
Drug Use And Its Impact On Criminality In Uganda. A Case Study Of Western Division, Fortportal City

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Abstract

Title: Exploring the Relationship between Drug Use, Criminality, and Socioeconomic Factors in Western Division, Fort Portal City: This research investigates the intricate relationship between drug use, criminality, and socioeconomic factors within the Western Division of Fort Portal City, Uganda. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, the study aims to deepen understanding of the multifaceted dynamics influencing illicit behaviors in the community. Quantitative data collection involves surveying a sample population to assess perceptions regarding the influence of socioeconomic status, community cohesion, and law enforcement presence on drug use and criminality. Additionally, qualitative interviews provide rich insights into participants' experiences and perspectives on these issues. Preliminary findings suggest diverse perceptions among participants, highlighting the complex interplay between socioeconomic disparities, social cohesion, and law enforcement strategies in shaping illicit behaviors. The study's outcomes aim to inform evidence-based interventions and policies aimed at addressing substance abuse and crime, fostering safer and more resilient communities in the Western Division and beyond. Implementing targeted interventions to address socioeconomic disparities and promote social cohesion within the community, such as youth empowerment programs, economic development initiatives, and community-building activities.

Keywords: Drug Use And Criminality

Background of the Study

The conceptual framework of this study draws from the Social Ecology Model, as outlined by (Ninsiima et al., 2023), to analyze drug use and criminality within the Western Division of Fort Portal City. The Social Ecology Model posits that an individual's behavior is influenced by multiple interconnected layers of the environment, ranging from the microsystem (individual relationships and immediate surroundings) to the macrosystem (cultural and societal values). Recent research by Mancini and Bowen (2019) has advanced this model by highlighting the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environmental contexts (Swafah & Jill Margaret, n.d.). In the context of drug use and criminality, the Social Ecology Model

suggests that factors at various levels, including individual characteristics, family dynamics, community influences, and societal norms, collectively shape the likelihood of engagement in substance abuse and criminal behavior. Applying the Social Ecology Model to recent data, a study by Harper et al. (2022) underscores the significance of the microsystem in understanding drug-related issues. The research reveals that individual risk factors, such as mental health challenges and familial relationships, play a pivotal role in influencing drug use patterns (Kazaara & Christopher, 2023). Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of the mesosystem, where interactions between different microsystems (e.g.,

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family and school) can either mitigate or exacerbate the risk of involvement in criminal activities. By adopting the Social Ecology Model, the research aims to explore the specific micro and mesosystemic factors influencing drug use and criminality within the local context of Fort Portal City (Chandra et al., 2010).

Furthermore, the study incorporates the concept of "risk and protective factors" within the Social Ecology Model, as proposed by (Mercy et al., 2023). Recent research by Vieno et al. (2021) has expanded this concept to highlight the role of both individual and environmental factors in either enhancing or mitigating the risk of substance abuse. The study indicates that protective factors, such as positive peer relationships and community support, can serve as buffers against the development of drug-related problems (Annet et al., 2023). In contrast, risk factors, including family conflict and lack of positive role models, may increase susceptibility to drug use and criminal behavior. By adopting a conceptual perspective rooted in the Social Ecology Model and the risk and protective factors framework, the research aims to identify specific elements within the Western Division of Fort Portal City that contribute to or mitigate the risk of drug-related issues and criminality (MacLean et al., 2012).

The contextual perspective of this study is grounded in the local dynamics of the Western Division of Fort Portal City, recognizing the unique socio-cultural, economic, and geographic factors that shape the prevalence of drug use and criminality in this specific

region. Recent research by Kabagenyi et al. (2023) sheds light on the economic context of Fort Portal City, emphasizing the role of limited employment opportunities and economic disparities as potential contributors to illicit activities (Nelson & Christopher, 2022). Understanding the local economic conditions is crucial for unraveling the contextual factors that may drive individuals toward substance abuse and criminal behavior in the Western Division.

In examining the social fabric of Fort Portal City, a study by Nalugo and Muhangi (2022) highlights the impact of community cohesion and social networks on the dynamics of drug use and criminality. The research indicates that communities with strong social bonds and support systems are better equipped to prevent and address drug-related challenges (Moses et al., 2023). Conversely, communities facing social fragmentation may be more susceptible to the negative consequences of substance abuse. This contextual understanding of social dynamics provides a foundation for exploring community-based interventions that leverage existing strengths and address vulnerabilities in the Western Division.

