A VISUAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST USE AND ADDICTION OF ILLICIT METHAMPHETAMINE (MKPURU MIRI) AMONG THE YOUTHS IN OWERRI, SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

BY

PROF. IVEN OKONKWO[1],

DEPARTMENT OF FINE AND APPLIED ART, NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA.

ONYEHARA LOUIS CHIMA[2]

DEPARTMENT OF ART AND DESIGN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC NEKEDE, OWERRI

[1]okonkwo @unizik.edu.ng. 08035430893

[2]livingsaint86@gmail.com, 07031297907

Abstract

South Eastern Nigeria through Media reports indicate that methamphetamine (mkpurummiri) use is growing among young people in South Eastern Nigeria, but empirical research has not been conducted, also the local production of illicit drug (crystal meth.) in remote areas is one of the major parameters that increased the availability and affordability thereby promoting unprecedented increase in the use of the drug, while motivating the user's involvement into social deviance activities like stealing, rape and others. Therefore, this research work intends to reawaken our unconsciousness over the dangers associated the use of illicit chemical substances and represent a wide spectrum of visual approaches to understanding the risk, and social disadvantages for the consumption of such chemical substance (Crystal Meth # Mkpurummiri) . This study used an empirical research method and questionnaires to determine methamphetamine prevalence within Owerri metropolis, the sources, motivations for use, and consequences in South Eastern Nigeria. These findings facilitated the design for effective intervention campaigns [photography and video – Visual communication for integrated advocacy] to reduce the growing

trend. Efforts to discover and dismantle illegal laboratories should not only focus on cities because laboratories set up to evade detection may exist in rural settings. It is vital that the government work with all stakeholders to increase public awareness over the dangers associated with methamphetamine use among the users and develops mechanisms to support addiction treatment and rehabilitation to prevent social stigma users may face.
Keywords: visual campaign, Addiction, Illicit, Methamphetamine, Youths

Introduction

Methamphetamine- a derivative of amphetamine - is a central nervous system chemical stimulant that can be ingested orally, injected, snorted, (Anglin, Burke, Perrochet, Stamper, and Dawud-Noursi, 2000). Methamphetamine's street names include crank, crystal meth, ice, and speed (Sato, 2008), amongst others. Methamphetamine was discovered in 1893 by Nagayoshi Nagai- a Japanese pharmacologist who synthesized it from ephedrine - while his compatriot, Akira Ogata, further synthesized the drug into a crystallized format in 1919 (Sato, 2008). Methamphetamine use was unpopular until World War II (1939-1945) when countries like Germany, Japan, and the United States of America (USA) supplied their soldiers with the substance to enhance their ''endurance and performance'' (Anglin *et al*., 2000).



Plate 1; pictures of crystal meth (MKPURU MMIRI*). Photo credits: internet*

The misuse of the drug was first recorded in Japan after the war (1945-195), and this was because

the surplus from military supplies ‘‘flooded the market’’ (Anglin *et al*., 2000). Since then, methamphetamine use has become a global phenomenon. Several countries such as Australia (Degenhardt, Sara, Connor, Mcketin, Roxburgh, Dobbins, Farrell, Burns, Hall, 2017), the USA (Sommers, Baskin and Baskin-Sommers, 2006), and Thailand (German, Sherman, Sirirojn, Thomson, Aramrattana, and Celentano, 2006), amongst others, have reported methamphetamine use and its associated harms.

Currently, methamphetamine is an internationally controlled, Schedule II or illegal substance in most countries. However, its use is still widespread worldwide, primarily due to the activities of drug traffickers and illegal manufacturers/laboratories (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [henceforth, UNODC], 2017). According to the 2021 World Drug Report, 27 million people used methamphetamine and amphetamine in 2019 globally (UNODC, 2021). Furthermore, the UNODC (2021) noted that: the number of countries and territories reporting seizures of methamphetamine rose from 79 in the period 2005–2009 to 111 in the period 2015–2019, suggesting a significant increase in the geographical spread of methamphetamine trafficking at the global level.

