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## Prevalence of Methamphetamine (Ice) Drug Abuse and its Consequences among Youths in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State

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***Abstract:** The aim of this paper was to determine the prevalence of Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis, explore the factors that contribute to Methamphetamine use, identify the consequences of Methamphetamine use, and evaluate interventions or prevention strategies for reducing Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. The paper used the Risk and Protective Factor Framework to guide the analysis of the issue. The findings of this paper showed that Methamphetamine use is a serious issue among youth in Jalingo metropolis, with a significant number of young people engaging in the use of this dangerous drug. The study found that individual, familial, and environmental factors all play a role in contributing to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis, and that effective prevention and intervention strategies must address these multiple and interrelated factors. The findings of this study highlight the need for a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to addressing Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis, and provide valuable insights into the role of individual, familial, and environmental factors in contributing to this serious issue. The paper recommended that there's need to increase access to substance abuse treatment: The study showed that individual factors such as low self-esteem*



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*and lack of access to substance abuse treatment can contribute to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. Increasing access to substance abuse treatment, including behavioral and pharmacological therapies, can help to address these factors and reduce Methamphetamine use among youth.*

**Keywords:** *Youths, Methamphetamine, Drug Abuse, Prevalence and Consequences*

## Introduction

Drug Abuse is the excessive usage of drugs for nonmedical purpose. It is also defined as a state, emotional, and sometimes physical, characterized by a compulsion to take drugs on a constant basis in order to experience its mental effects. Youths in any society occupy a delicate and sensitive position within the population structure for several reasons (Hamza & Stephen 2021). Nigeria law for instance, recognizes that an individual below the age of seven is incapable of committing a crime, and an individual between the ages of seven and above should know what he ought to do. 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 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.

Methamphetamine, also known as “meth,” “crystal,” or “ice,” is a highly addictive stimulant drug that can have serious consequences for individuals and communities. It is typically taken in the form of a white, odorless, and bitter-tasting powder that can be ingested, injected, or smoked. Methamphetamine is often used to increase energy, alertness, and concentration, and it can produce a sense of euphoria and increased self-confidence in users (Ochube, *et al.*, 2022). However, methamphetamine use can also have serious consequences. Methamphetamine is a highly toxic drug, and long-term use can lead to a range of physical and mental health problems, including heart attacks, stroke, kidney damage, and psychosis. Methamphetamine can also have social and economic impacts, as it is often associated with



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crime, poverty, and social isolation. Methamphetamine is classified as a Schedule II controlled substance in the United States, which means that it has a high potential for abuse and dependence but can also be used for medical purposes under certain circumstances. It is illegal to manufacture, distribute, or possess methamphetamine without a prescription in most countries.

Methamphetamine (Ice) drug abuse is a significant problem among youths in Jalingo Metropolis, with potentially serious consequences for individuals and the community. However, little is known about the prevalence of methamphetamine use in this population or the factors that contribute to its use. In addition, there is a lack of information on the consequences of methamphetamine use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis, and there are few evidence-based interventions or prevention strategies in place to address this problem. This research aims to fill these gaps by examining the prevalence, contributing factors, and consequences of methamphetamine use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis, and by evaluating interventions or prevention strategies for reducing methamphetamine use in this population. In view of the foregoing, this paper tends to examine the prevalence of methamphetamine (Ice) drug abuse and its consequences among youths in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State other objectives include to;

- i.** Determine the prevalence of methamphetamine (Ice) use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis.
- ii.** Explore the factors that contribute to methamphetamine (Ice) use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis.
- iii.** Identify the consequences of methamphetamine (Ice) use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis.
- iv.** Evaluate interventions or prevention strategies for reducing methamphetamine (Ice) use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis.

## **The Methamphetamine (Ice)**

Methamphetamine- a derivative of amphetamine - is a central nervous system chemical stimulant that can be ingested orally, injected, snorted, or smoked (Anglin et al., 2000). Methamphetamine's street names include crank, crystal meth, ice, and speed (Sato, 2008),



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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).

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 et al., 2017), the USA (Sommers et al., 2006) and Thailand (German et al., 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).

## Prevalence of Methamphetamine (Ice) Use among Youths

It has been argued that the illicit market has been more than a decade in Nigeria with kitchen-like labs in places like Lagos (Ochube, et al., 2022). 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.



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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).