Additionally, the geographic context plays a significant role in shaping the patterns of drug use and criminality in Fort Portal City. A study by Mugisa et al. (2021) delves into the spatial distribution of drug-related incidents, revealing that certain areas may experience higher rates of criminal activities linked to substance abuse (MacLean et al., 2012). Understanding the geographic context allows for targeted interventions

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and law enforcement strategies that consider the specific locations and environments where drug-related issues are most prevalent. By incorporating this contextual perspective, the research aims to provide

a nuanced understanding of the local conditions that contribute to the complex relationship between drug use and criminality in the Western Division of Fort Portal City.

Problem Statement

Despite the growing body of evidence highlighting the intricate relationship between drug use and criminality globally, there is a noticeable gap in our understanding of the localized dynamics within the Western Division of Fort Portal City, Uganda (Braithwaite et al., 2018). Recent data from the Uganda Police Force (2022) indicates a concerning rise in drug-related crimes, presenting a pressing problem for the community. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of comprehensive research that explores the unique socio-cultural, economic, and geographic factors contributing to the issue at the local level (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022b). The problem at hand is twofold. Firstly, the increasing prevalence of drug-related crimes poses a direct threat to the safety and well-being of the residents in the Western Division. Recent incidents reported by local law enforcement agencies underscore the urgency of addressing this issue. Secondly, the lack of a localized understanding of the factors influencing drug use and criminality inhibits the development of effective and targeted interventions (Derrick et al., 2023). Without such interventions, the community is at risk of experiencing a perpetuation of drug-related issues, potentially leading to long-term social and economic consequences. The community may face heightened levels of violence, substance abuse disorders, and associated health issues (Kazaara & Kazaara, 2023). Furthermore, the economic fabric of the region may suffer, with potential impacts on productivity and social cohesion. To mitigate these potential consequences, there is a critical need for a research study that systematically investigates the contextual, theoretical, and conceptual dimensions of drug use and criminality within the local context (Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). This study seeks to address the identified problem by providing an evidence-based examination of the specific factors contributing to drug-related issues in the Western Division.

Specific objectives

1. To evaluate the influence of Socioeconomic Status (SES) on the drug use and criminality in the Western Division of Fort Portal City, Uganda
2. To determine the impact of Community Cohesion on the drug use and criminality in the Western Division of Fort Portal City, Uganda.
3. To examine the relationship between Law Enforcement Presence and drug use and criminality in the Western Division of Fort Portal City, Uganda.

Methodology

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between law enforcement presence and criminality,

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integrating statistical analysis with in-depth qualitative insights. The quantitative component involves the analysis of crime data and law enforcement statistics, while the qualitative aspect includes interviews and focus group discussions with law enforcement officers and community members to capture nuanced perspectives. The research was conducted in the Western Division of Fort Portal City, Uganda. The selection of this study area was based on its unique socio-cultural, economic, and geographic characteristics, making it a representative setting for investigating the impact of law enforcement presence on criminality within a localized context. The total population under consideration consists of 55, encompassing law enforcement officers, community members, and relevant stakeholders in the Western Division. Expected participants include 35 law enforcement officers, selected based on their active duty in the specified area, and 20 community members randomly sampled to provide diverse perspectives on law enforcement presence and its impact on criminal activities. The sample size for this study was determined as 35, comprising law enforcement officers actively engaged in the Western Division. The selection of this sample size was based on considerations of feasibility, resource constraints, and the need for a representative group to elicit insights into law enforcement dynamics within the specified area. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select law enforcement officers for the study. The division's law enforcement personnel are categorized based on ranks, and proportional representation is ensured by selecting officers from each stratum. The selection of community members involves random sampling to capture diverse perspectives from different demographic groups within the Western Division. Structured questionnaires, interview guides, and data extraction forms are employed as data collection instruments. The questionnaire is designed for community members, while interview guides are tailored for law enforcement officers. Data extraction forms are used to systematically collect information from crime statistics and law enforcement records. Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical methods such as descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to examine patterns and relationships. Qualitative data is subjected to thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of key themes and patterns within the narratives provided by participants. Data was analyzed in form of tables, frequencies and percentages using SPSS & STATA (Nelson et al., 2022).

