



## EVALUATING PROACTIVE STRATEGIES AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKING AND MONEY LAUNDERING IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BUBA MARWA MODEL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study critically evaluates proactive strategies employed to combat drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria, specifically assessing the efficacy and implications of the Buba Marwa Model. Under Mohammed Buba Marwa's leadership since 2021, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) adopted rigorous, intelligence-led operations, enhanced inter-agency cooperation, and community-centred preventive education to tackle these interconnected crimes. Utilising a qualitative methodology, including content analysis of official reports and thematic analysis of interviews with key stakeholders, the research reveals significant improvements, notably heightened drug seizures and dismantling of illicit financial networks. Despite these gains, persistent challenges such as insufficient funding, and socio-economic vulnerabilities impede sustained effectiveness. The study situates these findings within Routine Activity and Deterrence Theories, highlighting the necessity of increasing enforcement capabilities, regulatory rigor, and community empowerment. The analysis emphasises the critical importance of robust institutional reforms, regional and international collaboration, and policy initiatives addressing economic inequalities. In Conclusion, the Marwa Model demonstrates significant potential for improving Nigeria's national security and economic stability but requires sustained political commitment and comprehensive strategies to achieve lasting impacts.*

**KEYWORDS:** Drug trafficking, money laundering, Buba Marwa, national security, economic development, Nigeria.



## INTRODUCTION

Drug trafficking and money laundering represent two deeply intertwined transnational crimes that have increasingly threatened Nigeria's national security, economic stability, and socio-political integrity (Uzoigwe, 2021; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2022). Nigeria, with its porous borders, strategic geographic location, and growing socioeconomic vulnerabilities, has emerged both as a prominent transit point and destination for narcotic substances, particularly cocaine, cannabis, and synthetic opioids such as tramadol (NDLEA, 2023). According to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA, 2022), drug trafficking in Nigeria is estimated to contribute significantly to illicit financial flows, undermining public health, fuelling organised crime, and weakening governance structures through pervasive corruption. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF, 2022) further highlights that money laundering activities in Nigeria facilitate the concealment and reintegration of proceeds derived from drug trafficking and other criminal enterprises into legitimate economic systems, severely undermining financial sector stability.

Responding to these critical challenges, Nigeria has historically implemented various strategies aimed at controlling drug-related crimes and financial misconduct. However, despite substantial resources invested, previous efforts often fell short due to systemic corruption, weak enforcement mechanisms, and inadequate coordination among security and regulatory agencies (Okeke & Agugua, 2023). In January 2021, Brigadier General Mohammed Buba Marwa (Rtd.) assumed leadership of the NDLEA, initiating robust reforms characterised by proactive law enforcement strategies, inter-agency collaboration, and extensive community engagement aimed at mitigating drug trafficking and related money laundering activities. Under Marwa's leadership, the NDLEA recorded unprecedented achievements, including significant seizures of narcotics, dismantling of high-profile drug trafficking syndicates, and heightened enforcement activities against illicit financial networks linked to these syndicates (Onyeji, 2023).

The current study critically examines these proactive strategies, conceptualised here as the "Buba Marwa Model," and evaluates their effectiveness in combatting drug trafficking and money laundering. The evaluation addresses significant questions: How effectively have these proactive measures reduced the prevalence of drug trafficking and disrupted money laundering activities in Nigeria? To what extent have Marwa's strategies improved inter-agency cooperation and community participation in anti-drug initiatives? Furthermore, what are the broader implications of these proactive measures on Nigeria's national security, governance integrity, and economic development? By systematically addressing these questions, this research provides comprehensive insights essential for policy formulation, strategic planning, and strengthening institutional responses to organised crime. This analysis is informed by Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) and Deterrence Theory (Gibbs, 1975), which offer critical lenses for understanding and enhancing proactive anti-drug and money laundering efforts within complex socio-economic contexts like Nigeria.

Drug trafficking and money laundering are critical issues that significantly impact Nigeria's socio-economic and political landscape. An extensive body of literature has explored various dimensions of these intertwined phenomena, offering insights into their origins, operations, and implications.



