. Analyzing the 'social facts' to sort into patterns, categories, and themes.

Selection of appropriate documents and records that would serve as data sources involves the evaluation of available materials based on the stated inclusion criteria.

Documents and records would be pre-qualified for analysis based on the following:

1. Relevance to the research problem, question, and purpose.
2. Alignment with the theoretical framework and research context.
3. Authenticity of the document
4. Credibility of the document. A document or record that is a result of first-hand experience would be preferred to that resulting from hear-say or secondary sources.
5. Target audience: the intended audience of the document or report is also key to determining its suitability as a data source for research.

My document analysis will involve

1. Skimming of documents and records that only need superficial examination.
2. Reading and studying of core documents that need thorough examination.
3. Interpretation of documents towards making meaning and sense out the data.

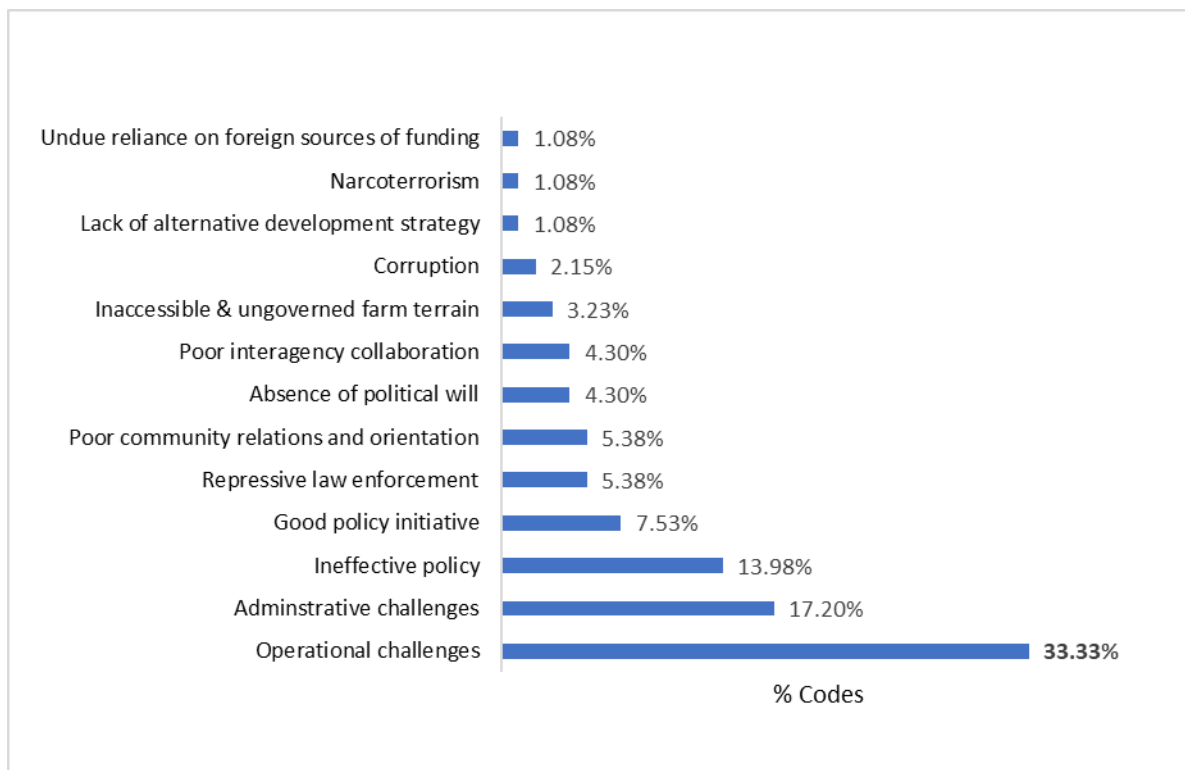Appendix F: Visual Representations of Findings That Contribute to Answers to the

