



ABSTRACT

This study investigates the trends and patterns of drug abuse and its associated criminal behaviors in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State. The primary objective is to assess the prevalence and patterns of illicit drug use, exploring its correlation with rising crime rates in the metropolis. Utilizing a quantitative research design, the study collected data from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) over five years, focusing on reported drug-

TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF DRUG ABUSE: ANALYZING FIVE YEARS OF PREVALENT SUBSTANCE USE IN YOLA METROPOLIS

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Introduction

Drug abuse represents an escalating public health issue globally, with severe implications for individuals, families, and communities. This issue is particularly critical in Nigeria, where rapid urbanization, economic challenges, and social stressors have worsened the prevalence of substance abuse, especially among young populations (UNODC, 2021). According to a recent national drug survey, around 14.4% of Nigerians aged 15 to 64 years engage in drug abuse, a figure nearly three times the global average of 5.3% (UNODC, 2021). The effect of drug abuse is complex, contributing to the deterioration of mental and physical health, rising crime rates, unemployment, and social instability (Oshodi et al., 2018). This issue is particularly pronounced in urban areas like Yola Metropolis an economic and social center in Adamawa State, drawing in diverse



related offenses and crime incidents. The results revealed a concerning upward trend in drug abuse, particularly in substances like marijuana, tramadol, and methamphetamine, alongside a parallel increase in various criminal activities including theft, assault, and drug trafficking. A significant correlation (Pearson coefficient of approximately 0.999) was found between drug abuse prevalence and crime rates, highlighting the complex relationship between substance abuse and criminality in Yola Metropolis. The findings emphasize the urgent need for integrated public health and law enforcement strategies to address the intertwined issues of drug abuse and crime, including enhanced prevention and treatment programs tailored to the local context. This study contributes to the understanding of drug-related challenges in urban Nigeria, emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive intervention approaches to mitigate the social and public health effects of illicit drug use.

Keywords: Crime Prevalence, Drug Prevalence, Drug Abuse, Trends and Patterns.

populations and, consequently, a range of drug abuse patterns.

The past decade has seen significant shifts in the types of drugs being misused in Nigeria, with substances such as cannabis, tramadol, and codeine syrup among the most prevalent (Nwagu et al., 2022). Prescription medications, such as opioid analgesics, have become increasingly popular, especially among young people, due to their availability and perceived safety compared to illicit drugs (Awosusi & Olugbenga-Bello, 2020). This trend is exacerbated by socio-economic pressures, inadequate drug regulation, and limited mental health resources, which allow these substances to proliferate, leading to heightened rates of addiction and the emergence of drug-related social problems (Ezeh et al., 2021).

The need for research into drug abuse patterns in Nigeria, particularly in Yola Metropolis, has become more urgent due to the implications of substance abuse on public health and safety. Recent studies indicate that while interventions have been launched by government and non-governmental organizations, efforts are often constrained by limited data on regional trends and the specific types of drugs in circulation (Adebayo et al., 2022). Understanding the patterns of drug use over the past decade in Yola can provide valuable insights into the unique factors influencing substance abuse in this region. These insights are essential for developing targeted public health campaigns, enhancing policy, and implementing more effective rehabilitation programs.

By examining the specific drugs commonly abused in Yola Metropolis over the past five years, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of local drug abuse trends. Such an investigation may reveal correlations with socio-economic conditions, cultural



influences, and access to healthcare services, thus informing strategies aimed at mitigating the rise of drug abuse. The findings could also support policy development aimed at regulating drug access, improving rehabilitation services, and increasing awareness of the dangers associated with substance abuse (Ayorinde et al., 2019; Nwagu et al., 2022).