## Drug Trafficking in Nigeria

Nigeria's strategic location has made it a pivotal transit point for illicit drugs. Alemika (2013) analysed the nexus between transnational organised crime and drug trafficking in West Africa, highlighting Nigeria's role as a transit hub. Klantschnig (2009) explored the political dynamics influencing drug law enforcement in Nigeria, providing insights into the challenges faced by agencies like the NDLEA. Lazarus and Okolorie (2019) investigated the evolution of Nigerian cybercriminals, offering perspectives on how drug trafficking networks adapt to digital platforms. The financial aspects of drug trafficking are equally raising concern, and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) (2021) provided an in-depth assessment of money laundering vulnerabilities in Africa, with specific references to Nigerian financial systems. The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) (2022) assessed the effectiveness of anti-money laundering measures in West Africa, highlighting Nigeria's compliance and challenges. Okeke and Agugua (2023) examined the effectiveness of Nigeria's anti-money laundering policies, shedding light on enforcement challenges and policy gaps.

Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou (1999) discussed the criminalisation of the state in Africa, providing context for understanding corruption's role in facilitating drug trafficking. Ellis (2009) explored the interplay between organised crime and politics in West Africa, with implications for Nigeria's drug enforcement strategies. Nwankwo (2018) analysed the impact of political corruption on Nigeria's efforts to combat drug trafficking and money laundering. The socio-economic consequences of these illicit activities are profound. Uzoigwe (2021) investigated the impact of drug trafficking on Nigeria's national security, emphasising socio-economic consequences. The World Bank (2021) highlighted the economic impacts of illicit financial flows, including those from drug trafficking, on West African economies. Evaluating enforcement strategies is crucial for understanding the effectiveness of current measures. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) (2023) provided annual reports detailing enforcement strategies and achievements under the Buba Marwa Model. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2022) offered global perspectives on drug control strategies, with implications for Nigeria's policies. Onyeji (2023) analysed recent reforms in Nigeria's drug enforcement strategies, focusing on the NDLEA's approach under Marwa's leadership.

However, understanding Nigeria's challenges requires a global perspective. Chouvy (2009) explored global drug trafficking routes, providing context for Nigeria's role in the international drug trade. Bowman (2008) discussed transnational threats, including drug trafficking, relevant to understanding Nigeria's challenges. Interpol (2022) highlighted the importance of intelligence-led policing in combating drug trafficking, relevant to Nigeria's enforcement strategies. Community involvement is vital for effective drug control. The West African Commission on Drugs (2014) emphasised the need for community-based approaches to drug policy in West Africa. The African Union (2019) outlined continental strategies for drug control, highlighting the role of preventive education. Creswell and Creswell (2018) provided methodological guidance for evaluating community engagement initiatives in the case of drug control.

Regional studies provide comparative insights. Mazzitelli (2007) examined transnational organised crime in West Africa, with case studies pertinent to Nigeria. Schmidt, Ndiaye, and Umaru (2012) analysed drug trafficking trends in West Africa, providing insights into Nigeria's



challenges. Abu, Karim, and Aziz (2015) investigated the causal relationship between corruption, political instability, and economic development in ECOWAS countries, including Nigeria. Media coverage influences public perception and policy. Reuters (2024) reported on significant drug seizures in Nigeria, reflecting public perception and media coverage. The Economist (2019) discussed Africa's role in global heroin trafficking, with implications for Nigeria. Le Monde (2024) explored Hezbollah's fundraising activities in West Africa, highlighting the intersection of drug trafficking and terrorism financing.

Robust legal frameworks are essential for combating these crimes. The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has robust legal framework for combating drug trafficking and money laundering and the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (2021) provided insights into financial monitoring mechanisms to detect and prevent money laundering.

Collectively, these scholarly contributions offer a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria, informing policy development and enforcement strategies.