Research Question

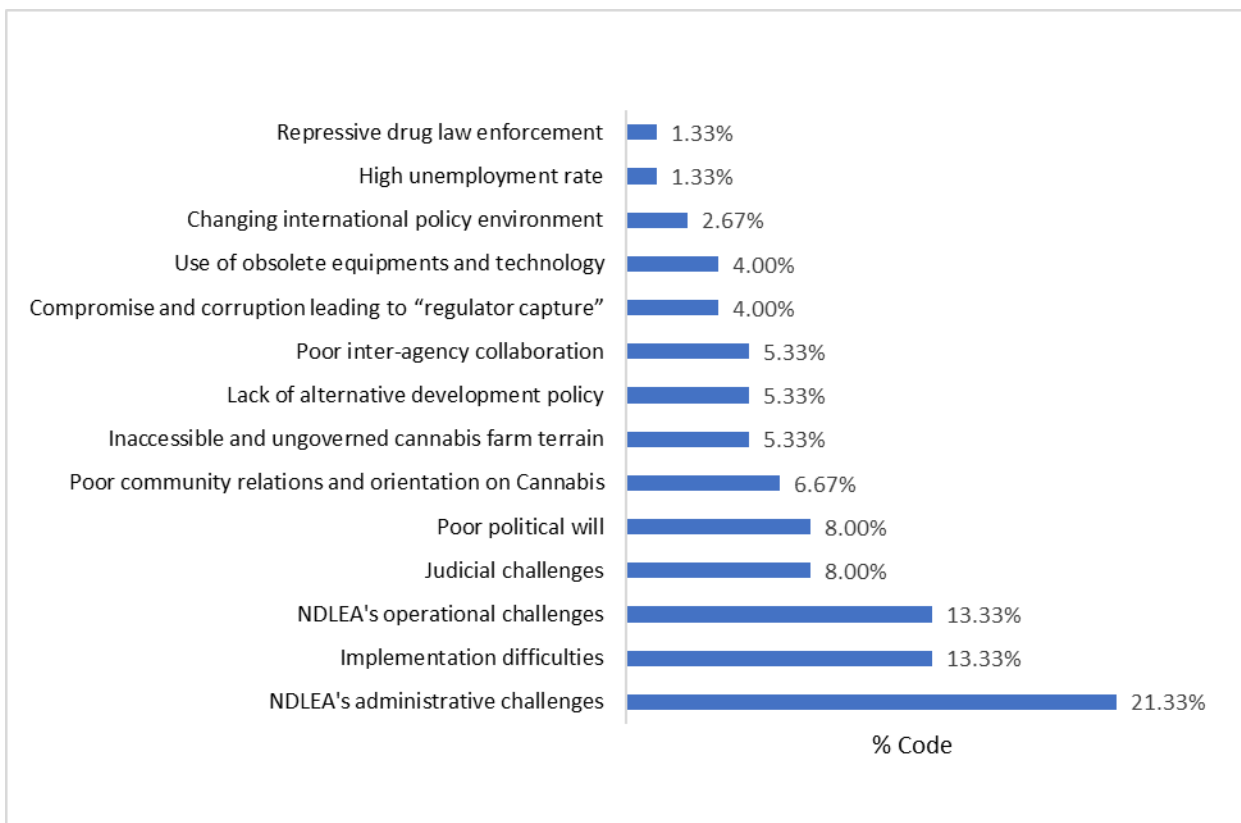*Figure 1*. Perception of NDLEA's campaign for cannabis eradication

