

Trying to understand the use of drugs by women farmers in Nigeria's Adamawa State

May 3 2021, by Saheed Babajide Owonikoko



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

[A national survey](#) on drug use in Nigeria published in 2019 shows that about 14.3 million Nigerians between 15 and 65 years have used psychoactive substances for non-medical purposes. One out of every four drug users is a woman.

We conducted [research](#) on the use of drugs among women farmers in

Adamawa State, north east Nigeria. These women are involved in the cultivation of food crops such as maize, beans and rice.

We wanted to find out if they used drugs in a bid to enhance their farming livelihood practices. We also wanted to understand the implications for health and their relationships in the community.

We used data collected from interviews and observations with 50 people who included farmers, business men and women involved in agricultural business, civil servants as well as artisans and unemployed young people. One clear observation that emerged was that more women were becoming the household breadwinners and that this meant that they were under a lot of pressure.

To be able to withstand the stress of farming and to help improve their productivity, some used psychotropic stimulants. These change nervous system function and result in alterations in perception, mood, consciousness, cognition or behaviour. The most used substances were cannabis and tramadol due to affordability and availability.

The study recommended that the government of Adamawa State should establish a rehabilitation centre for addicts in the state. We also recommended that all stakeholders should give empowerment of women in the state serious attention.

Farming in Adamawa State

Over 60% of farmers in Adamawa State are women. They work on the land as owners or as hired help. Some are both: they own land and can also be hired to work on another person's farm.

There are several reasons that women attempt to earn a living off the land. One is rising poverty. The [2019 report on Poverty and Inequality in](#)

[Nigeria](#) released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that over 75% of the population of Adamawa State was poor.

The state was only better than Sokoto State (87.73%), Taraba State (87.72%), Jigawa State (87.02%) and Ebonyi (79.76%). The most affected demographic group is women. One of the ways they deal with poverty is to take on farming activities, to feed their families.

The use of substance abuse is not new in the area. A rise in drug and substance abuse was a major reason for the enactment of Adamawa State Unclassified (Local Substance) Abuse Law in 2015. Unfortunately, the law has not led to the intended reduction in substance abuse.

What we found

Women in the research team conducted interviews with women farmers and drug sellers.

They asked general questions to explore why women were involved in farming rather than other ways of making a living. The interviewers also asked why respondents were involved in use of drugs.

Questions were also asked about what kind of drugs or substances were used and what effect these had.

Over 60% of respondents said that drug use among female farmers in Adamawa State was a common phenomenon. About 36% did not share this view.

Only four of those we interviewed would talk about their use of drugs and substances.

One [woman](#) farmer who answered these questions said: "We are human

beings. No matter how strong we are, we still get tired while working especially when it is a tedious and strenuous work like farming. We need to take something (like drugs or [substances](#)) to prevent quick tiredness and get our work done promptly."

While there will be health and social consequences of [drug](#) use among these women farmers, it is very difficult to track this. This is because data, especially on mental and psychological distress, are generally not available in Adamawa State.

Next steps

We recommended the establishment of a rehabilitation centre by the State government would go a long way in helping people who are addicted to drugs. Adamawa State law prohibiting [drug addiction](#) and recommending establishment of a rehabilitation centre was passed in 2015. This law has come into operation, but the rehabilitation centre has yet to be established.

It is also recommended that women be empowered by training them in vocational skills and setting them up in small scale businesses. This is necessary because [women](#) have become strong economic agents in the state.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: Trying to understand the use of drugs by women farmers in Nigeria's Adamawa State (2021, May 3) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-05-drugs-women-farmers-nigeria-adamawa.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.