

## **Illicit Drug and Drug Trafficking: Reflection on Methamphetamine (*Mkpuru Mmiri*) and the Youth Population**

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### **Abstract**

Most governments and international organizations in the world have had heated debates given the act on the basis in which global drugs ravage the entire globe. By this, it has been identified that the production, trafficking and consumption of number of organic and inorganic narcotic substance which have been declared illegal by government are indeed a problem for the whole of mankind. Against this backdrop, this study is on illicit drug and drug trafficking: reflection on methamphetamine (*mkpuru mmiri*) and the youth population. The study queries the emergence and consumption of *mkpuru mmiri*/methamphetamine as well as its debilitating effects on the youth population, using descriptive and historical analysis. The paper argues that *mkpuru mmiri* intake by some of the youth population is as the result of socio-economic and cultural decadence in most the local communities, especially in the South-eastern state of Nigeria and the society at large. This paper finds that methamphetamine/*mkpuru mmiri* addiction has caused mental disorders and frustration among the youth population. The paper proffers solution to abate the menace of *mkpuru mmiri* by calling on the relevant authorities, institutions and agencies to collaborate with the local communities in playing a well-desired role. The paper concludes that total eradication of *mkpuru mmiri* is possible only if the channel of supply and consumers are seriously dealt with by all the necessary approaches.

**KEY WORDS:** Illicit Drug, Drug Trafficking, Methamphetamine (*Mkpuru mmiri*), Youth Population and Communities

### **Introduction**

Globalization by its very nature of inter-connectivity and collectedness has turned the world into a global village. The action and inaction of peoples in a particular place have had debilitating effects against others. The history of illicit or illegal drug and drug trafficking cannot be overemphasized. It can be traced to the opium wars of 19th century between the United Kingdom and the Qing Dynasty China that was caused by the Chinese government's decision and enforcement ban on importation of opium by the British into her country. After much time, the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed great increase in both illicit drugs consumption and trafficking in North America and Europe, particularly with a very high demand for marijuana and cocaine (Selected Writings of Yusuf Bala Usman on the Economy, 2015).

Today, the issue of illicit drug and drug trafficking have become clearly a crucial theme that desired special attention in our midst. Its global scourge and burden have also occupied worrisome debates by individual states including Nigeria. Stringent methods, laws and various specialized agencies such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have been instituted to fast track this menace and apprehend the peddlers. Regrettably, the production, distribution and consumption of illicit drug and smuggling continued unabated. Recently, one of the species of this illicit drug popularly called *mkpuru mmiri* has permeated into the local communities of Southeast geo-political zone, creating havoc on thousands of youths. The metamorphosis of this illicit drug related substances especially *mkpuru mmiri* has caused myriad of dangerous but devastating harms and effects on youth population across genders (The Nation, 2021).

This paper is divided into seven parts. The first part is introduction, followed by definition of terms and moves to conceptual meaning of methamphetamine/*mkpuru mmiri*. The fourth peruses on causes, motivation and promotion of *mkpuru mmiri* substance among the youth population, while five looks at *mkpuru mmiri* as a scourge and its destroying effects on youth population. The penultimate part deals on *mkpuru mmiri*: eradication and strategic solution. Then, the last part is the conclusion.

### Definition of Terms

**Illicit Drug:** Illicit simply means contrary to or forbidden by law. It connotes not permitted by rules, illegitimate and unlawful. An illicit drug is one that is illegal to have (cannabis, heroin, and cocaine etc), and the non-medical use of drugs that are legally available such as painkiller and sleeping pills. Mara Tyler (2018) refers to illicit drug as items considered illegal to make, sell or use which include; cocaine, methamphetamines, heroin and hallucinogen. Tyler further posits that illicit drugs are regarded as substance that either stimulate (such as cocaine or amphetamines) or inhibit (such as heroin or sedative-hypnotic) the central nervous system or cause hallucinogenic effects (such as marijuana and lysergic acid diethylamide or LSD) to the effect that their use has been banned globally.

