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Border Insecurity and Transnational Drug Smuggling in Nigeria–Cameroon Border Communities of Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study assessed border insecurity and transnational drug smuggling in Adamawa State, Nigeria, focusing on the nature of drugs smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon border corridor and the effects of drug smuggling on border communities. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using a mixed-method approach. The study population comprised 434,000 people in Mubi North and Mubi South Local Government Areas, from which a sample of 400 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. The questionnaire was validated by three lecturers, while a pilot test produced a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.88. Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while qualitative data were analysed through content analysis. Findings revealed that cannabis, tramadol, codeine, other pharmaceutical drugs, cocaine, heroin, and locally produced illicit substances were smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor. The grand mean of 3.94 indicated respondents' agreement regarding the presence of these substances, with cannabis and pharmaceutical drugs identified as the most common. The findings further revealed that drug smuggling negatively affected border communities through increased drug abuse among youths, school dropout, disruption of economic activities, weakened social wellbeing, and damage to community reputation. The grand mean of 4.01 indicated general agreement regarding these adverse effects, with increased drug abuse among youths recording the highest mean of 4.15. The study concluded that drug smuggling constitutes a security and socioeconomic challenge requiring coordinated interventions. It recommended strengthened border surveillance and intelligence sharing between Nigeria and Cameroon, alongside community-based drug prevention programmes, support services, and youth empowerment initiatives.

Keywords: *Border insecurity, drug smuggling, border communities, Adamawa State, Nigeria–Cameroon border.*

1.1 Introduction

Drug smuggling constitutes a significant security and public health concern because of its implications for community safety, social stability, economic livelihoods, and public welfare. The movement of illicit and controlled substances across international borders creates difficulties for law enforcement agencies, particularly where border surveillance is inadequate and unofficial crossing points are widespread. Ismail and Rabi (2022) observed that Nigeria's unmanned border points facilitate the smuggling of prohibited goods and other contraband. Similarly, Obikaeze et al. (2021) noted that porous borders constitute a threat to human security in Nigeria and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. These conditions create opportunities for drug trafficking networks to operate across national boundaries, with consequences for border communities and the wider society.

The Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State face particular challenges because of difficult terrain, informal trade routes, and the presence of communities with longstanding cross-border social and commercial

relationships. These conditions complicate the distinction between legitimate commercial activities and illegal movements of controlled substances. The security challenges associated with the Boko Haram insurgency have further strained security institutions and complicated border monitoring in northeastern Nigeria (Akinola, 2018). Consequently, drug smuggling in the study area requires attention not only to the weaknesses in border security management but also to the types of substances being transported and the consequences of their movement for communities situated along the border.

The nature of drugs smuggled across the Adamawa–Cameroon border is important for understanding the scope and character of the problem. Reports of drug-related arrests provide evidence of the movement of controlled substances through the area. Olugbode (2025) reported the arrest of three trans-border drug traffickers attempting to smuggle 48,000 tablets of 225 mg Tramadol through Mubi to neighbouring Cameroon. Similarly, Obi (2022) reported the arrest of drug dealers in Konkol and Belel for activities involving Tramadol and Diazepam. Although these reports establish the presence of particular substances in reported trafficking incidents, they do not, by themselves, provide a comprehensive account of the range of drugs smuggled, their relative prevalence, or the patterns of their movement across the border corridor. This makes further investigation necessary to establish the nature of drugs involved in the illicit trade.

