

Psychoactive Substance Use as Correlate of Electoral Violence in Keffi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State

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Abstract

This study investigated psychoactive substance use as a correlate of electoral violence in Keffi LGA of Nasarawa State Nigeria. A total of 82 substance users with experience of electoral violence were sampled for the study using a convenient sampling method. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, demographic variable of the participants indicates that 58(70.7%) are Male while 24(29.3%) were Female. Two hypotheses were tested for the study. The first hypothesis states that there will be a significant link between psychoactive substance use and electoral violence in Keffi Nasarawa State. This hypothesis was positive ($r = .381, p < 0.05$). A second hypothesis states that there will be significant differences between men and women when it comes to electoral violence. Results show a significant difference in electoral violence between men and women $t(80) = 3.262, p < 0.05$. We therefore concluded that psychoactive substance use is significantly associated with electoral violence in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State, with male participants more likely than female participants to be involved in electoral violence. Therefore, we recommend that governments put measures to stop the use of psychoactive substance first, in order to stop electoral violence. And the government should give these young people the opportunity to attend school and find employment or start their own business.

Keywords: Election, Violence, Psychoactive Substance, Electoral Violence.

Introduction

Electoral violence refers to any form of violent actions, behaviors, or activities that occur during the electoral process. It typically takes place in the context of elections, referendums, or other forms of political contests where individuals or parties compete for positions of power or decision-making. Electoral violence can manifest in various ways and at different stages of the electoral cycle, including before, during, and after the voting process. Electoral violence can have severe consequences for the democratic process and the overall stability of a country. It can undermine public trust in the electoral system, erode democratic principles, and lead to long-lasting social and political divisions. Preventing and addressing electoral violence is crucial for ensuring free and fair elections and upholding the principles of democracy.

According to Laakso (2007) "electoral violence is an activity motivated by an attempt to affect the results of the elections either by manipulating the electoral procedures and participation or by contesting the legitimacy of the results". In another view Albert (2007) defines electoral violence as any form of organized act or threats physical, psychological and structural aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before,

during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process. Going by this view, it is clear that electoral violence can any form, that is, it can be in form of physical threat, intimidation psychologically or structurally. In the words of Höglund (2009) "electoral violence is separated from other forms of political violence by a combination of timing and motive. The time aspect relates to violence carried out during the election period. The objective of electoral violence is to influence the electoral process and in extension its outcome". Electoral violence can take many forms, such as thuggery, ballot box snatching, destruction of individual and government properties such as offices of the electoral body as put forward by Robert (2011) electoral violence depicts acts of aggression, thuggery, and other similar act that are displayed in the course of the electoral process.

Electoral violence can take place in different phases of the election, that is, during, before and after the election Balogun (2003). Ladan-Baki (2016) noted that electoral violence during general elections include the snatching of ballot boxes to rig and manipulate results, causing pandemonium in polling stations to hinder voters from voting, beating up electoral officers and sometime killing same in the process when weapons such as guns and cutlass are used during elections. These individuals involved in electoral violence were believed to be under influence of substances, this is so because, nobody in his right-thinking can take arm to harm or destroy individual or government properties as posited by Marwa, (2022, cited in Cable Newspaper) "Nobody in his right sense will take up arms to kidnap, rape and kill innocent people.

Current literature in this area suggested that there are several factors that are associated with violent behaviour, however, this study will focus on psychoactive substance as it relates to electoral violence. Researches such as Vladimir et al. (2019) find a link between psychoactive substance use and violent behaviour (Vladimir et al., 2019). their findings indicates that, as much as 50% of their participants perpetrate violent crime under the influence of psychoactive substances at the time of the offense, predominantly by alcohol. The association between substance use and aggression stems from the fact that among violent crime offenders there is a considerable number of individuals with alcohol or drugs abuse (Beck & Heinz, 2013).