**Drug trafficking:** drug trafficking is the process of cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of psychotropic substances to the public. It is the business, transaction or trading on illicit/ illegal drugs. By these definitions above, it is apparent to assert that the production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs are illegal, hence, it possesses destructive effects to users (Drug Trafficking, 2021). Justia Legal Resources put forward that drug trafficking also known as drug distribution, is the crime of selling, transporting, or illegally importing unlawful controlled substances, such as heroin, cocaine, marijuana, or other illegal drugs. Drug trafficking also applies to illegal selling of prescription drugs ...drug possession where the perpetrator(s) knowingly possesses an illegal controlled substance. Thus, an individual cannot engage in drug trafficking while being unaware that he or she is in possession of a drug, or if he or she reasonably but mistakenly believes that the substance is legal (Justia Legal Resources: Drug Trafficking).

However, it is important to reconcile the use of common words such as drug misuse, drug abuse and illegal drugs to illicit drug and drug trafficking as it is applied here. Emeka Onwudinjo (September 2019, 180) explains that:

*Drug misuse implies self-prescribed, self-obtained and self-administered outside medical supervision. A drug may be properly used but when it is illegally obtained becomes drug misuse. It is also seen as drug misuse when its self-indication harms the individual. Inappropriate use of a prescribed drug entails misuse, and ... sharing of drug with others without the consent of doctor is also said to mean drug misuse. On the other hand, excessive use of drugs to affect the psychological, social, academic and vocational functioning of an individual is known as drug abuse. It refers to the intentional or deliberate use of chemical substance for reasons other than legitimate medical purposes that result into some forms of physical, mental, emotional and social impairments ... while, illegal drugs are the ones referred to as hard drugs ... which renders the user incapable of functioning as a responsible member of the society. Instances of such drugs are heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine.*

**Youth population:** youth population can only be appreciated by understanding the meaning of youth. Generally, Igwe (2020:35) describes youths as a group of people that are passing through early stage of life full of exuberance, energy, impression, vigour, vitality and quest. Quoting Pope John Paul II, Moses Iloh defines the age of youths as the age of hope, of promise and of enthusiasm and as such, it is necessary that youths know the extent of their involvement in the noble task of shaping the destiny of the world (Punch, March 5, 2012). Madukwe (2016:225), nonetheless posts that the definition of the word youth is connected with many ideas of who constitute a youth and what characteristics such a person should possess. This is because the age bracket attached to the word 'youth' is considered based on the differences that exist among countries, organizations and cultural beliefs writers. For instance,

the African Youth Charter sees a youth as every person, between the age of 15 - 35 years (Africa Youth Charter).

The United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution 50/81 in 1995, adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth in the year 2000 and thus, defines 'youth' as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years (Definition of Youth – The United Nations). Youth is the time of life when one is young, and often means the time between childhood and adulthood (maturity). It is also defined as "the appearance, freshness, vigour, spirit, etc. characteristic of one who is young" (Youth – Wikipedia). The youth population is understood as those people between 15 and 24 years bracket. It is also the energetic or able male and female whose age is less than 40 years and can contribute for the growth and well-being of the society. Youth population therefore covers the generality of community or societal able and vibrant young male and female with manifest characteristics which include mental, physical, economic, political and social or emotional as well as intellectual maturity capacities.

### **Conceptual Meaning of Methamphetamine (*Mkpuru Mmiri*)**

The question is what is methamphetamine (*mkpuru mmiri*)? In this paper, methamphetamine or *mkpuru mmiri* shall be used interchangeably as meaning the same thing. Understandably, *mkpuru* in Igbo parlance means 'seed' and *mmiri* is known as water. The combination of the two words lead to what is lexically called *mkpuru mmiri*. Literally, it translates to mean "seed of water". Methamphetamine or crystal ice popularly known as *mkpuru mmiri* in Igbo slang is a dangerous illicit drug substance which looks like ice or white chalk crystal and sometimes can be blue, hence, the users refer to it as 'ice' that can be dissolved in water which affects the functioning system of the victim. *Mkpuru mmiri* is a crystal narcotic hallucinogen that is capable of affecting the central nervous system of whosoever takes it (Emeka Onwudinjo, 2019, 184).