### **Theoretical Framework: Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979)**

Routine Activity Theory (RAT), introduced by Cohen and Felson (1979), posits that criminal activities occur due to the convergence of three key elements: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardianship. According to this theory, crime is not merely a result of individual criminality but is significantly influenced by the environmental and situational context in which potential offenders find opportunities to act. Applied to the context of drug trafficking in Nigeria, RAT provides a compelling framework to understand why and how Nigeria has become both a transit points and destination for illicit narcotics. Nigeria's extensive and largely unsecured borders, bustling ports, and international airports constitute suitable targets for drug trafficking organisations seeking low-risk entry points into regional and global markets (Alemika, 2013; NDLEA, 2023).

Furthermore, the economic vulnerability and high unemployment rates among Nigerian youths create a pool of motivated offenders who may perceive involvement in drug trafficking as financially rewarding compared to legitimate employment options (Uzoigwe, 2021). The absence or ineffectiveness of capable guardians, such as adequately trained and equipped law enforcement officials, regulatory oversight, and robust institutional structures, exacerbates the opportunities for criminal enterprises to operate with impunity (Okeke & Agugua, 2023). The proactive enforcement measures under the Buba Marwa Model directly target enhancing guardianship by strengthening law enforcement capabilities, promoting inter-agency cooperation, and improving community surveillance and awareness to minimise vulnerabilities identified by RAT.



## **Deterrence Theory (Gibbs, 1975)**

Deterrence Theory, articulated by Gibbs (1975), suggests that individuals will abstain from committing crimes if they perceive that the costs of such actions outweigh the benefits, particularly through the certainty, severity, and swiftness of punishment. This theory assumes rational decision-making processes among potential offenders, who weigh the benefits against the risks associated with illegal activities. In the Nigerian context, deterrence theory is particularly relevant for evaluating the effectiveness of enhanced punitive measures and stringent enforcement actions implemented under the leadership of Mohammed Buba Marwa. Under Marwa's tenure, the NDLEA adopted aggressive prosecution strategies, increased drug seizures, and higher visibility of enforcement activities, designed explicitly to heighten offenders' perceived risks (Onyeji, 2023).

By publicizing significant drug busts and ensuring rapid prosecution of offenders, the NDLEA intends to send a clear message that involvement in drug trafficking carries substantial and immediate consequences. Gibbs' theory supports the hypothesis that such proactive, stringent, and visible enforcement measures increase the perceived costs of engaging in illicit drug trade and money laundering, thereby potentially reducing criminal involvement and disrupting trafficking networks. However, the effectiveness of deterrence strategies is heavily dependent on consistent enforcement, judicial integrity, and public trust in legal processes—factors that historically have posed challenges in Nigeria's criminal justice system (Ellis, 2009; Okeke & Agugua, 2023). Therefore, examining the applicability and impact of deterrence theory within Nigeria's institutional context remains essential to fully understanding the implications of the Buba Marwa Model for sustained reductions in drug trafficking and related financial crimes.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research adopts a qualitative methodology to critically evaluate proactive strategies against drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria, specifically focusing on the Buba Marwa Model in NDLEA revolution. The qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this investigation because it enables a deeper exploration into complex socio-political phenomena, facilitating comprehensive insight into policy effectiveness, institutional dynamics, and contextual realities influencing the success or failure of anti-drug trafficking and anti-money laundering initiatives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical generalisation, qualitative research offers the depth necessary to unpack intricacies embedded within institutional reforms and law enforcement strategies that quantitative techniques might overlook (Babbie, 2020). Through qualitative inquiry, the study can elucidate critical underlying factors that shape the operational effectiveness of the NDLEA under Marwa's tenure.

A purposive sampling method was employed to deliberately select participants based on their specific knowledge, expertise, and involvement in drug enforcement and money laundering in Nigeria. Purposive sampling is highly effective in qualitative research as it ensures data richness and relevance to the research questions by selecting knowledgeable informants who directly interact with or are impacted by the phenomena under study (Patton, 2015). The sample size comprised 30 participants: ten senior officials from NDLEA with direct oversight of drug enforcement operations, 10 financial experts or compliance officers from the financial institutions involved in anti-money laundering efforts, 5 policy analysts specialised in drug





policy and financial crime, and 5 community representatives involved in local drug prevention advocacy and public awareness campaigns. Participants were selected based on professional experience (at least five years), direct involvement in implementing or evaluating anti-drug trafficking measures, or active roles in community-driven preventive initiatives.