Drug smuggling also has implications for the wellbeing and development of border communities. The circulation of controlled substances may contribute to substance misuse, health complications, household financial difficulties, social disruption, and increased pressure on community health and security services. Furthermore, drug-related criminal activities may undermine local livelihoods, generate fear and insecurity, and weaken confidence in law enforcement institutions. However, the extent and specific forms of these consequences within the Nigeria–Cameroon border communities of Adamawa State require empirical examination rather than generalisation from national or regional security concerns. It is against this background that the study examined the nature of drugs smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State and determined the effects of drug smuggling on the communities affected by these activities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Drug smuggling remains a concern along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State, where difficult terrain, unofficial crossing points, and regional insecurity complicate the monitoring of cross-border movements. Reports of drug-related arrests indicate that controlled substances continue to be transported through the area despite the activities of relevant law enforcement agencies. For instance, Olugbode (2025) reported the arrest of traffickers attempting to transport 48,000 tablets of Tramadol through Mubi to Cameroon, while Obi (2022) reported arrests involving Tramadol and Diazepam in Konkol and Belel. Although these incidents demonstrate the presence of specific substances in reported trafficking cases, the available evidence presented in these reports does not establish the full range of drugs smuggled along the corridor or adequately explain the nature and patterns of the trade. This creates a need to identify the types of drugs being smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State.

Beyond the movement of controlled substances, drug smuggling raises concerns about its consequences for the communities located along the border. The circulation and possible misuse of these substances may affect public health, household welfare, community security, economic activities, and social relationships. Nevertheless, the specific effects of drug smuggling on border communities in Adamawa State cannot be established solely from reports of arrests or general discussions of border insecurity. There is a need for empirical evidence showing how drug smuggling affects community members, their livelihoods, their sense of security, and their social wellbeing. Without such evidence, interventions may concentrate primarily on the interception of drugs and the arrest of traffickers while giving insufficient attention to the broader consequences for affected communities. Therefore, this study investigated the nature of drugs smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State and determined the effects of drug smuggling on border communities, with a view to providing evidence that could inform more responsive drug-control and community-protection measures.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study was to assess border insecurity and transnational drug smuggling in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

i. Uncover the nature of drugs being smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon border corridor in Adamawa state.
ii. Determine the effects of drug smuggling on border communities in Adamawa State.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the nature of drugs being smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State?
ii. What are the effects of drug smuggling on border communities in Adamawa State?

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Regional Security Complex Theory

Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) was developed by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver in 2003 in their book Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security. The theory explains that security threats are often concentrated within geographical regions because neighbouring states share interconnected security concerns. Buzan and Wæver (2003) argued that the security of individual states cannot be adequately understood in isolation because threats and vulnerabilities frequently extend beyond national boundaries. The theory emphasises geographical proximity, mutual vulnerabilities, and security interdependence among neighbouring states.

An important assumption of RSCT is that insecurity in one country can affect neighbouring countries through the movement of armed groups, criminal networks, illicit goods, and other cross-border activities. Buzan (1991) maintained that international security is relational because the threats and vulnerabilities of one political community are often connected to those of others. Similarly, Buzan and Wæver (2003) explained that regional security dynamics are shaped by relationships among states and other relevant actors. Consequently, cross-border security challenges require coordinated responses rather than isolated national measures.

The theory is relevant to understanding border insecurity and transnational drug smuggling along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State. Nigeria and Cameroon share geographical proximity, commercial relationships, and security concerns associated with illicit trafficking and armed violence. The Boko Haram insurgency has affected northeastern Nigeria and parts of Cameroon, demonstrating the regional dimensions of insecurity. Drug smugglers may exploit weak border surveillance, unofficial crossing points, and gaps in cooperation between security agencies. Therefore, drug smuggling cannot be understood solely as a domestic criminal activity because its networks and consequences may involve both countries.

Furthermore, RSCT emphasises regional cooperation in addressing shared security threats. Buzan and Wæver (2003) highlighted the importance of relationships among states and other actors in managing interconnected security concerns. In the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas, this requires intelligence sharing, coordinated border patrols, joint investigations, and cooperation among relevant security and drug-control agencies. The effectiveness of these measures depends on institutional capacity, mutual trust, adequate resources, and coordinated responses.

