



Research Paper

# The Dynamics of Drug Abuse: A Study of Mkpurummiri Ravaging South East Nigeria

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## Abstract

Despite a growing interest in the study of effects of drug abuse, many youths seem to think of experimentation with drugs as an acceptable part of transition into adulthood. This paper is a systematic study of the literature on the dynamics of drug intake with special reference to Mkpurummiri (methamphetamine). In doing this, it analyzes studies indexed in the Web of Science, and Google Scholar presenting both their bibliometric indicators and methodological choices looking at how each scholar unravel the dynamics of drugs abuse among youths and teenage children. The negative effects of the drugs is such that after the user consumes it, they engage in criminal and immoral acts detrimental to the society, the substance can lead to anxiety, insomnia, confusion, violent behavior, mood swings and other anti-social acts. Through the comparison of the different streams of literature composing it, the review suggests that stakeholders such as the police, religious, traditional leaders, parents, educators, health professionals, social workers and the community at large as well as law enforcement agencies in South East Nigeria where the drug intake is at a high rate; ensure strict monitoring of the smugglers, distributors with the intention to apprehend and curtail the availability of such substance and also rehabilitate the users.

**Keywords:** Drug abuse; Mkpurummiri; Dynamics; Illegal; Drugs; Youths

Received 01 Jan, 2022; Revised 08 Jan, 2022; Accepted 10 Jan, 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse among youths and teenagers continues to be a major problem worldwide, and in particular, Nigeria (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). Most teenagers begin to experiment with drugs at an early age (Castrol, 1987; Jaffe, 1998). Abuse of drugs among youths is associated with a broad range of high-risk behaviour. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2008), drug abuse is worsened by complex socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, poverty and crime in general. These social ills have destroyed many families and communities. Drugs from all over the world currently flood into Nigeria (Ojinnaka, 2021). Drug dealers are forcing their way into the country and compelling young people into taking drugs so that once they are addicted, they can influence their friends into taking drugs (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). Too many youth seem to think of experimentation with drugs as an acceptable part of moving from childhood into adulthood. Few take seriously the negative consequences of dependence on drugs (Madu & Matla, 2003).

Drug abuse among youths costs a country a lot of money every year. This is evident in large sums of federal allocation to the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) used for in prevention and enforcement of drug abuse in Nigeria (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). Eventually this affects the whole country because these funds could have been used in other avenues such as poverty alleviation programs, since poverty is one of the reasons that lead to drug abuse.

Numerous organizations control the flow of drugs and discourage the youth from getting involved with drugs. These organizations, among others, include; National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDELA),

National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), Federal Ministry of Health (FMH), the Judiciary as well as non-government organizations (NGOs), (Department of Social Development, 2006). Despite their effort to control illicit drug use and abuse among youth, recent national survey data indicate that the use of drugs is still on the rise (particularly the recent one Mkpurummiri).

MKPURU MMIRI is a nickname for a highly addictive and stimulant drug called Crystal meth. Punch newspaper (November 24, 2021), put it as slang coined from the Igbo language, which is loosely translated as 'seed of water'. In reality, it is a crystal narcotic hallucinogen, medically known as Methamphetamine or by its street name Crystal Meth. It has a chalk-like crystal form and can sometimes be blue hence the name 'mkpuru mmiri'. Its negative effect is such that after the user consumes it they engage in criminal and immoral acts detrimental to the society at large. David (2021), in his campaign against hard and illicit drugs put that the substance can also lead to anxiety, confusion, insomnia, mood swings, and violent behavior from the user. A user's looks can change dramatically; from ageing quickly, to dull skin. They can also develop hard-to-heal sores and pimples and may have a dry mouth and stained, broken, or rotting teeth. A person addicted to Mkpuru Mmiri may also become paranoid and start hallucinating (David, 2021). He added that, they could also think of hurting themselves or others and may feel as though insects are crawling on or under their skin. It is now very popular among the southeastern youths of Nigeria and it's fast spreading with potentials of affecting the whole country.

## **II. GENERAL OVERVIEW**

In recent time, drug abuse becomes the necessity of acknowledging that this is a growing issue, a need for addiction treatment programs tailored to youth of this generation, and the need for proper diagnostic measures of drug abuse symptoms among youths. Generally, drug abuse or otherwise refer to as substance abuse or use is define as the use of certain chemicals for the purpose of creating pleasurable effects on the brain (United Nation on drugs and crime; 2009). In other words Drug abuse is the use of illegal or illicit drugs or the use of prescription or over-the-counter medications in ways other than recommended or intended (William, 2004). Donald et al (2007), added that it includes intentional inhaling of household or industrial chemicals for their mind-altering effects. Tobacco use and problem drinking are sometimes included in the definition of drug abuse (Crain, 2004). Crain also added that, chemical abuse and substance abuse or use are terms sometimes used interchangeably with the term drug abuse, or they may be used to refer to a combination of drug abuse and tobacco use or problem of drinking.