Psychoactive substances, also known as psychotropic or psychotropic drugs, are chemicals that alter brain function and result in changes in perception, mood, consciousness, cognition, or behavior. Psychoactive substances are substances that, when taken in or administered into one's system, affect mental processes, e.g., cognition or affect (WHO, 2020). According to Bowden-Jones (2016) A psychoactive drug is a chemical substance that alters the functioning of the brain, causing changes in the way we think, feel and behave. All drugs can be divided into those that have psychoactive effects and those that don't. Most drugs, for example medications like antibiotics, are not psychoactive. Antibiotics treat infections but they don't change our emotions. Psychoactive drugs can be stimulating, sedating, cause hallucinations or produce an out-of-body state called dissociation. Some psychoactive drugs can cause more than one of these effects. The most common

psychoactive substance used in Nigeria according to NAFDAC (2000) as cited by Haladu (2003) are categorized as follows: stimulants, these are substances that directly act and stimulate the central nervous system, users at the initial stage experience pleasant effects such as energy increase, the second one is hallucinogens: These are drugs that alter the sensory processing unit in the brain, thus, producing distorted perception, feeling of anxiety and euphoria and inner joy, they normally come from marijuana, thirdly, sedatives: this substance relieve stress and anxiety, and some of them induce sleep, ease tension, cause relaxation or help users to forget their problems, they are sourced from alcohol. Lastly, miscellaneous: This is a group of volatile solvents or inhalants that provide euphoria, emotional dis-inhibition and perpetual distortion of thought to the user. The main sources are glues, spot removers, tube repair, perfumes, chemicals. In the light of the, this study is set to investigate correlation between psychoactive substance and electoral violence in keffi LGA.

Statement of the Problem

Electoral violence is a significant threat to democratic processes and societal stability, disrupting the fundamental principles of free and fair elections. During and after the general elections in 2015, more than 100 people lost their lives (International Crisis Group, 2018). Premium Times (2023) reported that Kimpact Development Initiative (a nongovernmental organization working to advance good governance and democratic rights), said Nigeria recorded 339 incidents of election violence in 2022, the organization said 165 people lost their lives as a result of political violence. This becomes a threat to our electoral process in the future. It is common in Nigeria during election to see thugs attacking electoral officers, election materials been destroyed, and destruction and damage of the offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The Cable Newspaper on the 17th December, 2022, reported that according to INEC data, INEC recorded 50 incidents of attacks on its offices from 2019 to 2022. According to the data released by the commission, the states include Imo (11), Osun (7), Enugu (5), Akwa Ibom (5), Ebonyi (4), Cross River (4), and Abia (4). Others are Anambra (2), Taraba (2), Kaduna (1), Borno (1), Bayelsa (1), Ondo (1), Lagos (1), and Ogun (1). The data showed that the year in which the greatest number of incidents were recorded is 2020 with 22 attacks, followed by 2021 with 12, and 2019 and 2022 with eight attacks each (The Cable Newspaper, 2022). ACLED (2023) reported that between 1st January, 2022 to 21st April, 2023, Nigeria recorded 4,890 events of electoral violence and 13,158 fatalities. In Nasarawa State withing this period, the organization reported that Nasarawa State recorded 25 cases of electoral violence that includes: violence against civilians, mob attack, battles and Explosions/Remote violence.

It is in this purview that this research was set to investigate psychoactive substance as correlate of electoral violence. Hence it behooves to ask the following questions.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this research, the following questions were asked

1. What is the relationship between psychoactive substance use and electoral violence in Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State?
2. Is there gender differences on electoral violence participation among residents of Keffi LGA, Nasarawa State?

Research Objectives

The general objective of this research was to investigate the correlation between psychoactive substance use and electoral violence, while the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To explore the relationship between psychoactive substance use and electoral violence in Keffi, Nasarawa State.
2. To find out if male and female differ in electoral violence in Keffi Nasarawa State.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated for the purpose of this study

1. There will be significant relationship between psychoactive substance use and election violence in Keffi Nasarawa State.
2. Male and female will differ significantly when it comes to electoral violence in Keffi, Nasarawa State.

Review of Related Literature

World Health Organization WHO (2002) defined violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” Thus, violence may be characterized as an intentional act that involves force or power with the aim of causing harm (Goetz, 2010). Violence can be classified as: affective (impulsive) and predatory (premeditated) (Siever, 2008). Affective violence is more emotional and defensive, while predatory violence is planned, and it has the premeditated goal of attack (Ennis et al., 2017). Electoral violence can be either of the two categories.