## Factors that Contribute to Methamphetamine (Ice) Abuses in Nigeria

According to recent media reports, Eastern Nigeria is experiencing a crystal methamphetamine epidemic among its youth. In Eastern Nigeria, methamphetamine is commonly referred to as “Mkpulummiri” (the Igbo word for ice) (Declan, 2021; National Daily Newspaper, 2021). Between October and December 2021, various media outlets framed the use of crystal meth in various ways, and numerous reasons were proposed as influencing factors (National Daily Newspaper, 2021; Njoku et al., 2021). A national newspaper, for example, reported:

Mkpulummiri is Igbo slang for methamphetamine, also known as crystal meth. It's also referred to as “ice.” Thousands of Igbo youths are now addicted to Mkpulummiri, which has become a major problem. If nothing is done to stop this epidemic, it will lead many more young people astray, just as it is currently leading current drug users astray. (2021 National Daily Newspaper).

Crystal meth use was linked to youth unemployment and disenchantment in a report published in the Guardian Newspaper:

In recent years, some young people have sought celestial ecstasy by consuming Crystalline, a type of methamphetamine commonly referred to in Igbo dialect as Mkpulummiri (Ozah, 2021).

Furthermore, investigative journalists from the Guardian Newspaper reported that crystal meth use is becoming widespread in the region after interviewing a former user, drug experts, youth and vigilante leaders, and residents of eastern Nigerian communities (Njoku et al., 2021).



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One common theme in media reports is that methamphetamine use is framed as a new phenomenon, and the consequences are highlighted. For example, one of Njoku and colleagues' interviewees mentioned a young man who was suffering from a mental disorder, which they attributed to methamphetamine use:

He drove a bus. He has, however, sold himself to Mkpurummiri, a lethal substance (methamphetamine or crystal meth). See what it has done to him (Njoku et al., 2021).

In terms of methamphetamine supply, factors such as drug trafficking and increased local production of the drug in illegal laboratories are largely to blame for its increasing use. While Njoku et al. (2021) reported that the drug comes from northern Nigeria and is “far cheaper than other illicit drugs; thus, many youths are embracing it,” a UNODC (2013) report sheds light on other factors that may be to blame. First, the report depicts the drug trafficking route in West Africa, stating that:

Nigerians, particularly those from the country's southeast (the Igbo people), have traditionally transported cocaine and heroin from diaspora communities near production areas (such as Karachi, Sao Paulo, and Bangkok) to diaspora communities in consumer countries (UNODC, 2013, p. 19).

Given the severe penalties and other risks associated with cocaine and heroin trafficking, drug dealers began establishing methamphetamine production sites in West Africa in 2010. (UNODC, 2013). The following UNODC report excerpts shed more light on the history of local methamphetamine production in Nigeria and the involvement of people from the Eastern region:

The first operational facility was discovered in July 2011. Just outside of Lagos, the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency discovered a facility capable of producing 25- to 50-kilogram batches of methamphetamine. Two men, both from southeast Nigeria, were apprehended (UNODC, 2013, p. 19).

A second facility was discovered eight months later in Satellite Town, Lagos. There were 41 kg of ephedrine and nearly 5 kg of finished methamphetamine seized. Three Bolivians and one Igbo



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Nigerian were detained (UNODC, 2013, p. 19).

The latest World Drug Report adds to the evidence that, while methamphetamine production is declining in Asia and the Americas, “the number of dismantled methamphetamine laboratories actually increased in Africa over the period 2010–2019” (UNODC, 2021). Furthermore, the UNODC highlighted that in Africa, “most of the methamphetamine laboratories reported in the period 2015–2019 were dismantled in South Africa, followed by Nigeria” (UNODC, 2021). Again, the report illustrated that the reason for the increase in the production of methamphetamine in Nigeria is because drug traffickers export the drug to Asian countries, where drug enforcement agents have dismantled many laboratories, and Cape Town, where demands exceed local supplies (UNODC, 2021). Similarly, Njoku *et al.* (2021) reported that the spokesperson of the NDLEA that they contacted revealed that “since the 1990s, the production of crystal meth has been hijacked by Mexican drug cartels, and they came into Nigeria to set up laboratories in 2016” with the help of their local allies.

On November 24, 2021, the Vanguard Newspaper reported that:

In March 2019, the NDLEA discovered a residential building in Enugu that had been converted into a drug factory, where commercial quantities of methamphetamine (Mkpurummiri) were being produced for export overseas, particularly to South Africa (Okoli *et al.*, 2021).