The use of methamphetamine has become the focus of increasing public health attention worldwide because in many countries increased local production has fueled use and unprecedented harms arising from regular use. The harms of regular methamphetamine use include mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, dependence [Darke, Torok, kaye, Ross and Mcketin**,** 2010] and psychosis, physical health problems, violent and aggressive behavior [McKetin , Mclaren, Riddell, Robins, 2006], involvement in criminal activity [Mcketin, McLaren and Kelly, 2005], injecting and sexual risk and, in some cases, overdose deaths [Degenhardt *et al*., 2005].

‘Mkpurummiri’ is the Igbo slang for a very dangerous hard drug called Methamphetamine or Crystal Meth. It is also known as ‘Ice’. Nowadays, thousands of Igbo youths are addicted to

Mkpurummiri, and it has become a serious issue. If nothing is done to curb this menace, it will lead many more youths astray as it does to the present drug users (National Daily Newspaper, 2021). Based on multiple recent visual reports (e.g., News Agency of Nigeria, 2021; Njoku*et al.*, 2021; Ulasi, 2021), many young people in Eastern Nigeria have added methamphetamine to their drug repertoire. According to recent visual reports, Eastern Nigeria is facing an epidemic of methamphetamine use among youths. Eastern Nigeria is made up of five states (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo). The main ethnic group/language is Igbo. Methamphetamine is popularly called Mkpurummiri in Eastern Nigeria (Declan, 2021; National Daily Newspaper, 2021). Between October and December 2021, different visual outlets framed the use of crystal meth diversely, and many reasons were suggested as influencing factors (National Daily Newspaper, 2021; Njoku*et al.*, 2021). However, this substance # Ice #crystal meth# methamphetamine# Mkpurummiri has been proved by the NDLEA, to be sending Youths to their early grave and has also brought insanity and social disadvantages in the society. Currently, there are increasingly numbers of people in South East ranging from 15 years and above that are Crystal Meth users/addicts and among them are going through substance use disorder unknowingly, (Stamper, and Dawud-Noursi, 2000).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of drug abuse

Substance abuse issues today are on the rise and calls for intense public health concern in both developed and developing countries of the world (Holders, 1998). The use of hard substances (drug) has negative impact on both the user and on the fabric of the society. The effects of such an addiction can cause dangerous changes in the mind, body and spirit of the substance addict (Johnson, Ait-Daoud, Elkashef, Smith and Kahn**,** 2011). The most disturbing aspect of the use of

substance abuse is that it is reaching epidemic proportions in the whole world.

Methamphetamine Use in Sub-Saharan Africa

Methamphetamine use and its consequences have also been reported in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the results of the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) conducted in Benin (2012), Ghana (2016), and Liberia (2017) show that in addition to cannabis, and other drugs, both male and female adolescents in these counties use methamphetamine (Onyeaka *et al*., 2020). The study further indicated that methamphetamine use resulted in truancy amongst adolescents in three West African countries (Onyeaka *et al*., 2020). In South Africa, several previous and recent studies have reported methamphetamine use and the associated adverse effects such as aggression and mental health disorders in young people and adults (Okafor*et al*., 2020; Plüddemann *et al*., 2010).

Theoretical Framework

Overview theoretical frameworks

There are numerous theories that can be applied to investigate substance abuse. An extensive review based on a literature search by Oetting and Beauvais (1986), identified seven frameworks. Amongst others, the more current applicable theories include the disease addiction model, social theories such as the social learning theory, the psychosocial theories such as Jessors' problem-behaviour theory, Engel's biopsychosocial model and Bronfenbrenners' bioecological systems theory.

The disease addiction model views substance abuse as a disease afflicting otherwise healthy people. In broad terms the theory states that the exposure to a substance results in a physiological addiction to it. However, Oetting and Beauvis (1986) believe that this theory does not adequately explain adolescent substance abuse, since not all substances are physiologically addictive. From a

more physiological view, the social learning theory is a theory identified at a more cognitive level.