Psychoactive substances are drugs that affect the brain and alter a person’s mood, perception, or cognition. Some examples of psychoactive substances are alcohol, cannabis, cocaine, opioids, hallucinogens, and sedatives. Psychoactive substance use can have various effects on a person’s behavior, including increasing the risk of violence.

Research on the relationship and influence of psychoactive substance on violent behaviour have well been documented. For instance, Mulvey et al. (2006) examined the relationship between substance use (alcohol, marijuana, and other drug use) and violence at the daily level within a sample of mentally ill individuals at high risk for frequent involvement in violence (N=132). Results support the serial nature of substance use and violence, with an

increased likelihood of violence on days following the use of alcohol or multiple drugs, but not the inverse relationship.

Although the strong association documented in previous studies makes substance use a prime candidate to consider in the search for risk factors regarding violence, the exact nature of the relationship between substance use and violence is still poorly understood. There are several ways in which substance use and violence may be related. First, substance use may cause violence, either through direct disinhibition or through an indirect effect on other factors that heighten the risk of violence (e.g., intense involvement in groups prone to aggression; stressed interpersonal relationships; compromised coping resources) in the days surrounding substance use. Second, violent encounters may increase the likelihood of using substances by, for example, an individual using substances to cope with the aftermath of the event. Finally, it is plausible that the relationship between substance use and violence is a spurious one caused by some other influence, such as life stressors, promoting either or both of these behaviors (Parker & Auerhahn, 1998, cited in Mulvey et al., 2006).

Carter et al. (2020) carried out study on daily patterns of substance use and violence among a high-risk urban emerging adult sample, result indicates that Participants [48.7%-female; age = 24.4; 62.3%-African-American; 66.7%-public assistance] completed an average of 46.5 daily reports [SD = 26.7]. Across 90-days, alcohol was characterized by episodic weekend use (average = 10 days-of-use, 34.4% drinking-days involved binge-drinking), while marijuana use was continuous (average = 27 days-of-use; 1.7 times/day), with no weekend differences. Among 118-violent conflicts, 52.5% occurred on weekends; 57.6% were with non-partners/peers; 61.0% involved perpetration/57.6% victimization; and 52.5% involved severe violence. For violence conflicts, 27.1% were preceded by alcohol /22.9% preceded by drug use. Between-person predictors of daily violence included retaliatory attitudes (AOR = 3.2) and anxiety (AOR = 1.1). Within-person predictors included weekends (AOR = 1.6), binge drinking (AOR = 1.9), non-medical prescription opioid use (AOR = 3.5) and illicit drug use (AOR = 8.1). They concluded that among a high-risk urban minority sample, there is higher baseline retaliatory attitudes and anxiety, as well as same-day binge drinking, non-medical prescription opioid use, and illicit drug use were associated with daily violence, likely reflecting both pharmacological and socio-contextual factors.

Method

The study adopted an ex-post factor survey design. This is because the study involves the use of questionnaires that sample the opinion of the respondents in order to get necessary information from them on the relationship between psychoactive substance and electoral violence in Keffi, Nasarawa State. The event, electoral violence and psychoactive substance use had occurred in this case. Therefore, the researchers did not in any way manipulate any of the variables. The independent variable is psychoactive substance use, while the dependent variable is electoral violence.

Settings

The settings for this study is within Keffi Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Participants

The participants for the study comprised 82 drugs users in Keffi LGA who at a point in time took part in any form of electoral violence, the participants were selected through the use of convenient sampling technique. This technique was used because we don't have access to other persons who may participate in the study, hence we choose to adopt this technique to enable us use those that are available and accessible to us.

The demographic variable of the participants revealed as follows: in terms of gender, 58 (70.7%) of the participants were male and 24 (29.3%) were female. In the education field, 29 (35.4%) of the participants did not attend primary school, 32 (39.0%) attended primary school, 15 (18.3%) attended secondary school, and 6 (7.3%) attended university. In terms of employment status, 50 (60.9%) were unemployed, 13 (15.9%) were farmers, 8 (9.8%) were traders, and 11 (13.4%) were employed. Regarding marital status, 45 (54.9%) were single, 35 (42.7%) were married, and 2 (2.4%) were divorced. In terms of age, 35 (38.7%) participants were between the ages of 17 and 25, 30 (30.6%) between the ages of 26 and 30, and 17 (13.94%) between the ages of 31 and older.