Statement of the Problem

The rising prevalence of drug abuse in Nigeria, particularly among urban populations, has become a serious public health concern, leading to various negative social, economic, and health-related outcomes (UNODC, 2021). In Yola Metropolis, like many urban centers, drug abuse affects not only the individuals involved but also has broader societal consequences, including increased crime rates, higher healthcare costs, and reduced productivity. Despite governmental and non-governmental efforts to curb drug abuse, limited regional data on drug prevalence, specific substances involved, and changing trends over time have hindered the development of effective, targeted interventions. Existing studies in Nigeria tend to focus broadly on national trends, often overlooking the unique socio-economic and cultural dynamics that may influence drug abuse in specific regions like Yola. This lack of localized data poses challenges for public health officials, policymakers, and community leaders aiming to address the issue effectively. Furthermore, little is known about how the types of drugs abused in Yola Metropolis have evolved over the past decade, or the specific factors driving these trends, such as availability, socio-economic pressures, or peer influence (O'Farrell, & Fals-Stewart, 2020). To address this gap, this study aims to explore the types of drugs predominantly abused in Yola over the last five years and assess their prevalence and associated social factors. By identifying trends and patterns in substance abuse, this research seeks to provide actionable data that can aid in developing targeted interventions. This will support public health efforts, inform local policies, and potentially reduce the adverse effects of drug abuse on individuals and the broader community in Yola Metropolis.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the criminal behaviours associated with indulgence in illicit drugs in Yola Metropolis, Adamawa State, Nigeria. To inspect the prevalence and patterns of illicit drug use in Yola Metropolis.

Hypothesis

H₀ There is no relationship between illicit drug indulgence and prevalence of crime in Yola metropolis in Adamawa State



Literature Review

Nwagu, Chukwu, & Ezema, (2022) conducted surveys and interviews to provide a descriptive statistical analysis of drug use prevalence. The findings revealed a high prevalence of illicit drug use among youth in Yola Metropolis, with patterns indicating a rise in the use of stimulants and depressants. The study found that drug use was notably higher in areas with limited recreational facilities and higher unemployment rates. Lankenau, Teti, and Silva, (2017) used focus groups and questionnaires, employing thematic analysis to understand the patterns among youth. they identified distinct patterns of drug use, including a preference for specific drugs among different age groups. The study highlighted that drug use was more prevalent among adolescents and young adults, with a significant correlation between drug use and socio-economic status. Davis, et al, (2020) examined drug use trends in urban areas through cross-sectional surveys, analyzed using regression analysis. Their research indicated a trend towards increased drug use in urban areas, particularly among individuals engaged in informal employment. The study also found that the availability of drugs was a major factor influencing the patterns of drug use.

Awosusi, & Olugbenga-Bello, (2020) focused on substance abuse among adolescents through structured interviews and multivariate analysis. Their study found that substance abuse was widespread among adolescents, with a significant number reporting the use of multiple substances. The analysis showed a clear link between substance abuse and academic underachievement. Yusuf (2017) utilized health records and surveys to analyze the correlation between drug use and public health. Yusuf's research highlighted a correlation between drug use and negative health outcomes, including increased incidences of mental health issues and chronic diseases. The study showed that drug use was more common in lower-income areas with limited access to health services.

Research has highlighted several underlying factors contributing to criminal behaviors linked to illicit drug use. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (2021) examined socioeconomic factors through interviews and questionnaires, using content analysis. Peters identified socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and lack of education, as significant contributors to drug use and associated criminal behaviors. The study highlighted the role of economic instability in driving individuals toward criminal activities related to drug use. Nwagu, Chukwu, and Ezema, (2022) explored psychological factors via focus groups and thematic analysis. The study found that psychological factors, including stress and mental health disorders, played a crucial role in driving individuals toward drug use and criminal behaviors. The research highlighted the need for psychological support and counseling as part of intervention strategies.



Oshodi, Aina, and Onajole, (2018) analyzed peer influence using surveys and interviews, with factor analysis. The research showed that peer influence was a major factor in drug use, with individuals more likely to engage in drug-related criminal activities if their social circles were involved in drug use. The study emphasized the importance of peer-based intervention programs. Volkow, et al, (2014) investigated environmental factors through observational studies and regression analysis. They identified environmental factors, such as high-crime neighborhoods and lack of recreational facilities, as contributing to increased drug abuse and criminal behaviors. The study suggested that improving community infrastructure could help reduce drug-related crimes.

Methodology

Yola Metropolis is the administrative head quarter of Adamawa State. It is situated between latitudes 10°00'N and 10°30'N and longitude 12°14'E and 13°00'E (Adebayo, Tukur & Zemba 2021). It located within the northeast basement complex area of Nigeria. Its relief generally belongs to high land relief region of Adamawa State. The altitude of the area above main sea level is generally low compared to the other parts of the State. Elevation ranges from about 400m to 1400m. (Adebayo, Tukur and Zemba, 2020). Yola Metropolis has a total population of about 326,372 people according to the census results. Being the state Headquarters, Yola Metropolis is said to be the most densely populated area in the state due to early settlement and the economic activities taking place within the town (NPC, 2006). Yola Metropolis is pluralistic in ethnic composition, the main ethnic group found is Fulani and others are Hausa, Bachama, Bura, Marghi, Igbo, etc. The dominant religions found include Christianity and Islam. The people are also well known for their rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage. Their rich cultural and tradition were said to have arisen festivals in the area. Most of these festivals are celebrated for different purposes and provide sources of entertainments to people, (Adebayo, Tukur & Zember, 2020).