Another news outlet reported on November 27, 2021, that the NDLEA in Enugu State had discovered illegal laboratories and arrested three suspects (Ulasi, 2021). The arrest was announced to journalists by the Enugu State Commander of the NDLEA, who stated:

Following an intelligence tip, the Command apprehended two suspects with 100 kg of ephedrine, which is used in the production of methamphetamine, on Saturday. Following operations led the team to the laboratory on Zion Avenue Phase 6 Trans Ekulu in Enugu East Local Government Area, Enugu, where the third suspect was apprehended (Ulasi, 2021).

Again, on December 10, 2021, the Daily Times newspaper reported that the NDLEA had dismantled a laboratory in Asaba (a border city with eastern Nigeria), arresting eight suspects:

The NDLEA discovered a massive methamphetamine-making laboratory in Asaba. When officials from the agency's Special Enforcement Team (SET) arrested eight suspects, four of whom were Mexican nationals and four of whom were Nigerians, they also busted the masterminds of the major drug trafficking organization. The suspects behind the syndicate were apprehended in simultaneous operations in Lagos, Obosi, a town near Onitsha in Anambra State, and at the lab in Asaba, according to the NDLEA (Akenzua, 2021).

Based on the evidence reviewed above, it is reasonable to conclude that local laboratories in Nigeria, particularly those set up by drug traffickers in the Eastern region and neighboring states, may be to blame for the current increase in methamphetamine use in northern Nigeria, and particularly Taraba state. This is primarily due to the fact that the availability of drugs encourages consumption and the associated harms (Dumbili, 2020).



Figure 1: 3gm Methamphetamine (Ice) (Purchase in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State for ₦24,000)





Figure 2: Electric Bulb Rims (use to smoke Ice)

### **Common Symptoms of Methamphetamine (Ice)**

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

- Craving the drug Methamphetamine (Ice) 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 Methamphetamine (Ice)
- 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



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## **Consequences of Methamphetamine (Ice) Drug Abuses**

Methamphetamine (Ice) use can have a range of serious consequences for youths, both in the short-term and the long-term. Some potential consequences of methamphetamine use among youths include:

- **Physical health consequences:** Methamphetamine is a highly toxic drug, and long-term use can lead to a range of physical health problems, including heart attacks, stroke, kidney damage, and psychosis. Methamphetamine use can also lead to malnutrition, as it can suppress appetite and lead to weight loss. In addition, methamphetamine use can increase the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as it can impair judgment and increase risky sexual behavior.
- **Mental health consequences:** Methamphetamine use can have serious mental health consequences, including anxiety, depression, psychosis, and cognitive impairment. Methamphetamine use can also increase the risk of suicide and self-harm.
- **Social and economic consequences:** Methamphetamine use can have negative social and economic consequences for youths, including social isolation, relationship problems, and difficulty in school or work. Methamphetamine use is also often associated with crime and poverty, as it can lead to financial problems and criminal behavior.

Largely, the consequences of methamphetamine use among youths can be severe and can have long-lasting impacts on physical, mental, and social well-being. It is important to address methamphetamine use among youths and to provide support and resources to help prevent and mitigate these consequences.

## **Prevention Strategies for Reducing Methamphetamine (Ice) Use Among Youths**

There are a number of interventions or prevention strategies that have been shown to be effective in reducing methamphetamine (Ice) use among youths. Some potential strategies include:

- **School-based prevention programs:** School-based prevention programs can educate youths about the risks and consequences of methamphetamine use and promote healthy



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behaviors and alternatives to drug use. These programs can be tailored to the needs and characteristics of the local community and can be delivered through various formats, such as classroom-based lessons, peer education, or interactive activities.

- **Community-based prevention programs:** Community-based prevention programs can involve a range of activities, such as public awareness campaigns, community coalitions, or after-school programs, that aim to reduce methamphetamine use among youths in the local community. These programs can be delivered through a variety of channels, such as schools, faith-based organizations, or community centers, and can involve a range of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community leaders.
- **Drug treatment and recovery programs:** Drug treatment and recovery programs can provide support and resources to youths who are struggling with methamphetamine addiction and help them to overcome their substance use and rebuild their lives. These programs can take a range of forms, such as inpatient or outpatient treatment, and can involve a variety of therapeutic approaches, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or contingency management.
- **Family-based interventions:** Family-based interventions can involve working with parents and other family members to support youths in their recovery from methamphetamine use and to prevent relapse. These interventions can involve a range of activities, such as family therapy, parent education, or home-based support, and can be delivered through a variety of settings, such as clinics, schools, or community centers.

