

Legal Interrogation of Perceptions on Impact of Drug Trafficking in Nigeria

Shedrack Ekpa, Shaba Gimba

Faculty of Law, Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba-Nigeria,

*Corresponding Author

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ABSTRACT

This article entitled “Legal Interrogation of Perceptions on Impact of Drug Trafficking in Nigeria” scholarly explored into the growing trend in illicit drug trade and its connection with money laundering in Nigeria. The study interrogated perceptions regarding the efficacy of legal and institutional framework engendered to combat the menace as well probing the causes and impact of this interminable monster. The paper adopted doctrinal method where it relied on primary and secondary sources of data. Necessitated by the dire need of interrogating perceptions of people regarding the perplexing dynamics of phenomenon of drug trafficking and its ties with money laundering activity, the study was complimented with empirical methodology which deployed descriptive statistics wherein simple frequencies and percentages was used in interpreting the trends based on data elicited from 389 questionnaires administered. The study found inter-alia, that there are regulatory and enforcement gaps, weak financial vigilance in tracking the undesirable synthesis between illicit drug enterprise and money laundering. It found finally that there is inadequate international cooperation in the collective resolve to combat the heinous monster of drug trafficking in Nigeria. The study recommended inter-alia, the need to strengthen applicable legal and policy framework through conscious reforms, enhancing law enforcement capacity, promoting financial vigilance and rejig robust international cooperation in the quest to tame the interminable surge in drug trafficking in Nigeria.

Keywords: Drug Trafficking, Impact, Perceptions, Legal Framework, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The incidence of illicit drug dealing which started as local affairs has taken a new turn over the years which saw it moving away from domestic and local business confined to national territories¹ to one of the world's illicit businesses and laundering activity. It has not only assumed global phenomenon which has attracted global attention,² but as one of the most prevalent criminal activities.³ Nigeria is in the spotlight of the international community because of the activities of syndicates who have been implicated in drug related offences and in the drug market system⁴. Nigerians drug traffickers as others worldwide, are involved in the crime because it generates huge profits than any other forms of trafficking (human trafficking or smuggling of goods).⁵ It has been reported that the estimated profits derived from illicit narcotics amounted to \$600 billion annually and that up to \$1.5 trillion drug money is laundered through seemingly legitimate enterprises.⁶

The proceeds of the illicit drug trade is laundered in multifarious ways which itself is an international phenomenon proscribed by various international legal instruments and local legislations as drug trafficking

¹ M Collison, *Police, Drug and Community* (Free Association Books, New York, 1995)

² E Georges ‘The European Union and Drugs: Trafficking, Consumption and Strategies’. <<http://www.nd.gov.hk/en/conference-proceedings/Drugs-proBK-part1/Drugs-proBK-Georges.pdf>> accessed on 14 February 2015

³ ESAAMLG Report ‘Laundering the Proceeds of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (ESAAMLG Region)’. <<http://esaamlg.org/userfiles/DRUG-TRAFFICKING-REPORT.pdf>> accessed on 17 August 2015.

⁴ A Rotimi ‘Drug Trafficking and Penal Policy in Nigeria’. (1998) 22(2) *International Journal of Comparative Justice* 12

⁵ ESAAMLG Report (n3)

⁶ UNODC 2010 World Drug Report

itself. Thus, drug trafficking and the resultant laundering of its proceeds constitutes ‘twin crimes,’⁷ which have serious impact on the Nigerian State. The combined effect of drug trafficking on the State is tantamount to an attack on the government.⁸

In spite of the existence of avalanche of international legal instruments⁹ and local legislation,¹⁰ drug traffickers continue to employ different stratagem in carrying on with the illicit trade as evident by the number of arrests made within and outside the country and the seizure of large quantity of narcotics and psychotropic substances made by law enforcement agencies.¹¹ The upsurge in the crime portends grave danger with negative impacts on the Nigerian State. It is in this connection that the proposed study focuses on drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria as well as the impact of the crimes on the Nigerian State.

The rate of drug trafficking in Nigeria has assumed an alarming dimension. Almost each day passing, a major seizure of narcotics is made and reported by mass media involving Nigerians and foreigners using the Nigeria as transit route. Drug trafficking is a money criminal activity which is committed with a view to earning illegal wealth. Because of the global nature of the two inextricable crimes, the international bodies and organizations have evolved series of international legal frameworks through conventions and treaties to combat the crimes which member states are enjoined to ratify and comply with, through legislative processes. The existence of these international legal frameworks notwithstanding, Nigerians drug trafficking trade appears to have defied measures in eradicating or drastically reduce the menace. Rather drug traffickers and their syndicates have continued to alter and expand their trafficking networks.¹² They are assisted by Nigerian money launderers operating global networks to launder and even repatriate the proceeds of narcotics trade into the country financial system and in some cases re- repatriate the proceeds outside the shores of the country.¹³