The theory is appropriate for this study because it explains how border insecurity and transnational drug smuggling in Adamawa State relate to wider regional security conditions involving Nigeria and Cameroon. It provides a framework for examining the nature of drugs smuggled along the border and their effects on border communities, particularly regarding health, livelihoods, safety, and social wellbeing. It also highlights the limitations of isolated national interventions and the importance of coordinated border management and regional cooperation in addressing drug-related threats.

2.2 Conceptual Clarifications

2.2.1 Border Insecurity

Border insecurity refers to conditions in which the security, surveillance, and control of a country's territorial boundaries are weakened, thereby creating opportunities for illegal movements of people, goods, and criminal activities (Nosiri & Ohazurike, 2021). It occurs when security agencies experience difficulties in monitoring border areas due to inadequate personnel, insufficient surveillance equipment, difficult terrain, corruption, and the existence of unofficial crossing points. Border insecurity also involves the inability of relevant institutions to prevent and respond effectively to threats such as drug smuggling, arms trafficking, human trafficking, kidnapping, and transnational organised crime.

In Nigeria, border insecurity remains a significant concern because of the country's extensive international boundaries and the challenges associated with their effective management. Along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State, difficult geographical conditions, informal commercial routes, and cross-border social relationships create challenges for security surveillance. The activities of armed groups and transnational criminal networks further complicate efforts to maintain effective border control (OECD, 2022). Border insecurity is therefore not limited to the physical weakness of territorial boundaries but also reflects institutional and operational limitations that undermine the ability of security agencies to prevent illegal cross-border activities. In this study, border insecurity refers to weaknesses in border surveillance, enforcement, and management that create opportunities for drug smuggling along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State.

2.2.2 Transnational Drug Smuggling

Transnational drug smuggling refers to the illegal movement of prohibited or controlled substances across the international boundaries of two or more countries. It involves the transportation, distribution, concealment, or transfer of such substances through authorised or unauthorised routes in violation of applicable laws. Drug

smuggling may be facilitated by organised criminal networks that exploit weak border controls, corruption, inadequate surveillance, and the difficulties associated with monitoring extensive border areas (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], n.d.). The activities may involve different substances, including controlled pharmaceutical products and other illicit drugs, depending on the routes, demand, and operations of trafficking networks.

Transnational drug smuggling constitutes a security, public health, and socioeconomic concern because it facilitates the circulation of controlled substances beyond national jurisdictions. Its consequences may include substance misuse, health complications, criminal activities, household financial difficulties, and increased pressure on law enforcement and healthcare institutions (Thompson, n.d.). Along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State, reports of trafficking incidents involving Tramadol and Diazepam demonstrate the presence of drug-related offences within the corridor. The difficult terrain and numerous unofficial crossing points may further complicate efforts to detect and prevent such activities (OECD, 2022). In this study, transnational drug smuggling refers to the illegal transportation of drugs across the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State, with particular attention to the types of drugs involved and the consequences of their movement for border communities.

2.2.3 Border Communities

Border communities are settlements located within or near the geographical boundaries separating two countries. These communities often maintain social, cultural, economic, and family relationships with populations across the border. Such relationships support legitimate activities, including trade, farming, migration, and other forms of social interaction. However, the geographical characteristics of border settlements and their distance from major administrative centres may create challenges relating to infrastructure, public services, security provision, and economic opportunities. Where border management is weak, these conditions may also expose communities to cross-border criminal activities (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2021).

Along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State, border communities operate within a setting characterised by cross-border interactions, informal trading routes, and security management challenges. Although these interactions contribute to local livelihoods, criminal networks may exploit the same routes and relationships to facilitate drug smuggling. Residents may consequently experience insecurity, disruption of economic activities, health-related problems associated with drug misuse, and pressure on community relationships and public services (Thompson, n.d.). However, the nature and extent of these effects require empirical investigation within the affected settlements. In this study, border communities refer to settlements and their residents located along the Nigeria–Cameroon border areas of Adamawa State, whose security, health, livelihoods, and social wellbeing may be affected by transnational drug smuggling.