Figure 2. Barriers to effective implementation of current drug policies
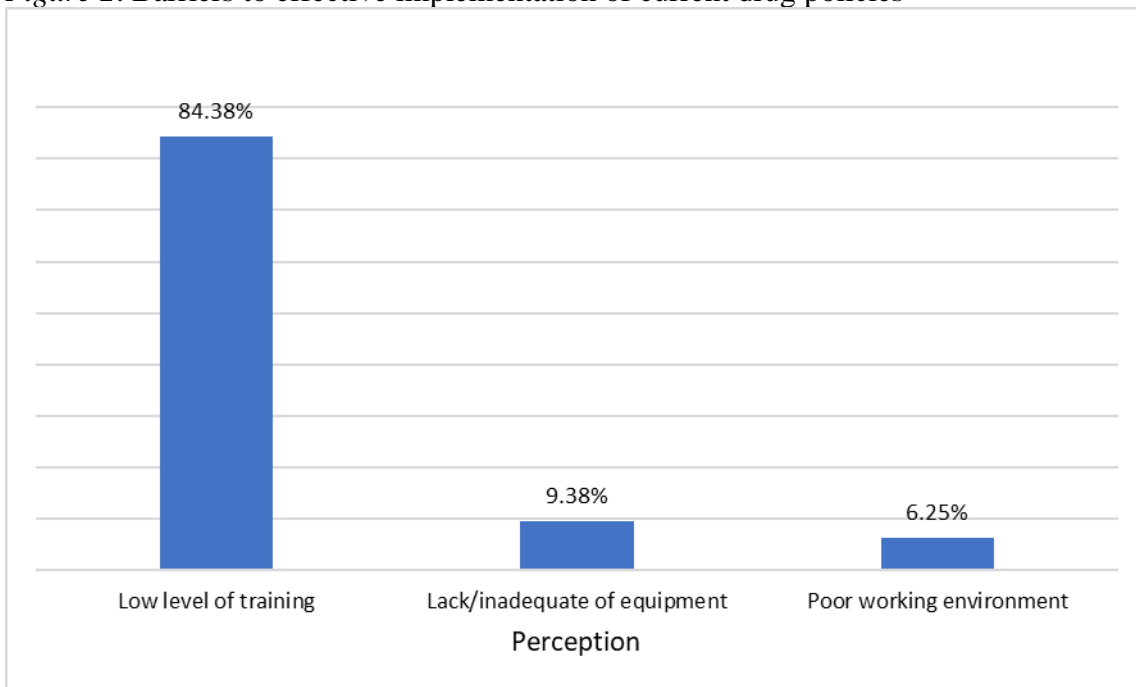

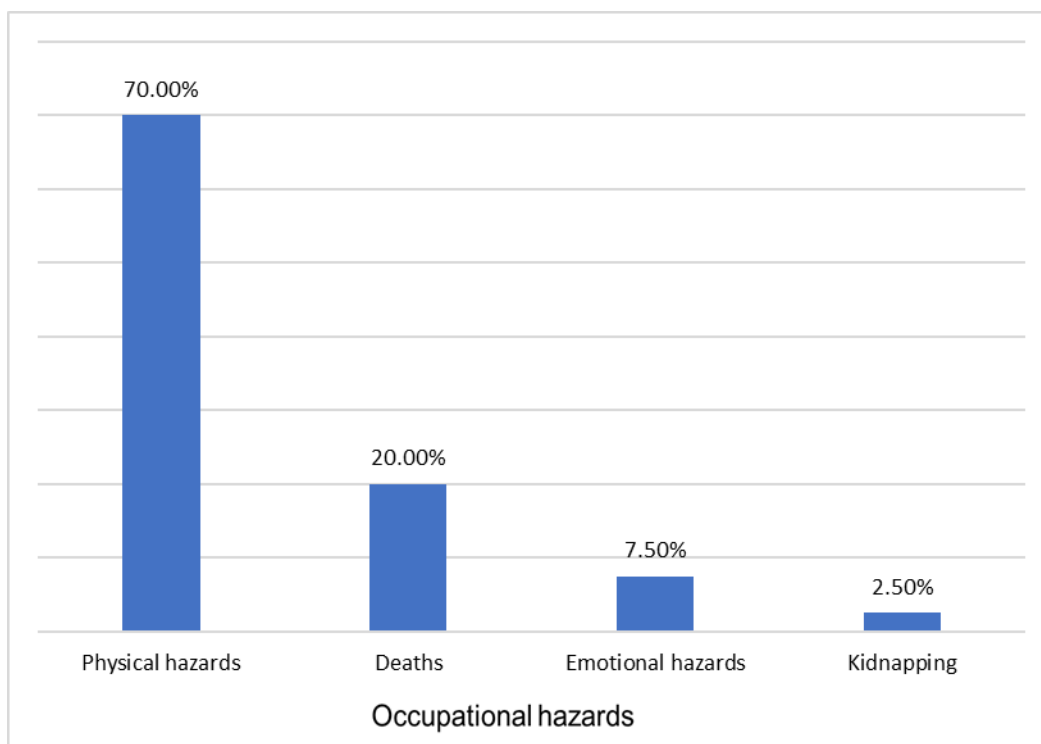*Figure 3*. Perception of the level of training and working tools