The high demand for hard drug and the high returns generated by the illicit trade is responsible for the rapid growth in drug trafficking in Nigeria as evidenced by the series of arrest and seizure made by the main anti-narcotic agency- National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, in various international airports and borders within the country,¹⁴ assisted by other law enforcement agencies like Nigerian Custom Service, Police, Immigration officials and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission.¹⁵

Despite the existence of all these agencies and seeming synergy among them in dealing the twin crimes, coupled with the measures of detection put in place, the international bodies as well as United States through their various agencies have variously blacklisted Nigeria as a hub of drug trafficking. The International Narcotics Control Board in 2007¹⁶ and 2013¹⁷ Reports, the defunct United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)¹⁸ 2007 Report all blacklisted Nigeria as a major hub and springboard for international drug trafficking by criminal syndicates.¹⁹ As if that was enough, the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs²⁰ in its International Narcotics Strategy Report 2014 blacklisted Nigeria as a transit country for heroin and cocaine destined for Europe and to some extent United States.²¹ FATF in its 2011 Annual Report, while referring to Nigeria stated that ‘criminals and terrorists organizations take advantage of the country’s location, porous borders, weak laws, corruption, lack of enforcement and poor socio-economic

⁷ SO Ering, ‘Trans-border Crime and Its Socio-economic Impact on Developing Economies’. <<http://www.krepublishers.com/02-journals/JSSA/JSSA-02-000-11-Web/JSSA-02-2-000-11-Abst-PDF/JSSA-02-2-11037>> accessed on 11 November 2020. Ering describes drug trafficking as the twin sister of money laundering.

⁸ C D Guymon ‘International Legal Mechanisms for Combating Transnational Organized Crime: The Need For Multilateral Convention’. (2000) 18 (1) *Berkley Journal of International Law* 12

⁹ United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, 1988; United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crimes 2000.

¹⁰ National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act 1989, Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act 2011 as amended

¹¹ See This Day Newspaper (Nigeria) December 31 2014. NDLEA arrested 14 suspects at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos with 33.655kg of narcotic drugs.

¹² A F Akindutire and others ‘Drug Abuse and Trafficking in Nigeria: Causes, Effects and Control Strategies’.

<<http://ircab.foundation.com/journals/SMS/DRUG%20ABUSE%20AND%20TRAFFICKING%20IN%20NIGERIA.pdf>> accessed on 10 August 2021.

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ This Day Newspaper (Nigeria) December 31, 2014.

¹⁵ J O Nnabuko and others ‘International image Implications of Nigerian Involvement in Hard Drug Trafficking and Public Relations Antidote for the Problem’ (2013) Vol.3 No.3 *Public Policy and Administration Research* 10.

¹⁶ This Day Newspaper (Nigeria) March 5, 2008

¹⁷ <<http://www.incb.org/documents/publications/press-Release/PR2013/03-Regional-Highlights.E.pdf>> accessed on 10 April 2021

¹⁸ UNDCP was merged and replaced by UNODC

¹⁹ WANEP (West Africa Networks for Peacebuilding), ‘Drug Trafficking: An Alarming Human Security Threat’ (Sept 12, 2007).

<<http://www.wanep.org/wanep/attachment/articles/89/pb-wa-sept07.pdf>> accessed on 17 March 2020

²⁰ It is an agency of the United States of America (USA)

²¹ <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/222881.pdf>> accessed on 17 March 2020

conditions to launder the proceeds of crime'²². It continued to blacklist Nigeria till the eventual passage and assent by the former President Goodluck Jonathan to Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act 2013.²³

The impact of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity Nigeria is colossal.²⁴ It affects the entirety of the socio-legal, economic and political psyche of the nation. This development is further exacerbated by daunting challenges that impede legal and policy responses geared at combatting the monstrous escapade of drug trafficking and its resultant Siamese twin of money laundering. It is against this background that this paper seeks to interrogate perceptions on the vexed issues regarding the impact of this illicit criminal enterprise as well as the challenges in Nigeria from the standpoint of legal empiricism. At the end, the article made series of recommendations as a way forward.

METHODS

To achieve the set aim and objectives of the proposed study mixed or hybrid method of legal research will be adopted. The choice of these methods of research is to ensure that legal issues and problems surrounding the phenomena of impact of the crimes of drug trafficking and money laundering are thoroughly investigated from the standpoints of legal analysis and opinion of stakeholders. These methods entail both doctrinal and empirical approaches. The doctrinal method is evidently library based. This study relies on primary and secondary sources of data.

In addition to the doctrinal method, the study was supplemented by empirical study where 389 structured questionnaires were administered to ease data collection from respondents who were purposively selected from diverse backgrounds. The empirical variant is based on analysis of raw data from respondents. The data drawn from doctrinal method were carefully scrutinized and systematized using conceptual and thematic interpretations. With respect to the empirical component, data sources were analyzed using descriptive statistics where simple frequencies and percentages were adopted to demonstrate the extent of significance of the tested variables.