Instruments

The study adopted research instruments for collection of data. The questionnaire used have four sections, the breakdown of each section is explained below.

Section A: Demographic Variables This section contains questions about demographic variables of the participants, such as age, gender, marital status, religion and education of the participants.

Section B: Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-10) The DAST was developed and validated by Dr. Harvey A. Skinner at the Addiction Research Foundation, Toronto, Canada (now the Center for Addiction and Mental Health). The DAST is copyrighted by Dr. Harvey A. The DAST-10 is a 10-item, yes/no, self-report instrument that has been shortened from the original 28-item DAST. Each question answered with a "Yes" scores 1 point, except for Question 3, which scores 1 point for "No". All items assess drug use in general, without referring to specific types of drugs. The words "drug use" and "drug abuse" used in the form refers to the use of any non-prescription drugs or the use of any prescribed or over-the-counter medications used in excess of the recommended doses. The questionnaire does not include any items on alcohol or tobacco. Lap Po Lam et al. (20015) reported a reliability coefficient of 0.75.

Section C: Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992) The scale measures aggression, the 1992 version of the AQ is a 29-item questionnaire in which participants rank certain statements along a 5-point continuum from "extremely uncharacteristic of me" to "extremely characteristic of me". The scores are normalized on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being

the highest level of aggression. It measures four factors: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility.

Procedure

We start by identifying individuals engaged in psychoactive substance use. We reached out these potential participants and introduced them to the purpose of our research study. We then establish a rapport and gain their willingness to participate, thereafter, we distributed carefully the designed questionnaires to the participants, participants were given sufficient time to thoughtfully complete the questionnaires. The researchers adhered to ethical considerations in the course of this research. Participants were presented with a written informed consent form which give the participant the ability to decide on whether to participant or not. They were given a clear and accurate description of the time and tasks required in the participation. They were informed that all information provided will be use strictly for the research purpose only; also, their liberty to withdraw from the study at any at time was assured without penalty. This is to avoid risks associated with invasion of privacy and coercion of participation. Participants were also assured of confidentiality for their involvement in the research.

Data Analysis

The data collected from this study was subjected to statistical analysis. Similarly, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test hypothesis one. This is because PPMC is used to test the relationship between two variables. Hypothesis two was tested using T-test for independent sample. Frequency and percentage were utilized for demographic variable. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section captures the demographic characteristics of the respondents as presented in table 1.

Result in table 1 below shows that 58 (70.7%) of the participants were male and 24 (29.3%) were female. In the education field, 29 (35.4%) of the participants did not attend primary school, 32 (39.0%) attended primary school, 15 (18.3%) attended secondary school, and 6 (7.3%) attended university. In terms of employment status, 50 (60.9%) were unemployed, 13 (15.9%) were farmers, 8 (9.8%) were traders, and 11 (13.4%) were employed. Regarding marital status, 45 (54.9%) were single, 35 (42.7%) were married, and 2 (2.4%) were divorced. In terms of age, 35 (38.7%) participants were between the ages of 17 and 25, 30 (30.6%) between the ages of 26 and 30, and 17 (13.94%) between the ages of 31 and older.

Table 1: Frequency Table Representing Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S/No	Items	Group	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	58	70.7
		Female	24	29.3
		Total	82	100.00
2	Age	17-25	35	38.7
		26-30	30	30.6
		31 Above	17	13.94
		Total	82	100.00
3	Education	No Primary Edu.	29	35.4
		Primary	32	39.0
		Secondary	15	18.3
		University	6	7.3
		Total	82	100.00
4	Marital Status	Single	45	54.9
		Married	35	42.7
		Divorced	2	2.4
		Total	82	100.00
5	Employment Status	Unemployed	50	60.9
		Farmers	13	15.9
		Traders	8	9.8
		Employed	11	13.4
		Total	82	100.00