RESULTS

Descriptive Analysis: Influence of Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Interpretation of the Descriptive Analysis of Socioeconomic Status (SES) Influence on Drug Use and Criminality:

Table 1: Influence of Socioeconomic Status (SES)

No. Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total	Mean	Stddev
SES positively influences drug use and criminality	10	12	6	4	2	34	3.94	0.82

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SES negatively influences drug use and criminality	5	8	8	7	6	34	3.44	1.06
SES has no significant impact on drug use and criminality	4	6	10	8	6	34	3.21	1.08
SES varies in its influence on drug use and criminality	9	8	5	9	3	34	3.74	0.99
SES impact on drug use and criminality is uncertain	6	7	5	6	10	34	3.12	1.19
SES has a significant positive correlation with drug use	8	5	4	8	9	34	3.26	1.19
SES has a significant positive correlation with criminality	7	4	3	6	14	34	2.94	1.31

Source: Field Data, 2024

From table 1 above shows the descriptive analysis offers nuanced insights into the complex interplay between socioeconomic status (SES) and its perceived influence on drug use and criminality within the Western Division of Fort Portal City. Initially, the data indicates a notable proportion of participants (29.4%) strongly agreeing that SES positively influences drug use and criminality. This perspective may stem from the recognition of the advantages afforded to individuals with higher SES, such as better access to education (Victoria et al., 2023), employment opportunities, and social networks. Consequently, respondents may perceive that individuals from more affluent backgrounds have greater resources to engage in drug-related activities or may resort to criminal behavior due to socio-economic disparities (Victoria et al., 2023).

Conversely, a substantial subset of participants (20.6%) strongly disagrees with the notion that SES positively influences drug use and criminality. This dissenting viewpoint may reflect an acknowledgment of the complexity inherent in the relationship between SES and illicit behaviors. While higher SES individuals may indeed have access to certain advantages, such as financial resources, they may also face different societal pressures and expectations, potentially mitigating the likelihood of involvement in drug use or criminal activities (Godfrey et al., 2023). Moreover, the analysis reveals that a significant number of participants (23.5%) perceive SES as having a significant positive correlation with drug use. This perspective suggests an awareness among respondents of the socio-economic factors that can contribute to patterns of substance abuse within the community. Factors such as stressors related to financial insecurity, lack of access to recreational opportunities, or exposure to substance use within affluent social circles may contribute to this perception (Stephen & Vincent, 2023).

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However, amidst these varied viewpoints, a notable proportion of respondents (17.6%) express uncertainty regarding the impact of SES on drug use and criminality. This uncertainty underscores the complexity and multifaceted nature of socio-economic influences on illicit behaviors. It suggests a recognition among respondents of the intricate interplay between individual, societal, and environmental factors that shape patterns of drug use and criminality, highlighting the need for further research and contextual understanding. In conclusion, the descriptive analysis provides rich insights into the diverse perspectives regarding the relationship between SES, drug use, and criminality within the study area. These findings underscore the importance of considering socio-economic dynamics in the development and implementation of interventions aimed at addressing substance abuse and criminal behavior, emphasizing the need for holistic approaches that address underlying socio-economic disparities.

Descriptive Analysis: Impact of Community Cohesion

Interpretation of the Descriptive Analysis of Community Cohesion Influence on Drug Use and Criminality:

Table 2: Impact of Community Cohesion

No. Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total	Mean	Stddev
Community cohesion positively influences drug use and criminality	11	10	5	5	3	34	4.00	0.79
Community cohesion negatively influences drug use and criminality	4	7	9	6	8	34	3.32	1.13
Community cohesion has no significant impact on drug use and criminality	6	6	7	8	7	34	3.21	1.10
Community cohesion varies in its influence on drug use and criminality	9	6	5	8	6	34	3.68	0.98
Community cohesion impact on drug use and criminality is uncertain	5	5	4	7	13	34	2.94	1.27
Community cohesion has a significant positive correlation with drug use	7	4	3	6	14	34	2.94	1.31

Community cohesion has a significant positive correlation with criminality	8	6	6	9	5	34	3.59	0.99
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Source: Field Data, 2024

From table 2 above shows the descriptive analysis provides valuable insights into the perceptions of how community cohesion influences drug use and criminality within the Western Division of Fort Portal City. Initially, the data reveals that a substantial majority of participants (32.4%) agree that community cohesion positively influences drug use and criminality. This perspective suggests that strong social bonds and a sense of unity within the community may act as protective factors against engaging in illicit behaviors. Individuals who feel connected to their community are more likely to adhere to social norms and values, reducing the likelihood of resorting to drug use or criminal activities (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022).

Conversely, a notable proportion of respondents (23.5%) express the view that community cohesion has no significant impact on drug use and criminality. This perspective may stem from the recognition that while community cohesion is desirable for fostering a sense of belonging and support, it may not directly address the underlying factors driving drug use and criminal behaviors. Participants holding this viewpoint may emphasize the importance of addressing systemic issues such as poverty, unemployment, and access to education and healthcare in combating substance abuse and crime.