DISCUSSIONS

Impact of Drug Trafficking as a Money Laundering Activity in Nigeria The impact of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria cannot be underestimated²⁵It transcends beyond socio-economic boundaries to the legal psyche of the country amongst the comity of nations. The social impact of drug trafficking is multidimensional and far reaching with devastating effect on the individuals, families and the entire communities.²⁶ Drug addiction is one of the most noticeable signs of illicit drug trade due to increased availability of drugs which results in higher consumption.²⁷ There are also health challenges such as mental illness, cardiovascular disorder and increased risk of infectious diseases such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIVs) associated with drug use fanned by illicit drug trafficking.²⁸ Drug use also affects family relationship leading to strained relationship as evidenced in family breakdowns and disintegration.²⁹ Addicts as family members may become violent and most times abdicate their family responsibilities. In some other instances addicts may engage in criminal activities leading to increased rate of crime and other social vices.³⁰ The violence associated with drug trafficking has the tendency of disrupting the peaceful cohesion of host communities. Ill-gotten funds from drug trafficking can be employed in compromising public institutions through bribery and corruption.³¹

²² FATF Report 2011 <<http://nigeriabestforum.com/generltopic>> accessed on 17 March 2020

²³ Vanguard Newspapers (Nigeria) February 27, 2013.

²⁴ EN Stephen, "Drug Trafficking and Threat to National Security" (2026) 12 (12) *Canadian Social Science* 1-11 DOI:3968/8974

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ Lengsi Manurung, "The Impact of Drug Abuse on Family and Society" (2024) 2(2) *Majority Science Journal* 239-244 DOI:<https://doi.org/10.61942/msj.v2i2.168>.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

²⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime-The Social Impact of Drug Abuse , Number 2 (1995) 1-49

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ RA Udama, "The Influence of Corruption in Curbing Illicit Drug Activities in Nigeria" (2012) 1(9) *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development* 252-272

As far as the Nigerian legal system is concerned, the activities of drug traffickers pose serious challenge to the law enforcement agencies as well as the judiciary.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section of the paper presents the study's findings using both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. It begins with an overview of the sample's demographics, followed by an examination of key variables through simple frequencies and percentages. All statistical analyses are conducted at a 95% confidence interval. The quantitative results are presented first, aligning with the study's research objectives. The chapter concludes with a discussion of qualitative findings derived from data collected through unstructured questionnaires.

1-Response Rate

Table I: Response Rate

Response rate	Sample size	Percentage (%)
Received questionnaires	389	97.7
Missed questionnaires	10	2.5
Unstructured interview	59	100
Total	399	100

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 1 indicates that out of the total 399 participants, 389 returned their questionnaires, resulting in a 97.7% response rate. In contrast, only 10 questionnaires were unreturned, accounting for 2.5% of the sample. Additionally, 59 key informant interviews were conducted. This notably high response rate indicates robust engagement among respondents and diminishes the likelihood of nonresponse bias, thereby enhancing the reliability and credibility of the study's findings.

The minimal number of missed questionnaires suggests that the data set is robust and comprehensive enough to support meaningful analysis and bolster the representativeness of the results. This response rate exceeds the 50% mark suggested for social science research which by implication applies to legal research.³² Its elevated level strengthens both the reliability and generalizability of the results, mitigates potential non-response bias, and enhances the overall representativeness of the sample.

2-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

An examination of respondents' demographic attributes provided essential context for interpreting the study's findings. This section highlights participants' backgrounds such as age, gender, marital status, employment status, educational level and location (rural or urban) and provides how these characteristics contribute to a deeper understanding of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria in terms of impact.

3-Gender of Respondents

Table II: Respondent's Distribution by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	250	64.3 %

³² DI Pielsticker and MRI Hiebl, 'Sample Size Guidelines for Business Research: A Review' (2020) *Journal of Business Research*.

Female	139	35.7%
Total	389	100%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table II indicates that of the 399 respondents, 250 (64.3%) are male and 139 (35.7%) are female, suggesting a moderate gender imbalance. In the realm of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria, this difference may reflect varying levels of awareness or perception between male and female youths. It could also signal potential gaps in legal, regulatory, and policy framework as well as the socio-legal impact by gender.

Accordingly, efforts to improve awareness of the imperativeness of strengthening legal and policy framework aimed at curbing the dreaded monster of drug trafficking in Nigeria should consider targeted strategies to address any gender disparities and ensure inclusive policy measures that effectively tame the menace appropriately by ensuring gender sensitivity.

4-Age Group of Respondents

Table III: Respondents' Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	70	18%
26-45	201	51.7%
46-60	112	28.8
60 and above	16	4.1%
Total	389	100%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table III showed that most respondents are between the ages of 26 and 45 years old. Specifically, 18% are aged 18–25, 51.77% are aged 26–45, 28.8% are aged 46–60 with only 4.1% in the 60 years and above age bracket. These figures suggest that mid- twenties to mid-forties represent a crucial demography of awareness on issues of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria possibly reflecting greater need of focusing enlightenment of legal and policy targets among that age group.