2.3 Review of Thematic Study Areas

2.3.1 Nature of Drugs Smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon Border Areas

Drug smuggling across international borders involves different substances, including cannabis, pharmaceutical opioids, cocaine, and methamphetamine. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2024) observed that Africa remains an important transit region for internationally trafficked drugs, while the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB, 2024) identified the non-medical use of pharmaceutical opioids and the proliferation of falsified medicines as significant concerns. These developments indicate that drug smuggling involves both illicit substances and pharmaceutical products diverted from legitimate distribution channels.

In Nigeria, reported drug seizures indicate the involvement of substances such as tramadol, cannabis, methamphetamine, and codeine-containing products. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2025) reported drug-related interceptions involving methamphetamine and tramadol along routes connected to Yola, Mubi, and Cameroon. Adewole (2022) also reported the arrest of three suspected traffickers in Mubi with 48,000 tablets of 225mg tramadol allegedly destined for Cameroon. These incidents demonstrate the presence of different substances in detected trafficking cases, although seizure reports do not establish the complete range or prevalence of drugs smuggled through the corridor.

The nature of drugs smuggled along the Nigeria–Cameroon border is important because different substances present different health and social risks. Pharmaceutical opioids may cause dependence and other adverse effects when used outside appropriate medical supervision, while methamphetamine and cannabis present distinct concerns associated with psychoactive substance use. Therefore, identifying the drugs smuggled through Adamawa requires evidence from documented seizures, security agencies, and border communities rather than assuming that national or continental trafficking patterns reflect the exact situation in every locality (UNODC, 2024).

2.3.2 Effects of Drug Smuggling on Border Communities in Adamawa State

Drug smuggling may affect border communities through its implications for public health, social relationships, economic activities, and security. The UNODC (2024) identified the diversification of drug markets in Africa as a growing public health concern, while the INCB (2024) highlighted the risks associated with falsified pharmaceutical products and the non-medical use of synthetic drugs. These developments suggest that border communities may face risks from the circulation and misuse of controlled substances, although the extent of these effects requires investigation within the affected communities.

Drug-related activities may also contribute to crime, violence, and tensions between residents and law enforcement agencies. Nelson and Onayemi (2024), in a study involving 31 in-depth interviews with Nigerian retail drug sellers, found that drug-market activities were associated with neighbourhood nuisance, crime, violence, poverty, and economic decline. Their findings also indicated that community opposition to drug markets sometimes resulted in police raids. However, because the study examined retail drug markets, its findings cannot automatically be generalised to all communities along the Adamawa–Cameroon border.

The economic and social consequences of drug smuggling may include disruptions to legitimate commercial activities, threats to livelihoods, insecurity, and concerns about the availability of controlled substances. Communities experiencing poverty, limited healthcare services, and inadequate security infrastructure may face additional difficulties responding to these consequences. Nevertheless, the specific effects on farmers, traders, transport operators, and other residents of Adamawa's border communities require direct investigation rather than inference from research conducted elsewhere.

3.1 Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using a mixed-method approach, which combined quantitative and qualitative methods to examine border insecurity and transnational drug smuggling in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The study was conducted in Mubi North and Mubi South Local Government Areas, which serve as important commercial centres along the Nigeria–Cameroon border corridor. The study population comprised 434,000 people across selected border communities, including Sahuda, Burha-Bango and Mujira based on the 2022 population projections. Using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% level of precision, a sample size of 400 respondents was obtained, comprising 216 respondents from Mubi North and 184 from Mubi South through proportionate allocation. The respondents included security personnel, community leaders, men, women, youths, suspected smugglers, and illegal marketers operating in the selected border communities.