This research attempted to evaluate the prevalence of criminal activities within the Yola metropolis by employing a quantitative approach. The study employed stratified, systematic, and random sampling techniques to collect both quantitative data. Quantitative data were acquired from National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). The collected data underwent analysis, which encompassed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Software such as SPSS was utilized in this analytical process.

Quantitative data was used. Quantitative data encompassed numerical information about crime incidents and occurrences, detailing the number of reported cases for each crime type in Yola metropolis. Qualitative data involved information about the nature of crimes,



modus operandi, and qualitative insights to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in Yola metropolis. This study utilized a combination of stratified and systematic sampling. The researchers divided the metropolis into distinct strata (wards) based on socio-economic status, population density, and crime history. Systematically the researchers selected each ward within the metropolis.

To analyze the types, prevalence, and trends of drug abuse in Yola Metropolis over the past five years, this study relied on secondary data collected from two primary sources: The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). These sources provided essential records on drug-related offenses, types of drugs confiscated, arrest records, and other relevant statistics, making them invaluable for understanding local patterns in drug abuse. The NDLEA, responsible for monitoring and controlling illicit drug use and trafficking in Nigeria, contributed various forms of data, including annual reports with statistical summaries of drug-related offenses. These reports contained details such as the types of drugs seized, frequency of seizures, locations, and demographic profiles of offenders, such as age and gender. Furthermore, the NDLEA supplied case records and incident reports on specific incidents of drug use, which provided insights into trends over time.

The Nigeria Police Force, which frequently collaborates with the NDLEA on drug-related crimes, especially those linked to public safety and criminal behavior, provided complementary data. This included crime records documenting arrests and prosecutions for drug-related offenses, which offered a view of the socio-economic factors linked to drug abuse in Yola Metropolis. Furthermore, the NPF shared data on drug distribution patterns, helping to identify potential sources and hotspots within the area. To ensure accuracy and reliability, data from both agencies were cross-referenced and compared to identify any consistencies or discrepancies, such as variations in the types of drugs reported, seizure rates, or arrest numbers. This information was further triangulated with reports from local health facilities or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that offered additional insights into regional drug abuse trends. Through these methods, the study achieved a comprehensive view of the drug abuse trends in Yola Metropolis.

The data collected from the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive analysis provided an overview of the prevalence and distribution of drug abuse in Yola Metropolis by calculating percentages and frequency distributions. These descriptive statistics allowed the study to highlight the most commonly abused drug types, along with yearly trends in drug-related incidents. This foundational information provided a clear view of patterns and trends within the study area.



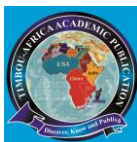
Inferential analysis, specifically correlation analysis, was also employed to examine relationships between different variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the strength and direction of relationships between average crime prevalence and average drug prevalence. This correlation analysis helped uncover associations between variables, offering insights into potential factors influencing drug abuse trends in Yola Metropolis. By using both descriptive and inferential analyses, this study achieved a comprehensive statistical understanding of the prevalence and contributing factors of drug abuse in the metropolis, with SPSS enabling efficient processing and interpretation of the data.

Results and Discussions

Different Drugs Mostly Abused and Their Prevalence over the Past Ten (10) Years in Yola Metropolis.

The results presented in Figure 1, illustrating drug abuse trends in Yola Metropolis from 2013 to 2023, reflect notable shifts in substance use patterns over the decade. The consistent rise in marijuana use, from 15.2% in 2013 to 20.8% in 2023, aligns with broader national and global trends indicating increasing acceptance and availability of cannabis. Similar findings have been reported in studies across various regions, suggesting that marijuana is becoming more normalized in society, potentially due to changing attitudes towards its use and ongoing decriminalization efforts in some areas (Cohen et al., 2020). In contrast, the significant decline in cocaine use from 4.5% to 2.5% could indicate successful law enforcement efforts, public health campaigns, or a decrease in availability. This trend mirrors findings in a study by Klein et al., (2019) that suggest effective intervention strategies can lead to reductions in specific drug use. The slight increase in heroin use, from 2.8% to 3.8%, along with the notable rise in methamphetamine use from 3.1% to 5.3%, raises concerns about the evolving drug landscape in Yola. Research by Makkai & Payne, (2018) indicates that shifting patterns in drug use often reflect changes in local trafficking routes and availability, emphasizing the need for adaptive prevention strategies.