Conversely, the small percentage of 60 years and above respondents may indicate potential barriers such as diminishing interest on drug use and in fact issues of drug trafficking generally. These findings underscore the importance of tailoring legal and regulatory frameworks, as well as policy measures, to accommodate the unique perception of various age segments in terms of engendering strategies at curbing the menace of drug trafficking in Nigeria.

5- The Level of Education of Respondents

Table IV: Education Level of the Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percentage
SSCE	50	12.8%
OND	106	27.2%
Degree	76	19.5%
Masters	139	35.7%
PhD	18	4.6%
Total	389	100%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table IV indicated that a fairly substantial portion of respondents (35.7%) hold a master's degree, followed by a smaller but notable group (4.6%) with a PhD qualification. Meanwhile, 27.2 % possess Ordinary National Diploma (OND), 12.8 % completed secondary school with Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE).

These findings imply that most participants have relatively high educational attainment, which may correlate with both greater awareness of and access to issue of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria. Responses elicited from people with higher education levels often align with the global awareness of the socio-legal impact of drug trafficking and the inextricable ties with the twin menace of money laundering especially having regards to its connection with terrorism financing.

6-Employment Status

Table V: Employment Status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage
Student	120	30.8%
Civil Servant	67	17.2%
Unemployed	15	3.8%
Public Servant	153	39.3%
Business	34	8.7%
Total	389	100%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table V reveals that the majority of respondents (39.3%) are employed on full-time as public servant, followed by portions (30.8%) who are students. Civil servants make up 17.2%. A smaller group (3.8%) identifies as unemployed. The study also reveals that business people attained (8.7%) of the response rate. These variations in employment status suggest differing interests and access levels to information regarding drug trafficking and the related menace of money laundering in Nigeria.

Full-time employees such as civil servants, public servants and those in engaged in businesses may have shown appreciable interests as indicated above based on the socio- legal impact of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity. These findings underline the importance of crafting legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks that support diverse employment circumstances among teeming population.

7- Location of Respondents

Table VI: Location of Respondents

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Urban	260	66.8
Rural	129	33.2%
Total	389	100%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table VI indicates diverse geographical representation among respondents. The largest proportion of the sample population (66.8%) is in the urban settings, followed closely by those in rural areas (33.2%). This data highlights the need for all encompassing target of both urban and rural population when addressing the issue of drug trafficking in Nigeria.

It is evident that the challenges associated with the ever-increasing rise in the incidence of drug trafficking does not respect boundaries of cities and villages. For instance, respondents in the urban areas may have a

higher level of awareness and access to information regarding drug trafficking as most of the institutions amplified with the authority to regulate same are located within the City Centres. Additionally, most of the transit points like airports, seaports and motor parks are not situated within rural areas. These factors might have influenced the divergent pattern of responses.

Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

This study adopted both quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches, conducted at univariate level. At the univariate level, descriptive statistics (simple frequencies and percentages) were used. The table below displays the mean response ranges and their interpretations, which apply to both individual items and overall grand means:

Descriptive Statistics for Perception on Awareness and Knowledge of Drug Trafficking as a Money Laundering Activity in Nigeria

Table VII: Perception on Awareness and Knowledge

Statements	Response	Significance
Have you heard of drug trafficking and money laundering	YES 382 (98.2%) NO 17(4.4%)	Yes
Have you or someone you know been affected by drug trafficking or money laundering?	SA 200(51.4%), A 175(44.9%), N 9(2.3%), UA 5(1.3%)	Strongly Agree
How familiar are you with the concept of money laundering	YES 226(58.1%) NO 163(41.9%)	Yes

SA – Strongly Agree; A-Agree; N-Neutral; SU- Strongly Unaware; UA-Unaware

Primary Data, 2025

From Table VII, it can be deduced that there is widespread knowledge of drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria, the proportion of 98% to 4.4% clearly shows that there is sufficient enlightenment regarding the concerns expressed regarding drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria. The high percentage of agreement on a two scale (Yes -98%) suggests that the issue of drug trafficking and money laundering are well known. This highlights the importance of maintaining intuitive legal and policy responses to abate or ameliorate the ills associated with illicit use of drugs

The second statement which points to personal use or awareness of illicit involvement in drug trafficking as a money laundering activity indicates that a high percentage of agreement (SA-51.4%) in conjunction with a close range of percentage (A-44.9%) clearly show that there is unanimity of perception on awareness and knowledge of persons affected by the negative impact of illicit use of drug trafficking in Nigeria.

With respect to the third statement which intends to unravel knowledge of money laundering as an offshoot of illicit engagement in drug trafficking in Nigeria. Statistics on a two-scale rate of Yes or No indicates that high percentage of 58.1% in comparison to a fairly closer percentage of 49.1% clearly shows that majority of the sample population are aware of the concept of money laundering signifying a close tie with drug trafficking. The not-too far gap in the statistical findings underscores the need to enthrone a more robust and elaborate enlightenment targeted at the teeming population.