Figure 4. Occupational hazards to officers during execution of cannabis prohibition
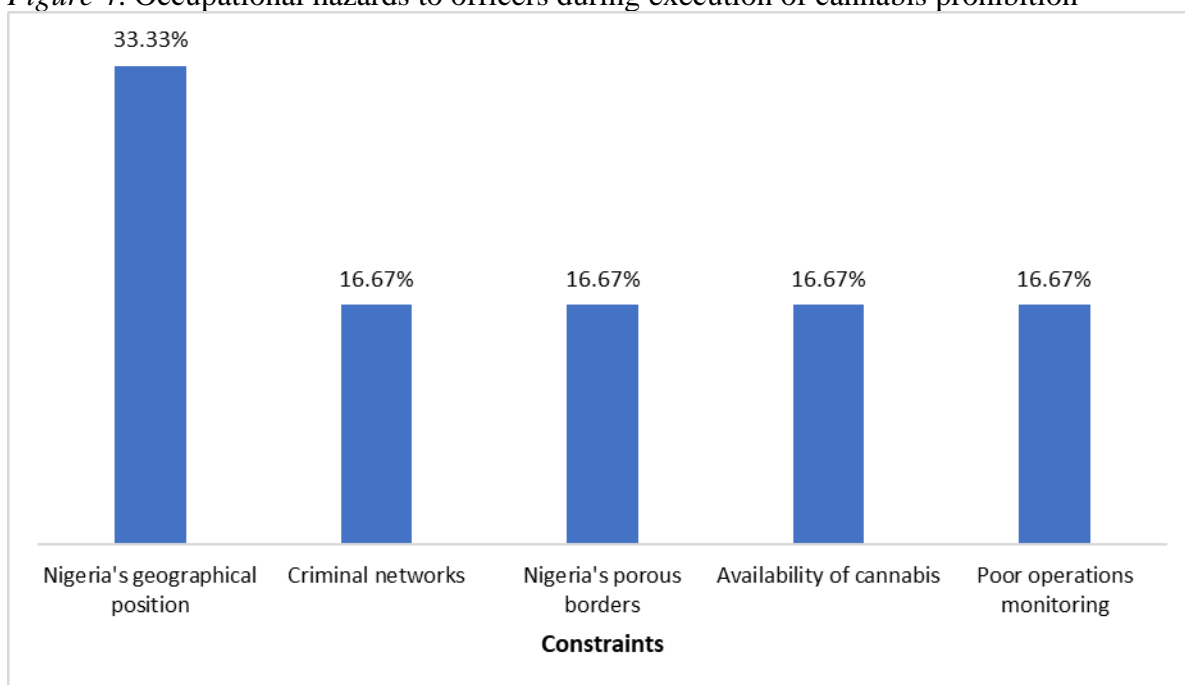