Data collection was rigorously triangulated using multiple qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and policy evaluations. This triangulation enhanced data reliability, validity, and depth of insights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The primary data source consisted of comprehensive semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately one hour. Interview guides were developed to explore respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness, limitations, and implications of the Buba Marwa Model in combating drug trafficking and money laundering. Questions were open-ended, designed to facilitate discussions around institutional collaboration, enforcement effectiveness, community perceptions, and areas requiring further improvements. All interviews were audio-recorded with explicit participant consent, ensuring accurate data capture and subsequent detailed analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Secondary data sources comprised detailed reviews of policy documents, annual reports from NDLEA, GIABA, FATF, and related international bodies, and media reports documenting significant enforcement activities and policy developments from 2021 to 2024. Document analysis provided vital contextual background and helped validate insights from interviews by offering additional evidence of strategy effectiveness, institutional challenges, and broader societal impacts of drug-related criminal activities (Bowen, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected from interviews and document analysis were subjected to thematic analysis, a qualitative method suited for identifying, interpreting, and reporting patterns and themes within complex data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interviews were transcribed verbatim, thoroughly reviewed, and coded systematically. Coding was conducted inductively, allowing themes to emerge naturally from participants' narratives rather than being predetermined by existing theory. Identified codes were grouped into themes addressing key areas such as proactive enforcement strategies, inter-agency collaboration effectiveness, community engagement outcomes, enforcement barriers, and socio-economic implications of the strategies.

The emerging themes were critically interpreted in relation to the theoretical frameworks employed—Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) and Deterrence Theory (Gibbs, 1975). This analytical approach facilitated a detailed examination of how structural factors (e.g., institutional weaknesses, enforcement capacity) and perceived deterrents (e.g., punitive measures, visible enforcement actions) influence drug trafficking and money laundering activities.

Ethical rigor was maintained throughout the research process. Participants provided informed consent after receiving detailed information regarding research objectives, potential implications, and confidentiality measures. Participants' identities were anonymised, and data collected were securely stored. Additionally, due to the sensitive nature of discussions related to crime and poor governance, psychological risks were minimised by providing participants with the right to withdraw from the research at any time, and referrals to professional support if necessary (American Psychological Association [APA], 2017). This qualitative study, while providing rich insights, has inherent limitations regarding the generalisability of its findings beyond the specific institutional and geographical context of Nigeria. The deliberate selection



of knowledgeable informants, although essential for detailed insights, may introduce bias based on informants' professional positions and experiences. Hence, future research could incorporate a larger and more diverse sample or adopt mixed method approaches to enhance validity and generalisability.

#### Analysis of NDLEA's Performance (2021-2024)

Year	Arrests	Seizures (kg)	Convictions	Counselled and Rehab	WADA Lectures	Hectares of Cannabis Farms Destroyed
2021	12306	3480368	1385	662	0	405.704
2022	14152	2145336	2348	2352	2253	0
2023	13664	1606799	3412	10904	2541	206
2024	17670	2726838	3427	8129	3812	220