The outpouring in tramadol abuse, from 4.0% to 6.5%, and the increase in codeine use from 2.5% to 4.5% point to a worrying trend in prescription drug misuse. This aligns with global observations regarding the rising misuse of opioid medications and the consequences of inadequate regulation (Volkow et al., 2014). The lack of data for Rohypnol and synthetic cannabinoids in 2023 leaves some uncertainty about their current trends, but moderate increases in these substances highlight the need for continuous monitoring of emerging drugs. The relatively stable use of inhalants and diazepam, with diazepam showing a



general increase, suggests ongoing concerns in these areas but indicates less dramatic shifts compared to other substances.

The implications of these trends are significant for public health and policy in Yola Metropolis. The rising rates of marijuana, tramadol, and methamphetamine use indicate a pressing need for comprehensive drug education and prevention programs tailored to the specific substances that are gaining popularity. Addressing marijuana use will require nuanced approaches that consider changing social attitudes while promoting responsible use and awareness of potential risks. The increase in prescription drug misuse underscores the necessity for stricter regulations and public education about the risks associated with opioid medications. Effective strategies could include community outreach programs, improved prescription monitoring, and better training for healthcare providers on responsible prescribing practices.

Moreover, the observed patterns suggest a potential shift in drug trafficking dynamics within the region, necessitating collaboration between law enforcement and public health agencies to adapt to these changes. Continued surveillance and data collection are crucial for understanding emerging trends and informing interventions.

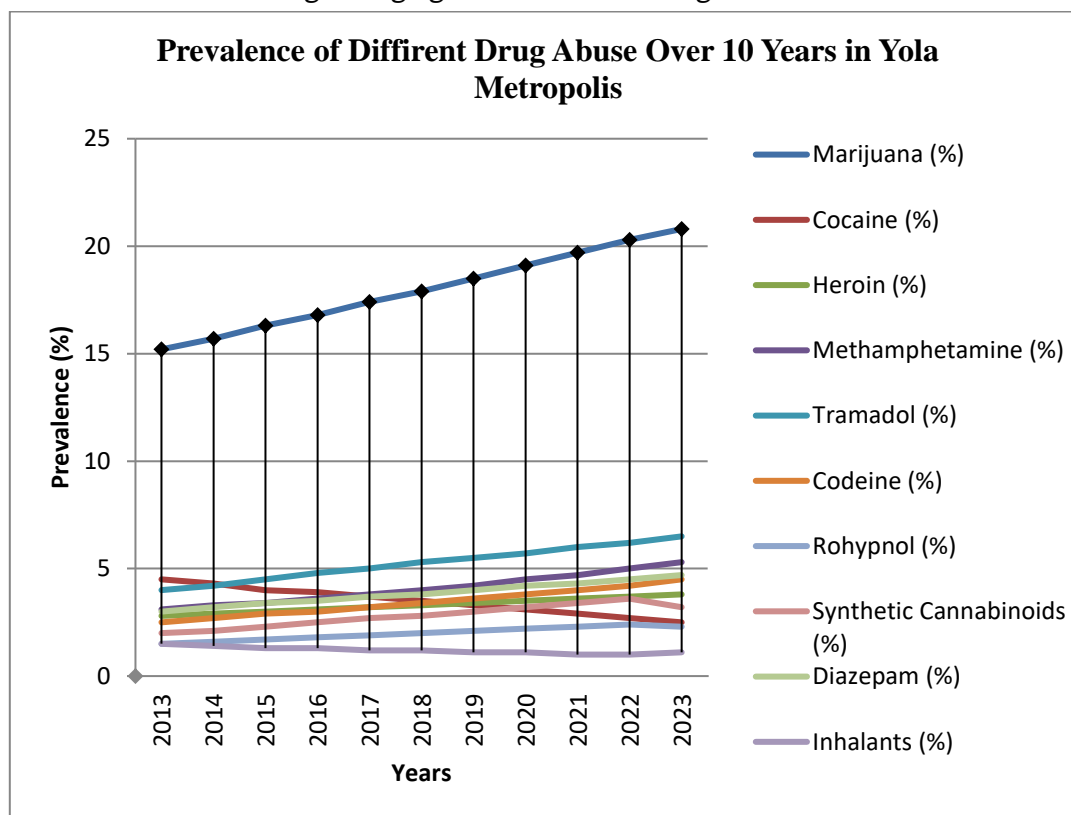


Figure 1: drugs mostly abused and their prevalence over the past five years:

Source: NDLEA Adamawa State Command, 2024.