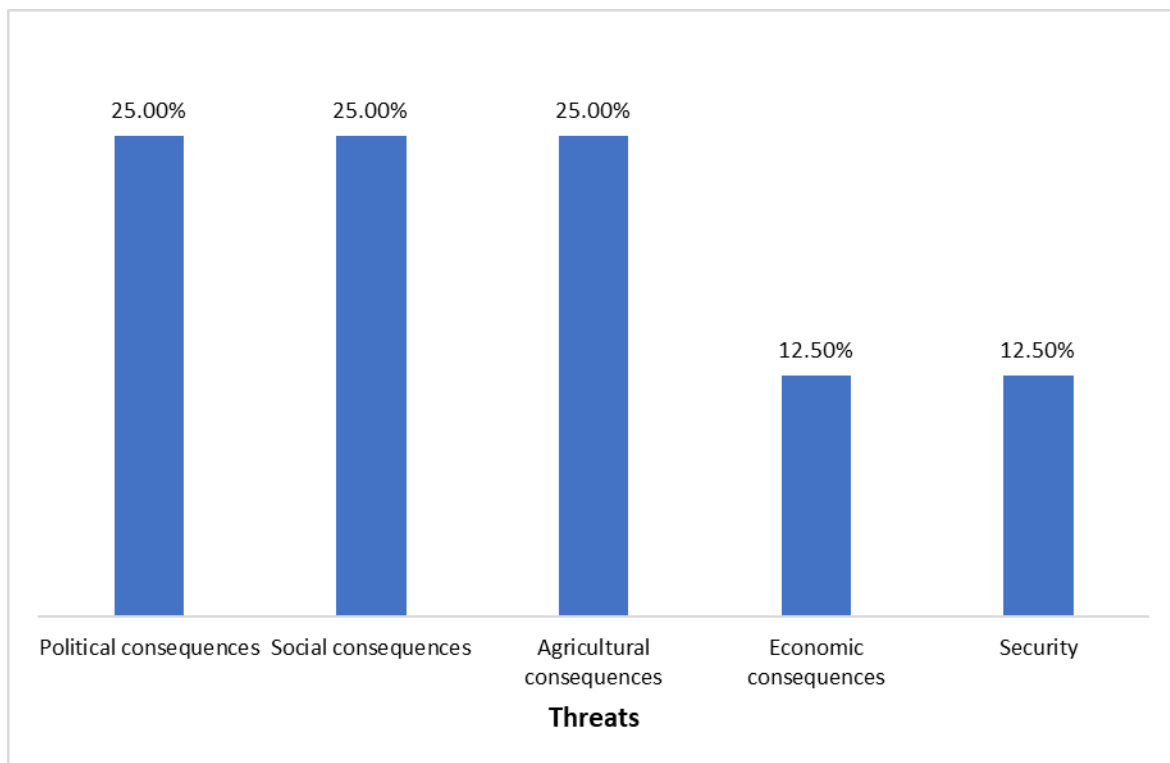*Figure 5*. Constraints to effective implementation of cannabis control policy in Nigeria
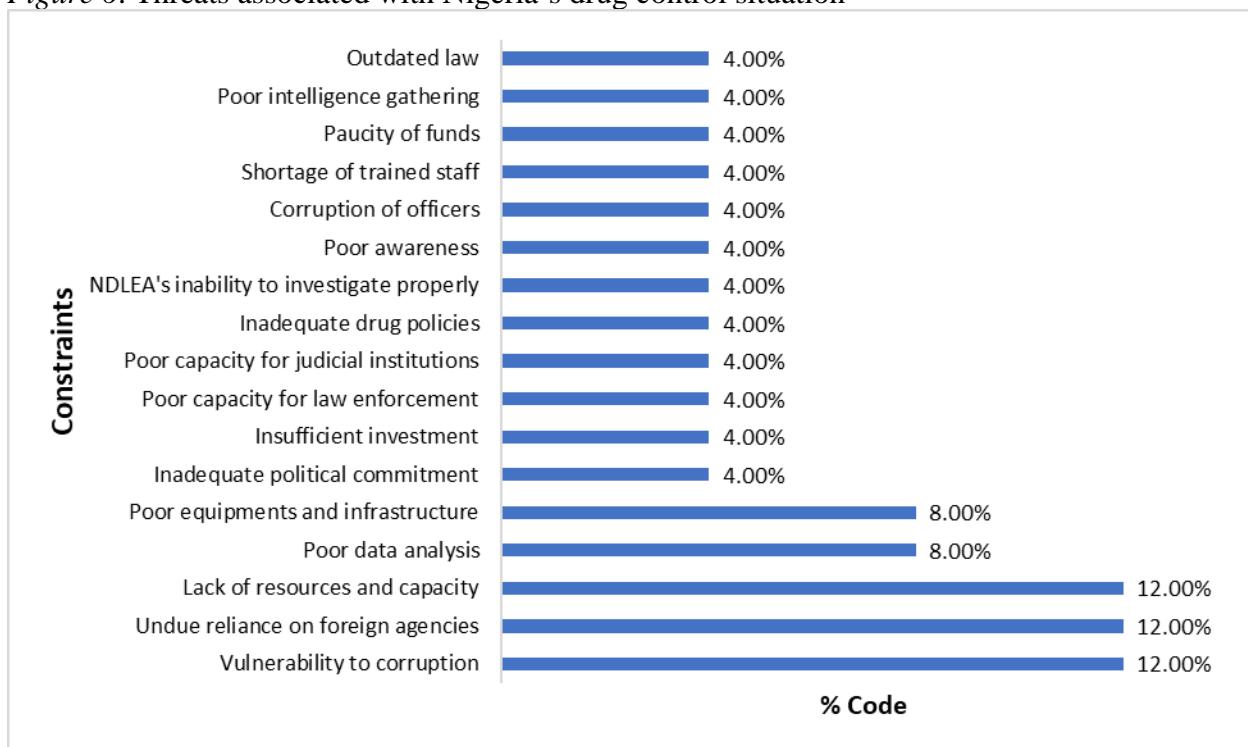
Figure 6. Threats associated with Nigeria's drug control situation