Descriptive Statistics for Perception on Perceived Impact of Drug Trafficking as a Money Laundering Activity in Nigeria

Table VIII: Perception on Impact of Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering Primary Data, 2025

Statements	Response Frequency (Percentage)	Significance
How serious do you think drug trafficking and money laundering are in Nigeria	NS 0(0 %), SS10 (2.6%), S 39(10%), VS 80(20.6%), ES 280(71.9)	Extremely Serious
How has drug trafficking and money laundering affected national economy	NS 0(0 %), SS10 (2.6%), S 39(10%), VS 280(71.9%), ES 80(20.6%)	Very Serious
How has drug trafficking and money laundering affected national security	NS 0(0 %), SS10 (2.6%), S 39(10%), VS 80(20.6%), ES 280(71.9)	Extremely Serious

NS: Not serious,; NS: Somewhat Serious; S: Serious; VS: Very Serious; ES: Extremely Serious

From Table VIII which tests perception of impact of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria measured on five scale ratings show that with respect to the first statement which focused on the enormity or seriousness of the impact of illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria, there is strong agreement denoted by the scale of *extremely serious* (ES) 71.9% that the impact is enormous. The table also reflects zero percentage with respect to whether the impact is not a serious concern.

On the measurement of impact of drug trafficking as it affects national economy, the table clearly indicates that there is a strong agreement amongst the sampled population that the impact is very serious (VS) as denoted by 71.9%. This finding totally aligns with precious study which showed that one of the most significant impacts of drug trafficking is its negative obstruction of the nation's economy.³³ As can be gleaned from the table, the lower percentage of responses with respect to the statement shows that there is widespread consensus that the impact on the economy is indubitable.

National security as an impact of drug trafficking is quantitatively measured by the third statement. On five sale ratings, the table indicates that the impact of drug trafficking on national security is extremely serious (ES) as typified by a high percentage of 71.9% as opposed to whether it is not serious with a percentage of 0%. The table also shows even distribution of lower responses of 20.6% for rating of very serious, 10 % - serious, 2.2% -somewhat serious indicating a consensus that the impact of drug trafficking on national security is not to be underestimated. The statistical findings align with previous studies that drug trafficking as a money laundering activity tends to undermine national security.³⁴

Descriptive Statistics for Perception of Effectiveness of Legal Framework for Drug Trafficking as Money Laundering Activity in Nigeria

Table IX: Perception of Effectiveness of Legal and Policy Framework

Statements	Response Frequency (Percentage)	Significance
How effective do you think the legal framework in combating drug trafficking and money laundering are in Nigeria	NE 96(24.7 %), SE 190 (48.8%), E 75(19.3%), VE 25 (6.4%), EE 30(0.8%)	Somewhat Effective

³³ T Uduo & O Ibiba, The Evolution of Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: Analysing Law Enforcement Strategies and their Impact on Combating the Menace, (2024) 29 (9) (6) *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 13-32 at 15.

³⁴ Olasupo & ME Olusegun, "Institutional and Legal Mechanisms for Combating Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment" (2021) 5(5) *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* 202-207;

EN Stephen, "Drug Trafficking and the Threat to Nigerian National Security" (2016) 12(12) *Canadian Social Science* 1-11 at 5 DOI: 10.3968/8974 <<http://www.csananda.net/index.php/css/article/view/8974>> accessed on 2nd March 2025.

How confident are you in the Nigerian government's ability to address drug trafficking and money laundering	VU 66 (16.9%), UL105(26.9%), L190(48.8%) , ML 20(5.4%), EL 8(2.1)	Likely
What do you think is the most effective way to combat drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria	<p>T: Tighten porous border security 14 (3.5%)</p> <p>A: Adopting technology –driven monitoring 95(23.1%)</p> <p>S: Strengthening legal and policy framework 100(25.7%)</p> <p>E: Engage in rigorous public enlightenment 20 (5.1%)</p> <p>E: Encouraging good governance 180(46.3%)</p>	

Primary Data, 2025

From Table IX, the descriptive statistics tests respondents' perception on the effectiveness of the applicable legal and policy framework aimed at curbing the menace of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria. Drawing from the first statement, the study revealed on a five scale as shown above that out of the sampled population, a high proportion of 190 respondents rated at 48.8% agreed that the legal framework is somewhat effective indicating that there are grey areas that needs improvement in order for the legal regimes to be all encompassing and efficacious. This is corroborative of the fact that a fairly high proportion of respondents (24.7%) are of the view that the legal framework is not effective indicating a conclusion that their effectiveness in curbing the menace of drug trafficking is still a work in progress.