Many drugs that are abused are also addictive; they cause cravings and a continued desire to use them despite negative consequences. Drug abuse can start in childhood and continue in adulthood. Studies conducted by CDC (Center for Disease and Control prevention) shows that high school students approximately 42% drink alcohol, 21% use marijuana, and 3% use cocaine. Approximately 12% have used inhalants, and 20% have abused prescription drugs and most recently Mkpurummiri.

## **III. ORIGIN OF METHAMPHETAMINE (MKPURUMMIRI)**

Methamphetamine (now called Mkpurummiri) went into wider use during war II and was actually given in high doses to Japanese kamikaze pilots before their suicide missions. It was first made in 1887 in Germany. But Methamphetamine which is more potent and easy to make was developed in Japan in 1919. Because of its soluble in water as a result of the crystalline, that made it a perfect option for injection (Ojinnaka, 2021).

It was recorded that after the war, the abuse by injection became rampant and the surplus supplies kept for military use became available to the public. By 1970, with its spread, the US government made it illegal. By 1990, when Mexican drug merchants set up large laboratories in California, smaller private labs started springing up in kitchens and apartments earning it another name "stove top". Ojinnaka, (2021), also stated that it was from then, it spread across states in America into Europe, through the Czech Republic, and later into Asia. And now a whole lot of African countries with its dominance presence in the South-East Nigeria.

## **IV. METHAMPHETAMINE (MKPURUMMIRI) IN NIGERIA**

It has been argued that the illicit market has been more than a decade in Nigeria with kitchen-like labs in places like Lagos. But stories had it that it was around 2010-2016 that the illicit drug took a new turn in Nigeria. Some drug syndicates brought in some Latin American experts to help them set up large-scale meth labs with similar characteristics to those found in Mexico in Nigeria. One of the industrial super labs that were set up, was said to have the capacity to produce 4000 kg of meth per week. When NDLEA raided the site in 2016, they arrested 4 Mexicans from Sinaloa State and 5 Nigerians (Ojinnaka, 2021).

According to Ojinnaka (2021), the growth of Methamphetamine market in Nigeria was made readily easier by the availability and accessibility of precursor chemicals such as ephedrine. Precursors are chemicals

that are essential to the production of a controlled substance. It has legitimate uses and is legally used in a wide variety of industrial processes like medicines, perfumes, plastics, etc. What also amplified the trade was the high cost of procuring cocaine in the global market such that by the same period in question, Nigeria became a hotbed of a global network of drug merchants producing and exporting this drug from Nigeria to Asia and some other countries. By 2019, 309 kg of ephedrine was seized in Trans Ekulu Enugu and Festac Town Lagos (Ojinnaka, 2021).

#### **V. COMMON SYMPTOMS OF MKPURUMMIRI**

The abuse of Mkpurummiri can cause problems in interpersonal relationships, at home, on the job, and with the law. Symptoms of Mkpurummiri just like any other drug abuse include:

- Craving the drug (Mkpurummiri) despite difficulties obtaining it or wanting to quit
- Deterioration of relationships
- Deterioration of school or work performance
- Difficulty holding a job
- Disengagement from non-drug-related activities
- Financial problems
- High-risk sexual behavior
- Increasing time spent thinking about, obtaining, using, and recovering from Mkpurummiri
- Leaving responsibilities unfulfilled
- Legal problems
- Needing higher doses to get the same effect (tolerance)
- Using a drug to avoid its withdrawal symptoms
- Using drugs before or during activities where safety is a concern

#### **VI. CAUSES OF DRUG ABUSE**

Many theoretical perspectives have ascribed different causal factors to drug abuse. Biological factors, such as genetics and the presence of other psychiatric disorders, may play a role, as may environmental factors, such as peer pressure, history of abuse, and stress, and developmental factors, such as the timing of drug exposure (Thom, 1998).

People who abuse drugs may take them initially out of curiosity, to feel good, due to peer pressure, or for a variety of other reasons. Drugs can affect a number of diver's organs of the body, and complications can result from damage to the brain or to other parts of the body. Other negative consequences often result from the effects drugs have on a person's mind, as well as actions an individual may take while under their influence. According to Morgan & Brosi, (2011), chronic medical or psychological problems can be worsened by drug use and even mistaken as physical or psychological issues rather than addiction. Many abused drugs alter neurotransmission in the brain, and age-related changes in the brain can lead to dire consequences.