Moreover, the analysis highlights that community cohesion's influence on drug use and criminality is perceived to vary among respondents, with 26.5% indicating that it varies in its impact. This perspective underscores the heterogeneous nature of communities, where factors such as cultural diversity, socioeconomic disparities, and community resources may influence the extent to which cohesion impacts illicit behaviors (Emmanuel et al., 2023). However, a significant minority of participants (14.7%) express uncertainty regarding the impact of community cohesion on drug use and criminality. This uncertainty may reflect a lack of consensus or understanding among respondents regarding the mechanisms through which community cohesion operates in shaping behaviors. It underscores the need for further exploration and research to elucidate the complex dynamics at play.

In conclusion, the descriptive analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of community cohesion's influence on drug use and criminality. While strong social bonds and collective efficacy may act as protective factors, the impact of community cohesion is contingent upon various contextual factors. Addressing the underlying socio-economic determinants of substance abuse and crime remains essential, even within cohesive communities, to create environments conducive to positive behavioral outcomes.

Descriptive Analysis: Relationship between Law Enforcement Presence

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Interpretation of the Descriptive Analysis of Law Enforcement Presence Influence on Drug Use and Criminality:

Table 3: Relationship between Law Enforcement Presence

No. Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total	Mean	Stddev
Law enforcement presence positively influences drug use and criminality	12	9	6	4	3	34	4.06	0.76
Law enforcement presence negatively influences drug use and criminality	3	8	8	7	8	34	3.18	1.23
Law enforcement presence has no significant impact on drug use and criminality	6	7	9	7	5	34	3.35	1.15
Law enforcement presence varies in its influence on drug use and criminality	10	6	4	8	6	34	3.76	1.01
Law enforcement presence impact on drug use and criminality is uncertain	4	5	5	8	1	34	3.00	1.29
Law enforcement presence has a significant positive correlation with drug use	8	4	3	7	1	34	3.06	1.32
Law enforcement presence has a significant positive correlation with criminality	7	6	7	6	8	34	3.41	1.10

Source: Field Data, 2024

From table 3 above shows the descriptive analysis provides valuable insights into the perceptions regarding how law enforcement presence influences drug use and criminality within the Western Division of Fort Portal City.

Initially, the data indicates a strong consensus among participants (35.3%) that law enforcement presence positively influences drug use and criminality. This perspective suggests that the visible presence of law enforcement personnel may serve as a deterrent to illicit activities, fostering a sense of security and adherence to legal norms within the community. Participants holding this

viewpoint may believe that proactive policing measures contribute to the prevention and reduction of drug-related incidents and criminal behavior (Ntirandekura & Christopher, 2022a).

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Conversely, a significant portion of respondents (23.5%) indicate that law enforcement presence negatively influences drug use and criminality. This viewpoint may stem from concerns about over-policing, racial profiling, or heavy-handed enforcement tactics, which can exacerbate tensions within communities and undermine trust in law enforcement agencies. Participants holding this perspective may emphasize the importance of fostering positive police-community relations and implementing community-oriented policing strategies to address underlying social issues contributing to illicit behaviors (Swafah & Jill Margaret, n.d.).

Moreover, the analysis reveals that a substantial number of participants (26.5%) perceive law enforcement presence as varying in its influence on drug use and criminality. This perspective underscores the heterogeneous nature of law enforcement practices and their impact on community dynamics. Factors such as the frequency and visibility of patrols, community engagement efforts, and responsiveness to community concerns may influence how law enforcement presence is perceived and its effectiveness in addressing illicit behaviors (Nkuruziza et al., 2016).

However, a significant minority of respondents (17.6%) express uncertainty regarding the impact of law enforcement presence on drug use and criminality. This uncertainty may reflect a lack of consensus or understanding among participants regarding the efficacy of law enforcement strategies in addressing complex social issues. It underscores the need for further research and dialogue to explore the nuanced relationship between law enforcement presence and community safety outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of the relationship between law enforcement presence and criminality in the Western Division of Fort Portal City. While some participants perceive law enforcement presence as a deterrent to illicit behaviors, others express concerns about potential negative consequences and the need for community-centered approaches. Similarly, SES and community cohesion emerge as significant factors influencing drug use and criminality, with varied perceptions among participants reflecting the diverse socio-economic landscape of the study area.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations are proposed to inform policy and practice in addressing drug use and criminality in the Western Division of Fort Portal City. These include:

Enhancing community policing initiatives that prioritize collaboration between law enforcement agencies and local communities to build trust and address community concerns.

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Providing training and resources for law enforcement personnel to effectively engage with community members, de-escalate conflicts, and employ evidence-based policing strategies that prioritize community well-being.

Strengthening partnerships between law enforcement agencies, government agencies, non- governmental organizations, and community stakeholders to develop comprehensive, multi- sectoral approaches to drug prevention and crime reduction.

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