The findings presented in Table 1 indicate a troubling increase in various drug-related crimes in Yola Metropolis from 2019 to 2023, with significant rises in theft, assaults, vandalism, domestic violence, and drug trafficking. These trends resonate with a study by Degenhardt, et al, (2016) who found that drug-related crime is often interconnected with property crimes and violence, as substance abuse can impair judgment and lead to aggressive behavior. Similarly, a systematic review by Makkai and Payne (2018) highlighted how drug abuse can escalate criminal behaviors, particularly in urban areas where access to substances is more prevalent.

The increase in theft, from 16.0% to 18.0%, suggests a growing challenge related to property crimes that may be driven by the need to finance drug habits. This aligns with findings from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) (2021), which indicated that individuals with substance use disorders are at a higher risk of engaging in theft and other property crimes. The rise in assaults from 18.0% to 20.0% also reflects a concerning trend, as aggressive behavior linked to drug use can lead to increased violence in communities. A study by Fisher et al. (2019) found that alcohol and certain illicit drugs significantly contributed to violent behaviors, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions.

Vandalism and domestic violence are other areas of concern, with increases from 11.0% to 13.0% and from 14.0% to 16.0%, respectively. These patterns underline the far-reaching consequences of drug abuse on familial relationships and community stability. Research by O'Farrell and Fals-Stewart (2020) supports this, indicating that substance abuse is a significant risk factor for domestic violence, as intoxication can exacerbate conflict within households. The rise in drug trafficking, from 9.5% to 11.5%, further complicates the situation, indicating that the availability of drugs is increasing in Yola, which can perpetuate other criminal activities.

The implications of these findings are profound and highlight the urgent need for a complicated approach to address the intertwined issues of drug abuse and crime in Yola Metropolis. The upward trends in various crime types point to the necessity for enhanced law enforcement strategies aimed at disrupting drug trafficking and distribution networks. Effective policing and community-based initiatives could significantly mitigate the availability of drugs, potentially leading to a decrease in related criminal activities. Moreover, the result emphasizes the importance of addiction treatment and prevention programs. Community support systems that provide education, counseling, and resources for individuals struggling with substance abuse can be crucial in reducing both drug use and its associated crimes. Evidence suggests that comprehensive addiction treatment programs can decrease criminal behavior among individuals with substance use disorders (Davis et al., 2020).



Table 1: Drug-Related Crimes Data (2019-2023)

Year	Crime Type	Prevalence (%)
2019	Theft	16.0
2019	Assault	18.0
2019	Vandalism	11.0
2019	Domestic Violence	14.0
2019	Drug Trafficking	9.5
2020	Theft	16.5
2020	Assault	18.5
2020	Vandalism	11.5
2020	Domestic Violence	14.5
2020	Drug Trafficking	10.0
2021	Theft	17.0
2021	Assault	19.0
2021	Vandalism	12.0
2021	Domestic Violence	15.0
2021	Drug Trafficking	10.5
2022	Theft	17.5
2022	Assault	19.5
2022	Vandalism	12.5
2022	Domestic Violence	15.5
2022	Drug Trafficking	11.0
2023	Theft	18.0
2023	Assault	20.0
2023	Vandalism	13.0
2023	Domestic Violence	16.0
2023	Drug Trafficking	11.5

Source: NPF Adamawa State Command, 2024.

The findings presented in Table 2, which demonstrate an increase in both average crime prevalence and average drug prevalence from 2019 to 2023 in Yola Metropolis, align with research by Degenhardt et al, (2020) indicated that higher levels of drug use in urban areas are often associated with increased criminal activity, particularly offenses related to theft and violence. Similarly, a study by Lankenau et al. (2017) found that communities with rising drug prevalence tended to experience escalations in crime, largely driven by drug-related behaviors and the socio-economic challenges faced by users.