What is more, the generally low responses of 19.3 % for effective, 6.4% for very effective (VF) and 0.8% for extremely effective (EE) confirmed that beyond the avalanche of legal framework, more is still expected to amplify the potency of response to the high problematic issue of drug trafficking in Nigeria. This finding clearly aligns with the view of learned writers that the alarming rate of drug trafficking in Nigeria cannot be attributed to paucity of legal and institutional framework.³⁵

With respect to the second statement regarding respondents' perception on prospects of the legal framework in addressing the challenges of drug trafficking in Nigeria, 190 respondents which represent 48.8% are of the view that it is likely that the legal framework could address the menace. 16.9% of the respondents had expressed very unlikely, 26.9% very likely, 5.4% most likely and 2.1% extremely. The cumulative deduction points to the conclusion that there is no doubt on the ability of the legal framework to curb the menace notwithstanding the variations in their respective responses as indicated in this study.

In terms of practical policy response to the problem of illicit drug trafficking as a money laundering activity, the third statement clearly test perception on identifying the most effective institutional strategies. 46.3% of the sampled population which represents 180 respondents agrees that encouraging good governance could be a panacea towards curbing the issue of drug trafficking in Nigeria. This finding aligns itself with previous studies which implicated bad governance as one of the drivers of the interminable surge in illicit drug trafficking in Nigeria. ³⁶There is also fairly high proportion of the respondents namely; 25.7% and 20.1% who believed that apart from ensuring good governance, other intuitive strategies such as the strengthening of policy initiatives in the form of adoption of technology –driven monitoring techniques respectively would help in no small measure at curtailing the menace of drug trafficking in Nigeria.

³⁵ TI Akomolade and EK Adetifa, "Analysis of some of the Challenges in Combating Drug Trafficking in Nigeria" (2021) 7(5) *International Journal of Law* 57-67 at 57.

³⁶ *Ibid* at 59.

Descriptive Statistics for Perception of Causes and Strategies of Drug Trafficking as Money Laundering Activity in Nigeria

Table X: Perception on Causes and Strategies

Statements	Response Frequency(Percentage)	Significance
What do you think is the root cause of drug trafficking or money laundering transactions?	<p>Poverty 61 (15.6%)</p> <p>Unemployment 28(7.1%)</p> <p>Insecurity 0(0%)</p> <p>Corruption 200(51.4%)</p> <p>Weak laws and institutions 100(25.7%)</p>	
How has the government and citizens work together to combat drug trafficking or money laundering?	<p>Establish effective institutions 260 (66.8%)</p> <p>Support community-based initiatives 75 (19.3%)</p> <p>Promote inter-agency collaborations 32(8.2%)</p> <p>Provide resources and training 13 (3.3%)</p> <p>Promote international cooperation 9 (2.3%)</p>	

Primary Data, 2025

From Table X empirically investigates perception on causes and strategies of combating drug trafficking in Nigeria, the study revealed based on the first statement that on a scale of five perceived root causes of drug trafficking, a high proportion of the sampled population of 51.4 % wholly agreed by implicating corruption as the chief root cause. This finding agrees that the root causes of drug trafficking are intertwined in many respects, 25.7% insisted that it is as a result of weak laws and institutions, poverty was recorded as constituting 15.6% and unemployment accounts for 7.1%. The investigation reveals that insecurity is not one of the causes of drug trafficking in Nigeria seldom that it may constitute one of the negative impacts.

With respect to the second statements, the table indicates that on a five scale ratings on how to combat drug trafficking as a money laundering activity in Nigeria, majority of the sample population (66.8%) are unanimous that establishing effective institutions is key to sustaining and winning the fight against drug trafficking as a money laundering activity, 19.3% are in favours of supporting community based initiatives, 8.2 % are of the view that there is need to promote inter-agency collaboration and 3.3% insists on government providing adequate resources and training of personnel is key. On a 2.3% response rate, the study finding also highly highlighted the importance of enhancing international cooperation.

These findings underscores the centrality of corruption in fueling drug trafficking and emphasize institutional strengthening as the most widely used countermeasure.

Observations and Findings

Drug trafficking remains one of the most significant organized crimes worldwide, with far-reaching socio-economic and security implications.³⁷ In Nigeria, drug trafficking is closely linked to money laundering, as traffickers employ various financial schemes to conceal the illicit proceeds of their trade. This empirical study explores the intersection of drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria, identifying the effectiveness or otherwise of regulatory and institutional frameworks, the impacts and the challenges faced in combating these intertwined crimes. Through qualitative and quantitative analyses, the study examines law enforcement responses, and the impact of international collaborations in addressing drug trafficking as a money laundering activity.

Nigeria is a signatory to several international and regional instruments aimed at combating drug trafficking and money laundering activities as discussed extensively in chapter three of this study. These instruments seek to complement domestic efforts put in place in Nigeria. While some of the domestic frameworks are true replica of the international mechanisms, Nigeria has gone a step further and indeed achieved giant strides in modeling local institutions with elaborate mandates to curtail the menace of drug trafficking with significant gains.³⁸

The study conducted an empirical investigation of respondents perception on arrays of issues including perception of knowledge and awareness of the menace of drug trafficking as a money laundering activity, perception on impact of the menace on Nigerian State and perception on causes and strategies aimed at combating the challenges of drug trafficking in Nigeria. The result of the investigation using descriptive statistics in the form of simple frequencies and percentages were discussed in chapter four of this work.