Etymologically speaking, methamphetamine/crystal meth or *mkpuru mmiri* had its developmental trace from Japan in 1919, but was grossly abused during the World War 11, when pilots like 'Kamikaze' on a suicidal mission was given the drug. After the World War 11, it was briefly used as medication for depression and for controlling obesity. In 1970s, it was quickly banned and abandoned because of its effects. However, since 1990s, the production of crystal meth became hijacked by Mexican drug cartels that came into Nigeria and set up laboratories in 2016 (Vincent Ujumadu, 2021). *Mkpuru mmiri* has high addictive stimulant and exposes to destructive tendencies such as suicide or homicide at the slightest provocation and without a reasoning and sense of remorse (Vincent Ujumadu, 2021).

*Mkpuru mmiri* is taken by smoking, swallowing the pill form, snorting or sniffing, or injecting the powder that has been dissolved in water or alcohol. Globally, it is known and called by different names as meth, trash, *grank*, biker's coffee, tweak, speed, ice, shards, stovetop, *yaba*, chalk, crystal, crank or *shabu* (Edith Nkem Declan, 2021). Locally, *mkpuru mmiri* is conceptualized in this paper as weapon of the weak and destroyer of human life, originated from illicit drugs and deceptive hyperactive feelings of massive happiness or sadness, which makes the user naturally incapacitated. It is a destroying substance that perpetually subjugates the victim and makes the person moving on the street naked or half-naked, haggard and unkempt, murmur to himself, and operates on a different level far from normalcy. Therefore, *mkpuru mmiri* as captured in this paper conceptually, is a consumptive substance to quick madness and self-destruction.

### **Causes, Motivation and Promotion of *Mkpuru Mmiri* Substance among the Youth Population**

Research with focus on youth population has argued that motives for illicit drug use and the decision to use *mkpuru mmiri* is most likely based on a rational appraisal process, rather than a passive reaction to the context in which a substance is available. Reported reasons vary from quite broad statements (e.g. to feel better) to more specific functions for use (e.g. to increase self-confidence). However, given the diverse effects that *mkpuru mmiri* have on the user, it might be proposed that reasons for use of *mkpuru mmiri* stimulant are heavily relied on socio-economic and cultural environment (Editorial, 2021).

Many other factors have been advanced as instigation to the production, distribution and consumption of methamphetamine/*mkpuru mmiri* in local communities and the society at large. Finance which has come to be the most hegemonic dimension of standard of living, created under the conditions of intensified maximization of profits and the commoditization of everything explains people's increasing

desire or greed (accumulation, i.e. to become rich), and thereby engaging on *mkpuru mmiri* trafficking business in order to maintain status (Catalina E Kopetz, Carl W. Lejuez, Reinout W. Wiers and Arie W. Kruglanski, 2015).

Unemployment has been considered as one of the causative spectrums that leads many youths to turn out to become notorious drug addicts in Nigeria. There is the problem of unbridled unemployment in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's unemployment rate as of the end of 2020 rose to 33.3 percent from 27.1 percent, indicating that about 23.2 million Nigerians continue to be unemployed; graduates and postgraduates combined made up about 2.9 million of the total Nigerians that are unemployed. Thus, it is revealed with relative consistency that the link between *mkpuru mmiri* and majority of users are economic and unemployment (Fikayo Owoeye, 2021).

For many youths, the consumption of hard drugs, including *mkpuru mmiri*, is their own way of escaping from the frustration and hopelessness staring them in the face within the socioeconomic environment. For instance, a crop of gainfully employed young people and those who can see positive indications that they would be ultimately employed are most unlikely to indulge in *mkpuru mmiri* use. What obtains now is a quintessential case of an idle mind becoming the devil's workshop (Mathew Agboma Ozah, 2021).