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Drug Smuggling Questionnaire (DSQ) and a key informant interview (KII) guide, while secondary information was obtained from books, journals, and newspaper publications. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents and communities based on accessibility, involvement in smuggling-related activities, and willingness to participate. The questionnaire covered respondents' demographic characteristics, border security measures, factors contributing to drug smuggling, types of drugs smuggled, smuggling methods, security implications, effects on border communities, and challenges faced by security agencies. The instrument was validated through face validation by three lecturers from the Centre for Peace and Security Studies, Modibbo Adama University, Yola, whose comments and suggestions were incorporated. Its reliability was established through a pilot test involving 20 respondents in other border areas of Adamawa State, producing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.88.

Data collection was carried out with the assistance of three research assistants, who administered the questionnaires to respondents in the selected border communities, while the researcher conducted the key informant interviews. Respondents were given three days to complete the questionnaires. Quantitative data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. A mean score of 3.0 and above was interpreted as agreement or an indication of a strong factor, while a mean score below 3.0 was interpreted as disagreement. Qualitative data obtained through key informant interviews were analysed using content analysis to identify recurring themes relating to the nature of drug smuggling, border security challenges, and the effects of drug smuggling on border communities in Adamawa State.

4.1 Result

Research Question 1: What is the nature of drugs being smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor?

Table 1: Mean Responses on the Nature of Drugs Smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon Border Corridor

			SD		D		U		A		SA				
S/N	**Item**	**N**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**$\bar{x}$**	**Std.**	**Rmk**
1	Cannabis is commonly smuggled through the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor.	389	11	2.8	27	6.9	42	10.8	176	45.2	133	34.2	4.01	0.97	Agree
2	Hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin are smuggled along the border routes.	389	24	6.2	33	8.5	45	11.6	163	41.9	124	31.9	3.85	1.11	Agree
3	Pharmaceutical drugs are illegally transported across the border.	389	15	3.9	29	7.5	37	9.5	179	46.0	129	33.2	4.00	1.00	Agree
4	Tramadol and codeine are among the drugs frequently smuggled in the area.	389	14	3.6	24	6.2	39	10.0	173	44.5	139	35.7	4.03	0.98	Agree
5	Locally produced illicit drugs are transported through the border communities.	389	26	6.7	38	9.8	44	11.3	161	41.4	120	30.8	3.80	1.14	Agree
	Grand Mean												**3.94**	**1.04**	**Agree**

Key: *SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, $\bar{x}$ = Mean, Std. = Standard Deviation, Rmk = Remark.*

Table 1 shows the mean responses on the nature of drugs being smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor. The findings revealed that all the items were agreed upon by the respondents, with mean scores ranging from 3.80 to 4.03, which are above the benchmark mean of 3.00. Specifically, item 4, which stated that tramadol and codeine are among the drugs frequently smuggled in the area, recorded the highest mean score of 4.03 with a standard deviation of 0.98. This was followed by item 1 on cannabis being commonly smuggled through the border corridor with a mean score of 4.01 and standard deviation of 0.97. Item 3 on pharmaceutical drugs being illegally transported across the border had a mean score of 4.00 with a standard deviation of 1.00, while item 2 on hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin being smuggled along the border routes recorded a mean score of 3.85 and standard deviation of 1.11. Item 5 on locally produced illicit drugs being transported through border communities had the lowest mean score of 3.80 with a standard deviation of 1.14. The grand mean of 3.94 and standard deviation of 1.04 indicate that respondents generally agreed that various forms of drugs, including cannabis, hard drugs, pharmaceutical drugs, tramadol, codeine, and locally produced illicit drugs, are smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor.