Consequently this study in the light of the research objectives set out in chapter one found as follows:

Regulatory and Enforcement Gaps:

This study found that despite the existence of international, regional and domestic anti- drug trafficking and money laundering (AML) laws, enforcement remains weak due to corruption, inadequate resources, and lack of inter-agency coordination. Corruption significantly hampers the enforcement of these laws in Nigeria.³⁹ Judicial challenges are notable, with some judges displaying skepticism or hostility toward anti-corruption prosecutions.⁴⁰ This judicial attitude undermines the effectiveness of legal proceedings against drug trafficking as a money laundering activity. With respect to issue of inadequate resources, the effectiveness of Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies is further compromised by limited budgets and staffing constraints. These agencies often operate without the necessary financial and human resources, hindering their ability to conduct thorough investigations and enforce AML laws effectively.⁴¹

Furthermore, effective enforcement of anti-drug trafficking laws requires seamless collaboration among various agencies. However, in Nigeria, there is a notable lack of coordination among key institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the NDLEA, the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and gaps in the enforcement process arising chiefly from duplication of responsibilities.⁴²

Addressing these challenges is crucial for enhancing the enforcement of anti- drug trafficking and money laundering laws in Nigeria and effectively combating resultant nefarious impact.

³⁷ C Nwannennaya and TF Abiodun, "Illicit Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: Obstacle to National Development and Security" (2017) 5(1) *Journal of Political Sciences and Public Affairs* 230, DOI: 10.4172/2332-0761.1000230.

³⁸ For example National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for Foods and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to mention but a few.

³⁹ EEO Alemika, *Drug Trafficking and the Law in Nigeria* (University of Nigeria Press, 2018)

⁴⁰ Eze & Njoku 2019.

⁴¹ T Uduo & O Ibiba, "The Evolution of Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: Analysing Law Enforcement Strategies and their Impact on Combating the Drug Menace" (2024) 29(9) *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 13-32 at 27.

⁴² TI Akomolede & EK Adetifa, "Analysis of Some of the Challenges in Combating Drug Trafficking in Nigeria" (2021) 7(5) *International Journal of Law* 57-67 at 21.

Weak Financial Vigilance

Some Nigerian financial institutions inadvertently facilitate money laundering arising from illicit drug trafficking due to insufficient compliance mechanisms, weak Know-Your-Customer (KYC) policies, and limited expertise in identifying suspicious transactions linked to drug proceeds. The absence of hi-tech vigilance capacity of financial institutions clandestinely aids in the free laundering of proceeds of illicit drug trafficking making it near impossible for effective investigation, arrest and prosecution of culprits.

Inadequate International Cooperation

Due to transnational nature of drug trafficking, collaborative cooperation with international agencies such as United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), have yielded some success in disrupting drug-financed money laundering networks. However, Nigeria's reputation as a high-risk jurisdiction limits its access to international financial systems for the purpose of intelligence sharing and provision of technical assistance, training and resources.⁴³ This strategy is yet to be optimally exploited in Nigeria.⁴⁴

Immense Socio-Economic and Security Implications

This study found that the proceeds from drug trafficking fuels corruption, terrorism financing, and economic instability, posing a serious threat to national development and security *inter-alia*.⁴⁵ Illicit drug trade also exacerbate other social problems such as increase in crime rate, persistent spread of infectious diseases such as HIV and the likes, breakdown of families ties.⁴⁶ Similarly proceeds from illicit drug trade have been severally implicated as a contributing factor to terrorism financing, constituting a gigantic quantum of a “fifth of organized crime revenues”.⁴⁷

Complexity in Prevalence and Methods of Illicit Drug Trafficking

Drug traffickers in Nigeria utilize multiple channels to launder money, including real estate investments, shell companies, trade-based money laundering, and the use of cryptocurrency. Informal financial systems such as the Hawala system are also exploited to transfer illicit funds across borders. Perpetrators of this illicit enterprise devise several sophisticated methods to evade arrest, seizure and evade prosecution.⁴⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS

Flowing from the above study findings, the following recommendations are apt in addressing sundry concerns raised with regards to engendering effective fight against drug trafficking as a money laundering activity with the aim of addressing enormous challenges that has impacted anti- drug trafficking regime in Nigeria.

Strengthening Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

Nigeria should update and enforce its anti-drug trafficking laws more rigorously, ensuring that drug-related money laundering activities are explicitly criminalized and adequately prosecuted. There is an imperative for the anti-drug trafficking laws to be made severe in order to deal effectively with emerging trends and strategies deployed by perpetrators of this illicit enterprise. The facts still remains that there are sufficient laws against drug trafficking in Nigeria, yet the problem still persists hence the need to be more resolute in the prescription of stiffer penalties in the nature of fines or imprisonment or both to serve utilitarian objective of deterrence.

⁴³ UNDOC, 2021.

⁴⁴ Akomolede & Adetifa (n 4) 21.