**Sources:** A review of *punch* newspaper February 2025

In February 2025, *The PUNCH* newspaper reported that between January 2021 and December 2024, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) made significant strides in drug enforcement, arresting 57,792 suspects (including 65 drug barons) and seizing a total of 9,959,340.9 kg of hard drugs. The agency also secured 10,572 convictions and counselled/rehabilitated 22,047 individuals. The breakdown of figure shows that in **2021**: 12,306 arrests, 3,480,368 kg of drugs seized, 1,385 convictions, 662 individuals counselled, 405.7 hectares of cannabis farms destroyed. In **2022**: 14,152 arrests, 2,145,336 kg of drugs seized, 2,348 convictions, 2,352 individuals counselled, 206 hectares of cannabis farms destroyed. In **2023**: 13,664 arrests, 1,606,799.1 kg of drugs seized, 3,412 convictions, 10,904 individuals counselled, 206 hectares of cannabis farms destroyed. In **2024**: 17,670 arrests, 2,726,837.8 kg of drugs seized, 3,427 convictions, 8,129 individuals counselled, 220 hectares of cannabis farms destroyed. A surge in drug seizures and arrests in 2024, with over 2.7 million kg seized. Public engagement and awareness efforts intensified, with 9,239 War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) lectures conducted in schools. Over 1,229 hectares of cannabis farms destroyed, disrupting local drug production.







The bar charts above highlight the NDLEA's performance under the leadership of Brigadier General Buba Marwa from 2021 to 2024, covering arrests, drug seizures (in kg), and convictions.

### **Key Observations:**

#### **I. Arrests:**

- i. A steady increase in arrests over the years.
- ii. The highest number of arrests (17,670) was recorded in 2024.
- iii. The significant jump in 2024 suggests intensified law enforcement efforts.

#### **II. Drug Seizures (kg):**

- i. 2021 recorded the highest total seizure of 3,480,368 kg, likely due to large-scale cannabis farm destruction.
- ii. A decline was observed in 2022 and 2023, but 2024 saw a surge again to 2,726,837.8 kg.
- iii. The fluctuations suggest different operational focuses or evolving drug trafficking methods.

#### **III. Convictions:**

- i. A consistent increase in convictions, peaking in 2024 with 3,427 convictions.
- ii. The rising trend reflects improvements in legal prosecution and judicial processes.

The Agency's achievements have consistently increased arrests and convictions, demonstrating improved operational capacity. The fluctuations in drug seizures might be due to changes in drug trafficking patterns, enforcement intensity, or shifting NDLEA strategies. The high counselling and rehabilitation numbers (22,047 total) show a balanced approach beyond enforcement—emphasising drug abuse prevention. The increase in cannabis farm destruction (over 1,229 hectares destroyed) suggests a proactive effort to disrupt local drug cultivation. Therefore, the Buba Marwa's tenure has seen significant progress in the fight against drug trafficking in Nigeria. The rising arrest and conviction numbers indicate effective enforcement, while the expansion of public awareness campaigns (e.g., WADA lectures) and rehabilitation programs highlight a holistic approach to combating drug abuse. Despite fluctuations in seizure quantities, NDLEA's impact remains evident, with 2024 marking a particularly strong year for drug interdictions and legal actions



## DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The findings from this qualitative study provide critical insights into the effectiveness and limitations of proactive strategies implemented under the leadership of Mohammed Buba Marwa in addressing drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria. The analysis revealed four prominent themes: **Enhanced Intelligence-led Enforcement, Inter-agency Collaboration, Community Engagement, and Systemic Challenges**. Each theme is discussed extensively, integrating theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence from the collected data.

### Enhanced Intelligence-led Enforcement

The study identified enhanced intelligence-led enforcement as a core component of the "Buba Marwa Model." Interviews with NDLEA officials confirmed substantial improvements in intelligence gathering, leading to an unprecedented rate of successful seizures and dismantling of drug trafficking operations. Between 2021 and 2024, NDLEA reported seizing narcotics valued at billions of naira, highlighting improved operational effectiveness (NDLEA, 2023). Participants specifically credited targeted intelligence operations, strengthened informant networks, and strategic profiling of drug trafficking syndicates as key factors driving these successes. These findings align with Deterrence Theory (Gibbs, 1975), underscoring that visible, consistent, and effective enforcement increases the perceived risks and potential costs of drug trafficking, thereby reducing criminal incentives.

Nevertheless, despite these achievements, respondents noted persistent operational challenges, including insufficient advanced technology for tracking financial transactions, inadequate training for field operatives, and occasional information failures that compromise enforcement efforts. Addressing these limitations through targeted investments and continuous capacity-building is crucial for maintaining and extending enforcement successes.