Key Informant Interview Responses

Security Personnel

Security Personnel respondents noted that *"Cannabis is one of the most commonly smuggled drugs along the border corridor because it is widely available and easy to conceal,"* while also stating that *"We also intercept hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin, though they are less frequent compared to cannabis."* They further explained that *"Pharmaceutical drugs like tramadol and codeine are heavily trafficked due to high demand among youths,"* and that *"Some smugglers also move unregulated prescription drugs across the border."* In addition, they emphasized that *"Locally produced illicit substances are also sometimes transported through bush routes into nearby communities."*

Community Leaders / Heads

Community leaders reported that *"Cannabis is very common in this area and is often moved in small quantities through bush paths,"* and that *"We have also heard of harder substances like cocaine and heroin being brought in, though not frequently seen in the community."* They further observed that *"Tramadol and codeine are widely abused and therefore commonly smuggled into the area,"* while adding that *"Some pharmaceutical drugs are illegally sold without proper regulation."* Overall, they concluded that *"Different types of drugs enter the community, but cannabis and prescription drugs are the most common."*

Smugglers (Men, Women, Youths)

Smugglers admitted that *"The most common drugs we move are cannabis and tablets like tramadol because they are easier to hide,"* and that *"Hard drugs like cocaine are rare but sometimes come through bigger connections."* They further revealed that *"Codeine syrup and other pharmaceutical drugs are in high demand and move fast in the trade,"* while also stating that *"Most of the drugs we carry are small items that can be hidden in bags or goods."* They also added that *"Locally made substances are sometimes included depending on demand in different places."*

Illegal Marketers

Illegal marketers stated that *"Cannabis is the most frequently seen drug in circulation within the border markets,"* and that *"Tramadol and codeine are commonly sold because many youths demand them."* They further explained that *"Hard drugs like cocaine and heroin are not common in open markets but are said to pass through hidden channels,"* while adding that *"Pharmaceutical drugs are often diverted from legal supply chains into illegal trade."* In conclusion, they noted that *"Most drugs circulating here are either cannabis or abused prescription medications."*

The responses from all categories indicate that the drugs being smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor include cannabis, pharmaceutical drugs such as tramadol and codeine, hard drugs like cocaine and heroin, and other locally or illegally produced substances. Cannabis and prescription drugs were consistently identified as the most common due to high demand, ease of concealment, and widespread local consumption. Hard drugs were acknowledged but considered less frequent and usually moved through concealed or high-level trafficking networks. Overall, the findings show that the drug trade in the area is dominated by cannabis and pharmaceutical substances, with occasional movement of more potent narcotics through covert channels.

Research Question 2: What are the effects of drug smuggling on border communities in Adamawa State?

Table 2: Mean Responses on the Effects of Drug Smuggling on Border Communities in Adamawa State

			SD		D		U		A		SA				
S/N	**Item**	**n**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**$\bar{x}$**	**Std.**	**Rmk**
1	Drug smuggling contributes to increased drug abuse among youths in border communities.	389	10	2.6	18	4.6	29	7.5	181	46.5	151	38.8	4.15	0.88	Agree
2	Drug smuggling negatively affects the social wellbeing of residents in border communities.	389	13	3.3	24	6.2	36	9.3	176	45.2	140	36.0	4.04	0.97	Agree
3	Drug smuggling contributes to school dropout among young people in the area.	389	19	4.9	31	8.0	41	10.5	167	42.9	131	33.7	3.92	1.07	Agree
4	Drug smuggling affects economic activities in border communities.	389	15	3.9	27	6.9	38	9.8	174	44.7	135	34.7	3.99	1.00	Agree
5	Drug smuggling damages the reputation of border communities in Adamawa State.	389	18	4.6	30	7.7	40	10.3	169	43.4	132	33.9	3.94	1.05	Agree
	Grand Mean												**4.01**	**0.99**	**Agree**

Key: *SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, $\bar{x}$ = Mean, Std. = Standard Deviation, Rmk = Remark.*