The experiences of moral decadence in virtually all the local communities and the society at large, where the practical details of the societies' core value system is bastardized for selfish whims and caprices no doubt influenced youth population. The dislocation of integrity, hard work, trustworthiness, respect etc as seen Igbo socio-cultural system in favour of mediocrity and sycophants as well as poor educational background were common risk factors associated to abuse of *mkpuru mmiri* epidemic. Among the secondary school and undergraduates both male and female, transport operators, farmers and sex workers believed to indulge in *mkpuru mmiri* to increase physical performance, manage stress and drive pleasure (Annabal Boys, John Marsden and John Strang, 2021).

In all, possible causes/motivation and promotion of *mkpuru mmiri* are attributed to poverty, bad economy, poor family upbringing, bad relationships, among others. It is also true that people go into drugs in search of solution to problem wittingly or unwittingly. However, emotional, social and psychological reasons cannot be jettisoned. Emotional inability as a cause could result from some social problems experienced by individual which defied natural means to solve like lack of love, acceptance and appreciation either by friends or family members. It could be lack of peace in the family, lack of interpersonal relationship between opposite sex, poverty and inability to meet family needs. Psychological reasons could be lack of respect, feelings of inferiority or inadequacy of fulfilling illusionary desires of pleasure – failures and experience of meaninglessness in life can lead to *mpkuru mmiri* addicts psychologically.

### ***Mkpuru Mmiri* as a Scourge and its Destroying Effects on Youth Population**

Investigation has shown that someone addicted to *mkpuru mmiri* substance is characteristically identified by shabby and tattered dressing look; always picking at hair or skin; loss of appetite and weight; moving eyes about every time; strange sleeping pattern – staying up for days or even weeks at a time; always talking non-stopping; borrowing money often; selling possessions or stealing; angry outbursts or mood swings; psychotic behaviour such as paranoia and hallucinations ; withdrawal from friends and family; attending social events where the drug will be present; preoccupation with getting and using drug and loss of job (Lawrence Njoku, Odita Sunday and Ijeoma Thomas-Odia, 2021). The aforementioned psychological effects of *Mkpuru mmiri* on the consumers will undoubtedly militate against the productivity of youth's population in such communities affected.

Ujunwa Odinkonigbo (2021) observes that *mkpuru mmiri* substance exposes the taker to depressive state that leads to suicidal thoughts and aggressiveness. It can permanently damage the brain. The risks of developing psychological dependence are greater to the user, because this drug is more powerful. In addition to the public health problems caused by addiction and other health consequences directly

related to its use, *mkpuru mmiri* is sold and purchased in an unregulated market. This means that it may contain adulterants and contaminants that may be harmful to health.

It is important to stress that *mkpuru mmiri* use generates significant stigma not only from the general population, but also from service providers and drug users. This stigma further accentuates the marginalization of people who use *mkpuru mmiri* and places additional barriers in front of those seeking help. People who use much of *mkpuru mmiri* and live on the streets may be reluctant to seek medical services because of stigma and the need to be sober.

The devastating effects of *mkpuru mmiri* on the youth population are all over: there are deaths, the crime rates have increased in the last few years and some families are psychologically destroyed by this menace on them and their children. The psychiatrists are reporting phenomenal increase in youthful patients, especially students of all tiers of education; primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. *Mkpuru mmiri* cuts across gender and no gender is saved. The streets have experienced more mentally deranged youths, communities are trying their best to arrest the drug epidemic, but like other such cases in the past, not much is categorically achieved (Nnedinso Ogaziechi, 2021).

The effects of *mkpuru mmiri* are overwhelming to the families, region and country as it is an affirmation of the changing socio-cultural paradigms in Igboland communities. The Igbo apprenticeship system is gone as nobody wants to serve or learn work patiently and be settled. Today, the local communities are engulfed and suffering from different types of criminalities made possible by the abuse of *Mkpuru mmiri* and other related illicit drugs such as cocaine, marijuana, ketamine, inhalants, heroin, codeine and tramadol etc. These have manifested in the high level of hoodlums who engage on raping, kidnapping for ransom, assassination, armed robbery and above all, terrorism and banditry (Paul Okah, 2021).