The increase of these illicit drugs (Mkpurummiri) in the eastern part of Nigeria has contributed to national tensions as it has increased the fear among the various residences of other regions of having the capabilities of reaching their communities. The origins of some of these tensions are clear: such as changes in political alignment, reduced family and community cohesiveness, increased unemployment and underemployment, economic and social marginalization and increased crime and generally the high rate of corruption in the economy (Ojinnaka, 2021).

#### **VII. EFFECT OF DRUG ABUSE**

Most drug addict knows the effects of taking drugs and even regrets their use thereof, but they continue using drugs despite the side effects of these drugs on them and the community at large. Their knowledge of drugs is limited in the sense that they are not aware that alcohol and cigarettes are drugs even though they are socially acceptable (Rice, 1992). Thus they are not aware of the other life threatening effects of these drugs. The use of drugs will shorten their life span and impact negatively on the already depleted scarce health resources. A lot of money will have to be spent in health and rehabilitation centers to help these adolescents and the teaming youths who indulge in drug use. Some of the effect of drugs among others includes:

##### **Social Effects**

The use of drugs by youths has a negative impact on the welfare of society (Butcher et al., 2004; Carson et al., 2000). If these adolescents are not monitored, they end up getting involved in criminal activities such as robbery, theft, rape and murder (Department of Social Development, 2006; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). Their use of substances endangers the lives of both their families and other people in their communities (Donald, et al., 2007). They become dangerous to everybody. They end up being rejected by

the very society that is supposed to nurture and guide them. That implies moral decay. These adolescents end up being arrested for their criminal activities and add to the already existing high rate of inmates in prisons (Butcher et al., 2004; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). Furthermore, they will have criminal records even before completing first year in school; that puts them at risk of being expelled from schools, not being accepted in tertiary institutions or securing employment because of a bad criminal record. Their future may therefore be doomed due to their substance use. These criminal activities also undermine democracy, good governance and have a negative impact on our country. It leads a lot of youths into vandalizing public properties such as, electricity wires, petroleum pipes, roads and other government infrastructure.

### **VIII. ECONOMIC EFFECTS**

The uses of drugs have a huge economic effect on the country. This is as dependent youths are absent from school while spending their time abusing drugs. They end up obtaining poor marks and failing at the end of the year thereby repeating the grade. That has a negative impact on the budget allocated to schools. Those repeating grades create a shortage in staff, learner furniture and stationery. In addition, strategies that may be employed to improve academic performance of these adolescents may be costly in terms of time and finances required to implement such strategies. The strategies may include, but not limited to convening meetings, writing letters and contacting parents through telephone calls to discuss learner behavior and academic performance (Department of Education, 2007). Furthermore, educational psychologists and social workers may be required to assess and refer learners who indulge in drugs to rehabilitation centers. That may be costly, since admission to rehabilitation centers is expensive (Plüddermann et al., 2007; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008). In addition, money may be required to empower adolescents to refrain from drug abuse, through campaigns such “Say No to Drugs”, and support structures such as Teenagers against Drug Abuse (National Drug Master Plan, 2006).

Financial resources may also be required to strengthen safety and security in school to counteract youths who abuse drugs and behave violently towards their educators and other learners. If these youths are not assisted with their drug abuse problem, we may end up with a country of young adults who are not making any contribution to the economy of our country because they are dependent on drugs (Davison et al., 2004). The rate of people who are not educated in rural areas will not improve because these youths are using drugs, and may end up dropping out of school or expelled because of their use of drugs. Thus, the effort mandated by the Nigerian constitution of availing opportunities and empowering the youth in particular as well as previously disadvantaged communities will be a fruitless and wasteful expenditure (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended).

### **IX. THE CAP CONTROL THEORY OF DRUG ABUSE**

Various definitions have been proposed for theory and theorizing. According to Weiner’s definition, a theory is a contemplative and rational type of abstract or generalizing thinking or the results of such thinking (Weiner, 1996). A theory can also be defined as a holistic explanation of some aspects of nature presented based on a wide range of evidence and can be comprised of facts, laws, conclusions, and hypotheses tested. This study adopted the Cap control theory for explanation.