Table 2 shows the mean responses on the effects of drug smuggling on border communities in Adamawa State. The findings revealed that all the items were agreed upon by the respondents, with mean scores ranging from 3.92 to 4.15, which are above the benchmark mean of 3.00. Specifically, item 1, which stated that drug smuggling contributes to increased drug abuse among youths in border communities, recorded the highest mean score of 4.15 with a standard deviation of 0.88. This was followed by item 2 on drug smuggling negatively affecting the social wellbeing of

residents in border communities with a mean score of 4.04 and standard deviation of 0.97. Item 4 on drug smuggling affecting economic activities in border communities had a mean score of 3.99 with a standard deviation of 1.00, while item 5 on drug smuggling damaging the reputation of border communities in Adamawa State recorded a mean score of 3.94 and standard deviation of 1.05. Item 3 on drug smuggling contributing to school dropout among young people in the area had the lowest mean score of 3.92 with a standard deviation of 1.07. The grand mean of 4.01 and standard deviation of 0.99 indicate that respondents generally agreed that drug smuggling has adverse social, economic, and moral effects on border communities in Adamawa State.

Key Informant Interview Responses

Security Personnel

Security Personnel respondents stated that *"Drug smuggling has increased drug abuse among youths in border communities,"* while also noting that *"It leads to breakdown of social order as more young people become involved in illegal drug consumption and trade."* They further explained that *"The activities negatively affect school attendance and contribute to dropout cases among students,"* and that *"Local economic activities are also disrupted due to insecurity and fear in affected areas."* In addition, they emphasized that *"The reputation of border communities is negatively affected because they are seen as drug-prone areas."*

Community Leaders / Heads

Community leaders reported that *"Drug smuggling has led to increased drug addiction among youths in our communities,"* and that *"It has weakened social values and family stability in the area."* They also observed that *"Many young people abandon school and engage in drug-related activities,"* while adding that *"Trading and farming activities are affected because of insecurity and fear."* Overall, they concluded that *"Our communities are now stigmatized because of the widespread drug activities."*

Smugglers (Men, Women, Youths)

Smugglers admitted that *"Drug smuggling has affected many youths negatively because some of them start abusing the drugs they handle,"* and that *"It creates social problems in families and communities."* They further revealed that *"Some people drop out of school because they prefer quick money from smuggling,"* while also stating that *"It affects normal business activities when security operations become strict."* They added that *"The image of the community is affected when outsiders associate it with drugs."*

Illegal Marketers

Illegal marketers stated that *"Drug smuggling has increased the availability of drugs in local markets, leading to abuse,"* and that *"It contributes to social problems such as youth restiveness and family instability."* They further explained that *"Schooling is affected because many young people are drawn into illegal trade,"* while adding that *"Economic activities are unstable due to insecurity and frequent enforcement operations."* In conclusion, they noted that *"The reputation of border communities is negatively affected in wider society."*

The responses from all categories indicate that drug smuggling has wide-ranging social, economic, educational, and reputational effects on border communities in Adamawa State. These include increased drug abuse among youths, breakdown of social and family structures, school dropout, disruption of economic activities, and negative perception of affected communities. Security personnel and community leaders emphasized the social and security implications, while smugglers and illegal marketers acknowledged the spillover effects on youth behavior and community stability. Overall, the findings show that drug smuggling significantly undermines the development, safety, and social wellbeing of border communities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are discussed according the objectives of the study:

The findings of the study revealed that cannabis, pharmaceutical drugs, tramadol, codeine, and hard drugs such as cocaine and heroin are commonly smuggled, along with locally produced illicit substances are the nature of drugs being smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor. This outcome is in agreement with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010), which documented that West African trafficking routes have increasingly become conduits for both plant-based and synthetic substances, reflecting a diversification of supply chains that mirrors global trends in narcotics consumption. The proliferation of such varied substances indicates that local markets are integrated into broader transnational distribution networks capable of sourcing multiple drug categories simultaneously. According to Ghodse (2010), the contemporary drug trade is characterized by the circulation of both internationally trafficked chemicals and domestically produced compounds, a reality that complicates enforcement efforts because it requires specialized knowledge to identify and intercept heterogeneous consignments. The presence of pharmaceutical preparations alongside traditional narcotics suggests that demand patterns in border communities have evolved beyond single-substance preferences. Furthermore,