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One

This hypothesis stated that there will be significant link between psychoactive substance use and electoral violence in Keffi Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Moment Correlation and the result is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation for the Relationship Between Electoral violence and psychoactive substance use among the participants

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	df	p
Psychoactive Substance Use	82	21.29	5.64	.381	80	<.05
Electoral Violence Involvement		73.24	24.63			

Result in table 2 shows significant relationship between psychoactive substance use and election violence involvement among residents of Keffi community in Nasarawa State, Nigeria $r(80) = .381$; $p = <.001$. Based on this result, hypothesis one which stated that 'there will be significant link between psychoactive substance use and election violence in Keffi Nasarawa State Nigeria' was therefore supported.

Hypothesis Two

This hypothesis stated that there will be significant differences between men and women when it comes to electoral violence in Keffi Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using independent t-test and the result is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Independent t-test Showing Gender Difference on Electoral Violence

DV	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Electoral Violence	Male	58	77.32	24.97	3.262	80	<.05
	Female	24	60.02	23.93			

Result in table 4 shows that there is a significant difference between male and female when it comes to election violence $t(80) = 3.262$; $p = <.105$. Based on this result, hypothesis two which stated that 'will be significant differences between male and female when it comes to election violence in Keffi Nasarawa State, Nigeria was therefore not supported. Further observation shows that males are more likely to engage in election violence than female with mean of 77.32 for male and 60.02 for female.

Discussion of Findings

This study investigates psychoactive substance use as correlate of electoral violence in Keffi LGA Nasarawa State. Two hypotheses were tested in the study. The first hypothesis stated that there will be significant relationship between psychoactive substance use and electoral violence in Keffi LGA. This hypothesis was tested positive in this study; hence we accept that there is a link between psychoactive substance and electoral violence, moreover, further observation indicates that the relationship is positive, meaning that as psychoactive substance use increase, participation in electoral violence increases and vice versa. This finding is consistent with the existing literature, for instance Mulvey et al. (2006) examined the relationship between substance use (alcohol, marijuana, and other drug use) and violence at the daily level within a sample of mentally ill individuals at high risk for frequent involvement in violence. Results support the serial nature of substance use and violence, with an increased likelihood of violence on days following the use of alcohol or multiple drugs, but not the inverse relationship. In addition, Wilkinson et al. (2015) posited that the sense of fear, loss of control, and panic which result from the use of depressant substances is associated with violence. Also, marijuana use increases heart rate, which may be associated with violent and aggressive behavior.

The second hypothesis stated that, male and female will differ significantly in electoral violence participation, this hypothesis was confirmed in the study, male participants are more likely to participate in electoral violence than the female.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study provides compelling evidence for the significant relationship between psychoactive substance use and electoral violence in Keffi, Nasarawa, Nigeria. The findings also underscore the gender differences in electoral violence, with males displaying a higher likelihood of engaging in such behavior compared to females. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions and policies to address substance abuse and violence, particularly in the context of electoral processes. It is crucial to consider the socio-cultural factors that contribute to these behaviors in order to develop effective strategies for prevention and mitigation.

Recommendations

Based on the insights gained from this study, we provide the following recommendations for further research and practical interventions:

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to better understand the temporal relationship between psychoactive substance use and election violence. This can provide more insight into causality and the potential for preventive measures.
- **Intervention Programs:** There is a need to develop community-based intervention programs that target substance abuse and violence prevention. Collaboration with local stakeholders, including schools, law enforcement, and community leaders, to create awareness and provide resources.
- **Gender-Specific Approaches:** Given the observed gender differences, we recommend interventions that consider the unique factors influencing males and females in engaging in election violence. Addressing these factors can lead to more tailored and effective strategies.
- **Education and Awareness:** There is a need for campaigns that educate the public about the consequences of substance abuse and its link to violent behavior during elections and also promote civic education and peaceful participation to foster a culture of non-violence.
- **Policy Recommendations:** There is need for policies that will promote substance abuse rehabilitation and mental health support.
- **Employment:** employment opportunities should be provided so that these people can have something doing. And they also need to be educated.

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