Appendix G: Prelim Coding Framework based on the Theoretical Foundation

Parent Codes (Features/strands of the theoretical framework)	Child Codes	Interview Questions
Scares and fearmongering	Drug labelling, drugs as evil, addictive, corruptive, debasing, and destructive.	Interview Questions 1 and 8
User demonization and stigmatization	Drugs as deleterious substances, health hazards, criminogenic, threat to national security, inimical to social norms and moral values, society pollutants and environmental contaminants. Characterization of Drug users as nuisances, social miscreants, misfits,	Interview Questions 3, 2, 1, & 4.
Securitization and control	Since drugs are conceived as existential threats, drug control is treated as a highly sensitive and high priority security issue that is beyond the purview of ordinary minds and laymen. Drug issues and control matters are therefore not routinely subjected to public scrutiny, open debate, or appraisal. Drug secrecy, drug policy inertia, and drug	Interview Question 4 & 5.

apathy are common features among ordinary Nigerians and most elites. This tendency also translates to the application of the most draconian laws and stiffest penalties to discourage prohibited drug activities (consumption, production, distribution, and of course trafficking).

Repressive law enforcement	Supply suppression, crack-down policy, punitive sanctions, detention prior to investigation, indefinite incarceration, imprisonment without trial, coercive interrogation, drug raids, sting operations etc. Predominance and persistence of prohibition.	Interview Questions 1 and 2
Drug Demand Reduction (DDR)	Drug abuse preventive education, counseling, treatment	Interview Question 6 &7.
Implementation difficulties	Rise of the illegal drug market and the underground economy, spread of prohibition-related health hazards, underground market violence, crimes, and increased homicides among operators and	Interview Questions 1, 2, & 3

	officers. Anarchy in ungoverned illegal drug havens.	
Operational Challenges and Hazards	Reign of terror, regulation capture and compromise (and corruption) of the drug police. Reprisals against the police officers. Shortage of reliable intelligence, and poor crime data. Shortage of basic equipment, essential facilities, and manpower, inadequate funding, poor interagency cooperation, territorial battles and turf guard among law enforcement agencies. High turnover rate/attrition rate of personnel. Lack of insurance policies and workmen/ family compensation schemes.	Interview questions 1, 2, 9 & 10.
Capacity building and Innovation	Training, refresher courses, orientation seminars, socialization, international partnership exchange programs, shortage of cooperation personnel training programs etc.	Interview Questions 8, 6, & 7
Policy Awareness	Cannabis control laws, penalties, interdiction (drug seizures and	Questions 1 to 10.

offenders' arrests),
crop eradication, drug
money-laundering acts
etc. Criminalization of
all drug-related
activities.