In general, it is argued that drug addicts are identified by two effects namely physical signs and behavioural changes. By the physical signs of effect: the victim experiences deterioration in health appearance; indifference in hygiene and grooming; poor physic coordination, slurred or incoherent speech, memory lapses, shod attention, dilated pupils of the eyes. While the behavioural changes effect includes: chronic dishonesty, cheating, sudden outburst or unusual temper or flare ups; defiance or general disobedience to rules or constituted authority; inappropriate anger amid hostility; heightened secrecy about actions and possessions; impaired relationship with family members; association with those who use drugs; diminished interest in extra-curricular activities; possession of large sums of money; frequent trouble with law enforcement agents; and if a student or worker, there will be poor attendance – absenteeism, truancy, frequent visits to the nurse or counsellor’s office, poor output and lack of concentration (Onwudinjo, September 2019, 180-190).

### ***Mkpuru Mmiri*: Eradication and Solution Strategies**

It is imperative to note that youths are the potential future leaders of any given country in the world, the youths constitute a formidable force and if their energies are properly channelled and utilized, there will be tremendous growth and development in the country. Following 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 youth’s population. So, if the youths are empowered; if they have jobs, *mkpuru mmiri* addictions will be drastically curtailed. Based on unemployment, the youths begin to nurse negative thoughts towards abusing drugs as the last resort (Ujunwa Odinkonigbo, 2021).

All the relevant agencies such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Pharmacists Council of Nigeria (PCN) and Presidential Advisory Committee in conjunction with non-governmental agencies and civil society groups should strategize solutions in eradicating the *mkpuru mmiri* problem. There should be involvement of government at all levels, communities, organizations, religious bodies, private individuals, parents and families in founding a lasting solution to *mkpuru mmiri* abuse. They can also provide functional facilities for the rehabilitation victims of *mkpuru mmiri* and provide them with

emotional support from psychologists and other medical personnel as well as economic empowerment to become well integrated into the society (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021).

Also, most prevention campaigns or strategy should focus on youth population in secondary and tertiary institution where peer-group relationship is easily cultivated and bad influences from already addicted ones could affect others. Since, school activities especially in secondary schools, are the most common place for *mkpuru mmiri* abuse. Youth population who do not attend school can be targeted as well in order to abate the menace of illicit drug. Transition institutions where former drug addicts can be accustomed to leading an appropriate way of life should be encouraged. These could be in form of youth movements; sports clubs and religious organizations which can help and redefine the focus of youth population to drug-free activities and environments conducive for economic ventures.

Ideally, treatment of the addicted *mkpuru mmiri* users should include counselling, supportive care, medical treatment, re-orientation, rehabilitation and reintegration into the society. Treatment programs should be individualized and tailored to the patient's personal situation and issues. If applicable, family members should be invited to participate. Above all, the government and law enforcement agencies must locate and destroy all the laboratories producing the *mkpuru mmiri* drug, cut the supply chain, and make the brain behind its production and trafficking to face the wrath of law (Nwanosike Onu, 2021).

### Conclusion

The problem of fast-spreading *mkpuru mmiri* menace has affected almost all the local communities which youth population divides. Its havoc, ranging from social, cultural and economic standpoint cannot be ignored. The success or failure of methamphetamine/*mkpuru mmiri* abuse or prevention depends on everybody not the government and its agencies alone. For some, total abstinence is the most advisable solution. To others, a slow reduction in dosage accompanied by supportive psychotherapy is preferable. However, in this paper total elimination is the solution of *mkpuru mmiri* production, distribution and consumption. Strategic solution involving coordinated sensitization and reorientation of the youths on the effects of *mkpuru mmiri*, letting them know the damages this could cause to their body system, the dangers of it in the community and beyond will influence the trend. Flogging and brutalizing the youth population caught in the act is not the ultimate but crude. Intelligent surveillance by the government in collaboration with the President General of the various communities should be mounted or tailored on culprit, especially against dealers to impede the channel of supply. Therefore, extrapolating from the above, the addictive, deadly and destructive threat of *mkpuru mmiri* will be forestalled.

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