Empirical studies

Adogu, *et al*., (2015) did a study on awareness, knowledge, perception and attitude towards prescriptionmedicinesabuseamongmedicinesprescribersanddispensersinNnewiNigeria.Theobjectiveofthisstudywas to assess awareness, knowledge, perception and attitudes toward the abuse of prescription medicines(PM) among medicines prescribers and dispensers in Nigeria. Data were collected through self-completed questionnaire and three hundred and seventy-five participants were recruited for this study. Data analysiswasdoneusingtheStatisticalPackagefortheSocialSciences(SPSS)version17forwindowswasusedfordata analysis. Bivariate and multivariate analyses were carried out to evaluate differences and associations based on selected variables. Results: The perception was high among respondents that PM abuse was a problem in the community. Knowledge of health problems associated with PM abuse was also high while the attitude of the respondents towards early detection of PM abuse among their patients/clients was discouraging. However the study concluded that attitude of the respondents towards early detection of PM abuse among their patients/clients is poor and discouraging. Lack of time especially by doctors, failure of clients to adhere to counsel by health workers, lack of continuing education and lack of necessary skills constitute barriers to counseling against PM abuse. The study recommended that early intervention Is meant to provide doctors and other health care professional with the necessary tools to detect PM abuse in its early stages.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design adopted for this project incorporates integrated marketing communication mix

(IMC) with basic research methodologies. The research outcomes are intended to satisfy both local and international visual platforms and standards, while research methodologies will be used to gather information e.g., survey questionnaires, interviews, focus group and observations coupled with secondary source interviews. visual communication visual will be used to generate advocacy material (below-the- line and Above -the -line) that are intended to project the mass visual campaigns about public health and disseminate information about the consequences associated with methamphetamine addiction, in order to persuade people to adopt behavioral changes towards illicit use[s] of specific chemical substance including methamphetamine, which aimed at reducing the use and raising awareness on the dangers associated with substance use disorder. These campaigns typically target young people because evidence has shown that substance users often start during adolescents; a time in life when young people may experiment illicit use of substance, including methamphetamine #Mkpuru Mmiri#.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire was used to sample the opinion of the participants /general public on issues and challenge confronting the use of chemical substance/ substance use disorder among the youths within Owerri metropolis. These questions were meant to evoke responses that can help understand the instruments put in place by government and policy makers over illicit drug issues in Nigeria, and to enable the researcher produce coherence visual communication messages. Analysis from the questionnaire has been presented earlier.

Secondary information gathering: This will include survey research techniques and survey questionnaires - aimed at explaining people's current attitudes and responses towards the research topic. As a prelude to this topic, a research questionnaires were sent out to 50 participants to understand their views and perceptions over crystal meth consumption/ addictions among the

Youths and reasons for increased numbers of crystal meth users within Owerri metropolis and also the consequences in the society at large. The participants consisted of 37 male [74%] and 13 females [26%], with an average age of 15-65 years. These participants are non-governmental organization heads, government staff and regular people.

Visual Communication Design

Is a branch of the design sciences that studies how to deliver messages using creative expressions to achieve certain goals such as providing information or persuasion. *https://www.itb.ac.id>undergradu*...

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

QUESTIONNAIRE ANALYSIS

QS	ATP	A	B	I	A%	B%
1	50	--	50	-	---	100%
2	50	15	35	--	30%	70%
3	50	29	21	-	58%	42%
4	50	32	18	-	64%	36%
5	50	39	11	-	78%	22%
6	50	27	23	-	54%	46%
7	50	31	19	-	62%	38%
8	50	33	17	-	66%	34%
9	50	50	0	-	100%	0%
10	50	38	12	-	76%	24%
11	50	35	15	-	70%	30%
12	50	36	14	--	72%	28%
13	50	34	16	--	68%	32%

The following analysis can be deduced from the respondent answers.

1. In question number one, 100% of the participants were asked the behavioral pattern of the crystal meth addicts and, they all affirmed that their attitudes in the society are bad.