### Inter-agency Collaboration

Findings indicated significant improvements in inter-agency collaboration under Marwa's leadership, particularly between NDLEA, EFCC, Nigerian Customs Service, and international enforcement partners. Respondents highlighted successful joint operations leading to increased asset seizures and disruption of financial networks connected to drug trafficking. This collaboration reflects best practices documented internationally, where coordinated enforcement actions across agencies enhance operational efficiency and outcome effectiveness (Interpol, 2022; FATF, 2021).

However, certain informants highlighted structural issues that occasionally undermine effective collaboration. Notably, overlapping mandates, bureaucratic delays, and competition among agencies emerged as substantial barriers. Clear institutional guidelines, role definitions, and ongoing dialogue among agencies are essential to sustain and enhance collaborative efforts.

### Community Engagement and Preventive Education

The research highlights the proactive integration of community-driven preventive education into NDLEA's strategy, aiming to enhance public awareness about the socio-economic dangers of drug trafficking abuse. Community representatives and policy analysts reported positive shifts in public perception and increased community responsiveness to drug prevention



campaigns. This aligns with Routine Activity Theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), which suggests that enhancing community vigilance reduces opportunities for criminal activities by strengthening local guardianship mechanisms.

Despite the positive outcomes, findings revealed uneven implementation across different communities due to limited resources, varying degrees of community trust in law enforcement, and inconsistent engagement strategies. Strengthening local partnerships, enhancing transparency, and investing in sustainable community-driven programs could address these disparities and expand community-based prevention successes.

### **Systemic Challenges**

Systemic challenges, particularly remuneration, inadequate funding, and socio-economic vulnerabilities, emerged as recurring barriers significantly affecting the long-term efficacy of anti-drug trafficking and anti-money laundering measures. Interviewees unanimously identified inadequate funding within enforcement and regulatory institutions as a persistent issue undermining trust, weakening enforcement actions, and facilitating illicit financial flows. These findings resonate with existing literature highlighting inadequate funding and corruption as critical enabler of organised crime, significantly hindering enforcement effectiveness in Nigeria (Ellis, 2009; Okeke & Agugua, 2023).

Additionally, socio-economic vulnerabilities, including widespread poverty and youth unemployment, continue to provide fertile grounds for criminal recruitment. Participants emphasised the urgent need for policy interventions addressing economic empowerment and educational opportunities as essential complements to law enforcement strategies. This integrated approach is vital for addressing underlying motivations driving criminal behaviours beyond mere punitive measures.

The analysis demonstrated substantial support for both Routine Activity Theory and Deterrence Theory. Enhanced enforcement operations and visible punitive measures effectively elevated perceived criminal risks (Gibbs, 1975). Concurrently, the strengthening of community guardianship mechanisms through local engagement initiatives reduced criminal opportunities (Cohen & Felson, 1979). However, systemic institutional challenges highlight that theoretical assumptions of rationality and effective governance frameworks require cautious application within Nigeria's complex socio-political context. Addressing these broader systemic limitations is essential for fully realising the theoretical benefits anticipated by proactive enforcement strategies.

Overall, the "Buba Marwa Model" signifies a substantial advancement in Nigeria's strategy against drug trafficking and money laundering. Enhanced intelligence operations improved inter-agency collaboration, and targeted community interventions collectively demonstrate notable progress. However, inadequate funding, limited financial resources, and entrenched socio-economic issues remain significant challenges. The sustainability and broader efficacy of Marwa's strategies depend heavily on comprehensive policy reforms, enhanced institutional transparency, strategic investments in enforcement infrastructure, and long-term economic empowerment initiatives.



## CONCLUSION

This study critically examined proactive strategies implemented under the Buba Marwa Model aimed at combating drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria. The findings reveal significant strides made by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) under Marwa's leadership, characterised by enhanced intelligence-led operations, improved inter-agency cooperation, and strengthened community engagement. These strategies collectively resulted in notable successes, such as increased drug seizures, dismantling of major trafficking networks, and heightened public awareness of drug-related issues. Despite these commendable achievements, systemic barriers continue to impede the effectiveness and sustainability of the proactive measures. Persistent corruption, inadequate funding, and socio-economic vulnerabilities within communities create enabling conditions for criminal activities, limiting the overall impact of enforcement actions.