The implication of the results from Table 2 is significant. The consistent upward trend in both crime and drug prevalence over the five-year period suggests a feedback loop where increased drug abuse may contribute to heightened criminal activity, which in turn could lead to further drug-related offenses. This dynamic is particularly concerning for local authorities and public health officials, as it emphasizes the urgent need for integrated strategies that address the intertwined issues of drug abuse and crime.

Furthermore, the increasing prevalence of drug abuse points to potential gaps in preventive measures and treatment options available in the community. Research by Hser et al. (2017) emphasizes that effective drug intervention programs not only help reduce substance use but can also mitigate associated criminal behaviors. Thus, the results imply that enhancing access to substance abuse treatment, community education initiatives, and preventive measures could be critical in curbing both drug use and its related crime.

Table 2: Average Crime Prevalence and Average Drug Prevalence:

Year	Average Crime Prevalence (%)	Average Drug Prevalence (%)
2019	13.8	6.0
2020	14.2	6.5
2021	14.7	7.1
2022	15.2	7.7
2023	15.7	8.2

Source: NDLEA and NPF Adamawa state commands, 2024

Test of Hypothesis

The results in Table 3 indicating a very strong positive correlation (Pearson correlation coefficient of approximately 0.999) between drug-related crimes and drug abuse in Yola Metropolis from 2019 to 2023 echo findings from numerous studies that have explored the interconnections between substance abuse and criminal activity. A study by Degenhardt et al. (2020) found that increases in drug use significantly correlated with rises in drug-related offenses, supporting the notion that substance abuse often underpins criminal behavior. Likewise, research by Hser et al. (2017) highlighted that communities facing higher levels of drug abuse frequently experience corresponding spikes in crime rates, particularly those related to theft, violence, and drug trafficking. The implications of this very strong correlation in Yola Metropolis are profound. The findings suggest that as drug abuse becomes more prevalent, the associated drug-related crimes will also likely escalate, posing challenges for public safety and community health. This aligns with observations in urban settings worldwide, where drug abuse is linked to



increased crime rates, thereby necessitating targeted interventions that address both issues simultaneously (Makkai & Payne, 2018).

Given the strong correlation, policymakers and law enforcement agencies should prioritize integrated strategies that encompass both drug abuse prevention and crime reduction efforts. For example, community-based programs aimed at educating the population about the dangers of substance abuse, alongside accessible treatment and rehabilitation services, could be effective in curbing both drug use and the associated criminal behaviors. Research by Volkow et al. (2014) emphasizes that preventive measures, including education and treatment, not only reduce drug abuse but also contribute to lower crime rates. While the correlation is significant, it is essential to acknowledge that correlation does not imply causation. Further research is needed to unpack the underlying factors that contribute to this relationship. For instance, it is crucial to investigate whether certain socio-economic conditions, community dynamics, or access to drugs are driving both increased drug abuse and crime. Understanding these causal mechanisms can inform more effective intervention strategies and policies.

Table 3: Correlation Result

		Crime Prevalence	Drug Prevalence
crime Prevalence	Pearson Correlation	1	0.999**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	5	5
drugs Prevalence	Pearson Correlation	0.999**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	5	5
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Correlation Coefficient (r): 0.9990.9990.999

Strength of Correlation: Very strong positive correlation.

Conclusion

The assessment of criminal behaviour connected to illicit drug indulgence in Yola Metropolis reveal strong positive correlation between drug use and growth in criminal activities such as violence, theft and gang violence. The research found that unemployment and poverty significantly contribute to both the prevalence and effect of the associated crime. While law enforcement efforts are recognized, they are insufficient without comprehensive community based interventions in the aspects of youth engagement and rehabilitation program. Addressing this problem therefore requires a



multifaceted approach that encompass Integrated prevention, rehabilitation, and law enforcement strategies, these are essential to effectively reduce both drug abuse and its associated crimes, thereby improving community safety and well-being.

Recommendations

1. Government of Adamawa state should strengthen the law enforcement efforts to target drug distribution networks and increase surveillance in high-risk areas to effectively reduce drug-related crimes.
2. Community and government should implement community-based initiatives that raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse and involve local stakeholders in prevention efforts, focusing on education and peer support.
3. Government should Increase access to rehabilitation programs for drug users, integrating these services within the criminal justice system to support recovery and reduce recidivism rates.
4. Government and private organizations should develop policies to create job opportunities and provide economic support, particularly targeting vulnerable populations, to address underlying issues of poverty and unemployment that contribute to drug abuse and related crimes.

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