2. In question number two, 70% said that of the participants responded that the presence of Institution of higher learning, private and public secondary schools influence the accelerating number of crystal meth users/addicted persons within Owerri metropolis While 30% places emphasis on Rural – Urban migration as a factor that influences the accelerating increase.
3. In question number three, 58% of the participants opined that frustration is the root cause that influences the use of crystal meth among the users while 42% responded that bad company / peer pressure is the factor that influences the users.
4. 64% of the respondents in question No. four, said that the establishment of local laboratories in some rural areas for the production of crystal meth makes it readily available and creates easy access to get the substance thereby accelerating the number of the substance users while 36% said that the substance is cheaper and more affordable as a result of the establishment of the local production laboratories in some rural areas.
5. In question No. five 78% participants stated that, the age range of the crystal meth users/addicts are 15 - 45 years while 22% of other participants were of the opinion that the age range of the crystal meth users/addicts are from 45 – 65 years
6. 54% respondents affirmed that crystal meth addicted person become dependent on their family and also causes mayhem in the family while 46% of the respondents affirmed that the addicts represent bad image to the family
7. 62% in question No. seven testified that crystal meth addicts are social deviant and also causes mayhems in the society while 38% also testified that crystal meth addiction leads to health problems and early death.
8. 66% in question No. eight commended the parental role, including monitoring, observation and counseling as a way to discover when the child may involve in illicit substance use

including crystal meth while 34% respondents said, it's also a way of accessing the child's daily activities.

9. In question No. nine, all the participants affirmed that crystal meth symptoms manifest on the addicted person through various signs that were listed in question number eight option [a] answers.
10. 76% of the respondents said that the crystal meth addicted person unproductive in the labour market while 24% respondents said that crystal meth addicted person become vulnerable and economic dependency.
11. 70% in question No. eleven, the respondents said that the online and offline dissemination of information about the general consequences of crystal meth addiction will help curb the dangers of substance use[s] among the Youths while 30% affirmed that the online and outdoor sensitization on withdrawal method from the substance use is also useful
12. 72% respondents in question twelve said that visual communication campaign through integrated marketing communication mix on the dangers of crystal meth consumption will accelerate a significant decrease in the crystal meth uses among the Youths. While 28% of the respondents stress the effects of visual communication on the legal consequences of crystal meth consumption
13. Finally, 68% of the respondents in question No. thirteen, answered ''Fair'' while 32% answered ''good' on the effect of government agencies in combating the prevalence of crystal meth users/addicts within Owerri, the capital of Imo Stats.

Publicity and public relations involve a whole host of strategies to accomplish an organization's goals by sending messages to appropriate audiences.

It is the practice of managing and disseminating information from an individual or an organization (such as a business, government agency, or a nonprofit organization) to the public in order to affect

their public perception. It is also one of the elements of promotional mix, used to attract attention and also creates public awareness for a brand.

The use of mass visual campaigns in illicit substance use prevention is both have a relationship with visual communication and integrated marketing. Both policymakers and practitioners have hotly debated the effectiveness of such campaigns to reduce young people's drug use or their intention to use. This analysis aims to contribute to the debate via a review of available evidence on the topic.

Visual campaigns have been widely used for the prevention of illicit substance use in young people. They often address specific substance by creating awareness over the risks/consequences associated with the use of such illicit chemical substance, such as Methamphetamine [Mkpuru Mmiri].

This type of campaign typically targets young people because evidence had shown that substance use often starts during adolescence; *a time in life when young people may experiment with illicit drugs.*



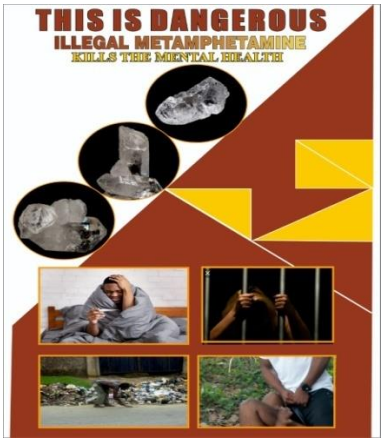
Design Credit: Onyehara Louis

Banner Ads

Banner ads are everywhere. A common idea of a banner ad is the “hanging banner” that you often see in schools, airports, and malls. The idea behind these is they are put in a space that otherwise would not be used i.e., walls and ceilings. This provides another way for an advertiser to share their message, while also making use of the space available.

Since banner ads are one of the most modern billboards, it only makes sense that they are also located on the internet. These digital banner ads are viewable on various websites and apps. More often than not when you visit a website**, a** digital banner ad pops up on either the top or bottom of the page.