CAP control theory emphasizes the interaction of individual’s style and the affective experience of drug use with the drug’s pharmacogenic effect. These are the basic ingredients of the cognitive affective-pharmacogenic (CAP) control theory of addiction (Coghlan et al. 1973; Gold and Coghlan 1976 cited in Dan, Mollie and Helen, 1980). The CAP theory of drug abuse was developed primarily on experiences gained working with adolescent drug abusers at Holy Cross Campus, a coed residential treatment center in Rhinecliff, New York. The cognitive style of the drug abuser is viewed as the pivotal factor in an individual’s moving from drug experimentation to drug abuse. The CAP theory of drug abuse emphasizes the interaction of cognitive-affective-pharmacogenic effects of drug taking. The belief that one is powerless to affect the environment and cope with stress plays a central role in the theory. The CAP theory is seen as being consistent with newer cognitive models which emphasize the role of internal thoughts and beliefs in the development of maladaptive behavior (Dan, Mollie and Helen, 1980).

#### **Major Assumptions**

1. Human behavior is mediated by unobservable that intervene between a stimulus and the response to that stimulus. Beliefs, sets, strategies, attributions, and expectancies are examples of the types of mediating constructs currently considered crucial to an understanding of emotion and behavior
2. The way an individual labels or evaluates a situation determines his or her emotional and behavioral response to it
3. Thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are causally interactive (Mahoney 1977)



4. CAP control theory posits that the abuse process begins with conflict as a predisposing factor. People who are having difficulty in meeting demands or expectations placed upon them by society or by themselves are in conflict, and a consequence of the stress of conflict is anxiety.

5. Anxiety is a universal feeling, something most of us experience to some degree each day. It is not the experience of anxiety but the individual's interpretation of the anxiety that is crucial to the theory. Underlying the anxiety of drug abusers is a belief that they cannot alter or control the situation; that they are powerless to affect their environment and decrease or eliminate the sources of stress. The belief that they are powerless to cope with stress is the major cognitive distortion of drug abusers. One consequence of this is the intense feeling of low self-esteem. Feelings of self-depreciation, which form the belief that one is powerless, represent the affective component of the CAP theory

6. The CAP model of drug abuse also makes several assumptions about the treatment of drug abuse. First, effective and lasting change is based on learning that behavior has consequences and that one can have an effect on his or her own life. To replace a sense of powerlessness with a sense of mastery, the abuser has to be taught alternative ways of responding to external or internal stress. These alternative ways cannot, however, be developed, practiced, and adopted as long as the individual continues to use drugs (Dan, Mollie and Helen, 1980).

Adolescence is a period of physical and sexual development, as well as development of adolescents' thinking, feelings, personal relationships, behavior and identity (Berk, 2007). It also a period of transition, in which individuals seems to be more impulsive, reckless and non-conforming than during other developmental stages of their lives (Visser & Routledge, 2007).

Adolescence is a time of growth, exploration and increased risk taking. Many adolescents engage in drug use activities which they perceive as acceptable within their peer groups. As a result, risk behaviors including substance abuse during the adolescent years are of major concern because they are associated with the increased risk of injury, interpersonal violence, and crime, high risk of unacceptable behavior, suicide, academic difficulties and school drop-out. Consequently, drug abuse can have a major impact on the lives of adolescents. The CAP theory of drug abuse emphasizes the interaction of cognitive-affective-pharmacogenic effects of Mkpurummiri. The belief that one is powerless to affect the environment and cope with stress plays a central role in the theory. This stress may be associated with the economic instability of the country, coupled with high level of inflation, increased crime and unemployment faced by youths in the country. The CAP theory is seen as being consistent with newer cognitive models which emphasize the role of internal thoughts and beliefs in the development of maladaptive behavior. Research findings support the hypothesis that an individual's belief in the ability to control a situation strongly influences behavior. Successful treatment of the drug abuser requires a multimodal approach which alters faulty thinking, teaches new interpersonal skills, helps the abuser cope with pain and anxiety, and encourages the development of a positive self-image.

## **X. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Nigerian youths are faced with various sources of stress arising from family responsibilities, personal health concerns, pressure from environment and peers, media pressure, unemployment and the challenges of living the Nigerian good life. Not meeting up with these expectations usually makes them end up being frustrated, confused and helpless. In trying to cope with such challenges, the youths may end up indulging in a variety of drugs that endanger their own lives as well as the lives of other people around them.

Parents, educators, health professionals, religious and traditional leaders, social workers and the community at large must be at the fore front in the fight against the intake of Mkpurummiri by youths. The negative effect of this drug affects everybody and there is a likelihood that it may spread to other parts of the country and the continent if not curtailed. As future leaders of our country, youths should be loved, guided and supported so that they are able to deal with stressors and pressures and the ability to refrain from seeking alternatives to controlling stress and pressures of meeting up with societal expectations. Political leaders in the South East region must stand against this challenge by arresting smugglers and sellers of these drugs and ensure proper rehabilitation of the abusers.

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