the findings resonate with the observations of the World Health Organization (2022), which noted that the abuse of medically intended compounds such as opioid analgesics has emerged as a parallel crisis to conventional drug trafficking, particularly in regions where regulatory oversight of prescription medicines remains weak. The inclusion of locally manufactured substances in the trafficking matrix aligns with the analysis provided by Uzuegbu-Wilson (2020), who contended that domestic production capabilities have expanded in response to demand pressures, creating decentralized supply nodes that operate independently of international cartels. This pharmacological diversity presents unique challenges for detection and interdiction, as enforcement agencies must contend with substances that vary widely in appearance, potency, and concealment methods.

The findings of the study revealed that Drug smuggling has wide-ranging socio-economic and moral effects on communities that leads to increased drug abuse among youths, school dropout, disruption of economic activities, poor social wellbeing, and damage to the reputation of border communities in Adamawa State. This outcome is in agreement with Keefer, Loayza, and Soares (2008), who demonstrated that the illegality of drug economies imposes severe developmental costs on affected populations by diverting human capital away from productive activities toward consumption and dependency, thereby truncating the life chances of entire generations. When adolescents become ensnared in patterns of addiction, the long-term productivity of the community suffers irreparable harm. According to Stares (1996), the normalization of narcotics within local social fabrics erodes the foundational structures that sustain communal wellbeing, including family cohesion, educational aspiration, and civic participation, effects that are particularly pronounced in marginalized regions where institutional resilience is already compromised. The social fabric unravels as trust networks give way to exploitative relationships centered on drug procurement. Furthermore, the findings align with Ghodse (2010), who documented that communities situated along trafficking routes frequently experience collateral damage in the form of disrupted livelihoods and compromised public health, as the influx of substances creates secondary markets that divert resources from legitimate economic endeavors. Local entrepreneurs find their businesses undermined by the volatility and violence that accompany narcotics commerce. In the same vein, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010) observed that the stigma attached to drug-affected localities often results in economic isolation and reduced investment, as external actors associate these spaces with criminality and instability rather than commercial opportunity. The reputational damage thus becomes self-reinforcing, trapping border settlements in cycles of exclusion that persist long after the immediate trafficking activities have subsided.

Conclusion

The study concluded that various substances, including cannabis, tramadol, codeine, other pharmaceutical drugs, cocaine, heroin, and locally produced illicit substances, were smuggled along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor. Cannabis and pharmaceutical drugs were identified as the most common, indicating the diverse nature of drug smuggling in the study area.

The findings further revealed that drug smuggling adversely affected border communities through increased drug abuse among youths, school dropout, disruption of economic activities, weakened social wellbeing, and damage to community reputation. These consequences undermine community security and socioeconomic development.

The study concluded that addressing drug smuggling requires strengthened border surveillance, effective Nigeria–Cameroon security cooperation, community participation, youth education, drug awareness, and improved livelihood opportunities. Consistent with Regional Security Complex Theory, effective responses must combine coordinated regional security measures with public health interventions and community-based protection strategies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the followings are made:

i. Strengthening Border Security and Regional Cooperation: The Nigerian government should strengthen border surveillance along the Adamawa–Cameroon border corridor through improved security equipment, adequate personnel, regular patrols, and intelligence sharing between Nigerian and Cameroonian security agencies. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and other relevant agencies should intensify efforts to detect and intercept smuggled drugs, particularly cannabis, tramadol, codeine, and other controlled pharmaceutical substances.

ii. Community-Based Drug Prevention and Youth Empowerment: The Adamawa State Government, in collaboration with relevant health agencies, community leaders, and non-governmental organisations, should implement drug awareness programmes, strengthen support services for people affected by substance misuse, and expand vocational training and employment opportunities

for youths in border communities. These measures would help reduce drug abuse, discourage involvement in smuggling, and improve the social and economic wellbeing of affected communities.

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