POSTER DESIGN.



Design Credit: Onyehara Louis

A printed illustration, usually containing textual and/or graphic elements, on a large sheet, designed to be affixed to a wall or other vertical surface. Posters are often mass-produced and publicly displayed to advertise or promote something, to attract attention to events, activities, causes, goods, or services. Posters can be visually striking and are usually designed to covince, provoke and make an immediate impression from a distance.

HANDBILL



Design Credit: Onyehara Louis

A handbill is a small printed notice which is used to create awareness for particular service, or event. **Thus,** a printed sheet to be distributed by hand.

SOCIAL PLATFORMS



Design Credit: Onyehara Louis

A social platform is a web-based technology that enables the development, deployment and management of social media solutions and services. It provides the ability to create social media websites and services with complete social media network functionality. The largest social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat. Social media typically features user-generated content and personalized profiles that lend themselves to engagement via likes, shares, comments, and discussion. These ads (videos, banners, or text) can be shown

before the requested video plays, as an overlay while a video plays, or in the right margin of the page.

Increasing brand awareness through the usage of videos in marketing strategy improves the overall campaign results. You can set channel keywords, add a website, or allow your channel to appear in other channels' recommendations using advanced settings. TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube Shorts are the three great platforms for sharing short vertical videos. Creating videos for TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube will lead to more potential viewers and influencers knowing and talking about the product campaign. Researches have also shown that primarily videos have helped *increase* users understanding over a product.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

This research work synthesized the available evidence regarding methamphetamine production, use, and associated harm in Eastern Nigeria.

The research has shown abundant evidence of how illegal laboratories set up by drug traffickers may be driving the availability of the substance, which encourages consumption. According to the UNODC (2013, p.19-20), the "manufacturing of methamphetamine requires no advanced technology. Addicts have been known to synthesize the drug in their own kitchens using common decongestants". Therefore, the NDLEA should not only focus on uncovering large laboratories in cities but should also focus on rural communities because drug producers may hide smaller laboratories in rural settings to evade detection. To curtail the production and easy availability of methamphetamine from its roots, the NDLEA and other regulatory bodies should focus on eradicating the importation of, and access to the "precursor chemicals (primarily ephedrine)" used in producing the substance (UNODC 2013, 19-20). While the dissemination of information

regarding the effects of the drug is urgently needed, different communities should focus more on reorienting youths to stop those who have not initiated methamphetamine use and encourage cessation amongst current users.

It is imperative to note that youths are the potential leaders of any given country in the world, the youths constitute a formidable force and if their energies are properly channeled, there will be tremendous growth and development in the country. Flowing from the foregoing, it is necessary to adopt an economic and social approach aimed at proposing plans to support economic activity and entrepreneurship for the southeastern youths. So, if the youths are empowered; if they have jobs, most of these addictions to drugs will be curtailed.

Recommendation

It is vital that the government work with all stakeholders to increase public awareness of the dangers of methamphetamine use in Nigeria and develop mechanisms to support addiction treatment and rehabilitation services.

To curtail the production and easy availability of methamphetamine from its roots, the NDLEA and other regulatory bodies should focus on eradicating the importation of, and access to the "precursor chemicals (primarily ephedrine)" used in producing the substance

Also, it is essential that the use of punitive measures by vigilante groups be discouraged as there is no evidence that such measures are effective. This will also help to prevent the stigma faced by affected individuals who are flogged in public.

While research into this is warranted, the government should also create jobs for the unemployed youths. Importantly, drug regulations in Nigeria have often followed the draconian- war on drugs - approach (i.e., arrest and imprisonment), but this has not reduced illicit drug availability and use in the country (Ugwu&Dumbili, 2021). Therefore, the government should not focus on applying

such methods in regulating methamphetamine use. An evidence-based, multi-stakeholder (e.g., individuals who use the drug, community leaders, Schools, mental healthcare providers, policymakers, etc.) approach should be designed and implemented not just in this region but in the whole country. All hands must be on the deck, there must be strong synergy among the stakeholders in the country to find a lasting solution to this menace.

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