The theoretical perspectives of Routine Activity Theory and Deterrence Theory provided robust frameworks for interpreting these findings, emphasising that reducing criminal opportunities and increasing perceived costs significantly deter illicit behaviours. However, this context demands sustained institutional reform, comprehensive financial oversight, community economic empowerment, and continuous public engagement to fully realise these theoretical benefits. Thus, while the Buba Marwa Model represents a significant advancement, further efforts addressing underlying socio-economic drivers and operational challenges are necessary. Ultimately, sustained political commitment, strategic investment, and holistic policy initiatives remain essential for long-term success against drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria.

## Contribution to Knowledge

This study significantly contributes to existing scholarship by critically evaluating and documenting the proactive strategies of the "Buba Marwa Model," offering a deep understanding of the ongoing battle against drug trafficking and money laundering. Firstly, the research enriches the theoretical discourse by systematically applying Routine Activity Theory and Deterrence Theory within the Nigerian context, demonstrating how theoretical frameworks can effectively explain the complexities of drug-related crimes in a developing economy. This integration highlights the relevance and limitations of established criminological theories in addressing organised crime, particularly in contexts characterised by institutional weaknesses and socio-economic disparities.

Secondly, the study expands empirical knowledge by providing detailed qualitative evidence regarding the operational dynamics, strengths, and vulnerabilities of recent NDLEA interventions. It sheds light on previously under-examined areas, such as the depth and effectiveness of inter-agency cooperation, the role of community engagement strategies, and the persistent influence of corruption and socio-economic challenges. This empirical contribution provides stakeholders and policymakers with robust insights, facilitating informed decision-making for future policy formulation.

Finally, by critically analysing both successes and systemic challenges, the research outlines clear pathways for strengthening enforcement frameworks and stresses the importance of integrated strategies encompassing institutional reforms, economic empowerment, and international cooperation. Thus, the study not only advances academic understanding but also



serves as a practical roadmap for policymakers and law enforcement agencies seeking sustainable solutions to drug trafficking and money laundering in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the critical analysis and findings from this study, the following four recommendations are proposed to strengthen NDLEA proactive strategies against drug trafficking and money laundering:

### 1. **Enhanced Institutional Capacity and Training**

To sustain the successes of the Buba Marwa Model, it is critical to invest substantially in continuous capacity-building programs for NDLEA personnel and collaborating agencies. Specialised training in intelligence-gathering, financial crime investigation, cyber-surveillance, and advanced analytics should be prioritised to ensure operatives can effectively dismantle increasingly sophisticated drug trafficking and money laundering networks.

### 2. **Strengthening Inter-Agency Collaboration Frameworks**

Clear, well-defined protocols and mandates for inter-agency collaboration should be established among the NDLEA, EFCC, Nigerian Customs, Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, and other relevant security organisations. Regular joint task-force operations and information-sharing platforms should be institutionalised to enhance coordination, reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies, and mitigate jurisdictional conflicts.

### 3. **Community-Based Preventive Programs and Economic Empowerment Initiatives**

Comprehensive community engagement programs should be expanded and consistently funded, particularly in high-risk communities. Initiatives must integrate preventive education on drug abuse, community surveillance training, and economic empowerment schemes (e.g., vocational training and job creation), addressing the socio-economic factors driving individuals towards involvement in drug trafficking.

### 4. **Enhancing Regional and International Cooperation**

Strengthening regional partnerships within ECOWAS and expanding international collaboration with global bodies such as INTERPOL, FATF, and UNODC should be a priority. Such cooperation would facilitate intelligence sharing, joint enforcement operations, training exchanges, and alignment of national strategies with global best practices, significantly enhancing Nigeria's ability to tackle the transnational dimensions of drug trafficking and money laundering effectively.





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