⁴⁵ Ibid at 19 and 21.

⁴⁶ Lengsi Manurung (n26)

⁴⁷ Yashasvi Chandra, “Illicit Drug-Trafficking and Financial Terrorism: The Case of Islamic State, Al Qaeda and their Affiliate Groups” (2020) 14(1-2) Jan-June, *Journal of Defence Studies* 69-91 < <https://idsa.demosl-03.rvsolutions.in/system/files/jds/14-2-2020-illicit-drug-financing-of-terrorism-ychandra.pdf>> accessed on 31st March 2025.

⁴⁸ R Olawale, “The Dynamics of Drug Trafficking in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects (2017) 26(1) *African Security Review* 81-104.

Furthermore, constitutional constraint still persists in the course of domestication and ratification of foreign instruments in Nigeria. This legislative tight fist posture continues to hamper effective alignment with international standards in view of the cumbersome procedure of ratification and eventual domestication of treaties as outlined in Nigerian Constitution.⁴⁹

Enhancing Law Enforcement Capabilities

More resources should be allocated to NDLEA, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and other relevant agencies to improve investigative capacity, surveillance, and prosecution of offenders. One of the daunting challenges facing law enforcement agencies and institutions on drugs in Nigeria is poor funding which ultimately connect to lack of efficient training, manpower and facilities

Financial Sector Vigilance

Banks and other financial institutions should strengthen their anti-money laundering laws compliance mechanisms beaming more search lights on proceeds of illicit drug trade by improving know your customer (KYC) protocols, and enhance reporting systems for suspicious transactions to regulatory authorities.

Public Awareness and Community Engagement

Nationwide campaigns and enlightenment should educate citizens about the dangers of drug trafficking and money laundering, fostering a culture of zero tolerance towards illicit financial activities. Ignorance is one of the underlying factors that contribute significantly to growing rise in the illicit drug trade. Good should aggressively pursue the path of creating sufficient aware of the negativities associated with drug trafficking and the laundering of its illicit proceed. Community based initiatives aimed at combating the menace of drug trafficking has the capacity of addressing the root causes of drug trafficking through robust education on the alternative social services and engagement that offer clear and sustainable alternatives to monetary fantasies associated with drug trade.

Strengthening International collaboration and Partnerships

Nigeria should deepen its collaboration with international bodies to improve intelligence-sharing, extradition agreements, and financial monitoring to disrupt transnational drug networks. This recommendation is apt in the light of the findings of this study that international cooperation and collaboration has yielded enormous gains in the context of interception of drug shipments and wholesome dismantling of drug trafficking networks.⁵⁰

Investing in Technology-Driven Solutions

In order to stem the growing trends in the complexity of the methods and prevalence of drug trafficking and laundering of its proceeds, Nigerian government should leverage artificial intelligence, blockchain analysis, and forensic accounting tools to track and dismantle illicit financial flows linked to drug trafficking.⁵¹

CONCLUSIONS

The article highlighted the intricate relationship between drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria, underscoring the urgent need for a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach to combat these crimes. While significant efforts have been made through regulatory frameworks and international collaborations, gaps in enforcement, financial oversight, and inter-agency cooperation persists. Addressing these challenges requires political will, technological advancements, and continuous capacity-building for enforcement agencies. By implementing robust measures and fostering global partnerships, Nigeria can effectively mitigate the threats posed by drug-related money laundering and secure its economic and national security interests.

⁴⁹ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As amended) s12.

⁵⁰ UNDOC (2021). See also Nigerian Agencies Unite to Combat Organized crime with Support from INTERPOL and AFRIPOL, 6th February 2025, <https://www.interpol.int/News-and-Events/News/2025/Nigerian-agencies-unite-to-combat-organized-crime-with-support-from-INTERPOL-and-AFRIPOL?utm_source=chatgpt.com> accessed on 1st April 2025.

⁵¹ C Nwannennaya & TF Abiodun (n1).

A multi-faceted approach to solving the problem of drug trafficking and its concomitant effect on money laundering is inevitable. As a matter of fact, it would include combining legal reforms with institutional strengthening, technological advancement and encouraging more vibrant international collaborations has the capacity to address headlong the dreaded menace.

Contribution To Knowledge

The study innovatively adopted hybrid methodology in investigating the socio-legal conundrum associated with the interminable surge in illicit drug trafficking and its connection with the siamese crime of money laundering in Nigeria thereby bringing new vista into the search for multi-faceted solutions to the intractable monster. In the same vein, the elaborate and case sensitive literature review undertaken in this study contributes significantly to body of existing knowledge thus widening new perspectives on the subject.

Area Of Further Research

Owing to some limitations in this study especially those relating security concerns and issue of stigma which impacted on the capacity of the researcher to engage directly with those negatively affected by indiscriminate use of illicit drug, there is need to conduct a multi- disciplinary investigation that would effectively unearth some of the underlying issues and challenges in the fight against drug trafficking in Nigeria.

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