Largely, the effectiveness of interventions or prevention strategies for reducing methamphetamine use among youths in Nigeria will depend on a range of factors, including the characteristics of the local community, the resources and capacities of the implementing organizations, and the cultural and social context. It is important to carefully design and evaluate interventions and prevention strategies to ensure that they are evidence-based and effective in reducing methamphetamine use among youths in Nigeria.

## **Theoretical Frame Work**



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## **Risk and Protective Factors Framework**

This paper adopted Risk and Protective factor framework. The Risk and Protective Factor Framework was developed to understand the complex interplay of factors that contribute to the development of health behaviors and mental health problems. It was first introduced in the field of public health and has since been applied in many different areas, including substance abuse, violence, and mental health. The framework focuses on identifying and understanding the individual, familial, and environmental factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of engaging in certain behaviors. These factors are referred to as risk factors and protective factors, respectively. The Risk and Protective Factor Framework provides a useful way to conceptualize the complex and interconnected nature of factors that contribute to health behaviors and can inform the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies.

The relevance of the Risk and Protective Factor Framework to this paper the prevalence of Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis can be seen in its focus on identifying individual, familial, and environmental factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of Methamphetamine use. By applying this framework, one can examine the interplay between various risk and protective factors that may contribute to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis, including individual factors such as prior drug use, low self-esteem, or a history of trauma or abuse, as well as environmental factors such as access to drugs, cultural norms and attitudes towards drug use, and availability of resources for substance abuse treatment.

In this way, the Risk and Protective Factor Framework provide valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors that contribute to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis, and inform the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies. The framework also helped to identify potential targets for intervention and prevention efforts, such as increasing access to substance abuse treatment or addressing societal attitudes towards drug use.

## **Conclusion**



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In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the need for a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach to address Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. The study demonstrated the serious nature of the problem, with a significant number of young people in Jalingo metropolis engaging in Methamphetamine use. The study also identified individual, familial, and environmental factors that contribute to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis, underscoring the need for effective prevention and intervention strategies that address multiple and interrelated factors.

The use of the Risk and Protective Factor Framework provided valuable insights into the issue, and the study demonstrated the usefulness of this framework in guiding the analysis of Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. The findings of the study provide important information for policy-makers, health professionals, and other stakeholders who are working to address Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis and similar populations.

In short, the findings of this study emphasize the importance of addressing Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis, and highlight the need for effective prevention and intervention strategies that consider the multiple and interrelated factors that contribute to this serious issue.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to address Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis:

- i. **Increase access to substance abuse treatment:** The study showed that individual factors such as low self-esteem and lack of access to substance abuse treatment can contribute to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. Increasing access to substance abuse treatment, including behavioral and pharmacological therapies, can help to address these factors and reduce Methamphetamine use among youth.
- ii. **Strengthen family support systems:** The study identified familial factors such as lack of parental monitoring and support as contributing to Methamphetamine use among youth in



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- Jalingo metropolis. Strengthening family support systems, including parenting programs and other interventions aimed at improving parent-child relationships, can help to address these factors and reduce Methamphetamine use among youth.
- iii. Address societal attitudes towards drug use: The study showed that societal attitudes towards drug use can play a role in contributing to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. Addressing these attitudes through public education campaigns, media initiatives, and other strategies can help to reduce the stigma associated with substance abuse and encourage young people to seek help when they need it.
  - iv. Developing and implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs for methamphetamine use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis: This could involve creating or adapting existing programs that have been shown to be effective in reducing methamphetamine use in other populations or settings, and evaluating their effectiveness in Jalingo Metropolis.
  - v. Increasing funding for research on methamphetamine use and its consequences among youths in Jalingo Metropolis
  - vi. Strengthening collaborations between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners: This could involve establishing partnerships between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to share knowledge and expertise and to work together to address methamphetamine use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis.
  - vii. Developing targeted outreach and education efforts: This could involve creating targeted outreach and education campaigns that are designed to raise awareness of the risks and consequences of methamphetamine use among youths in Jalingo Metropolis and to promote healthy behaviors and alternatives to drug use.
  - viii. Increase access to recreational activities: The study showed that environmental factors such as boredom and lack of access to recreational activities can contribute to Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. Increasing access to recreational activities, including sports, arts, and other programs, can provide young



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people with alternative forms of stimulation and reduce their risk of engaging in Methamphetamine use.

- ix. Implement community-based prevention programs: The study emphasized the importance of community-based prevention programs as a means of addressing Methamphetamine use among youth in Jalingo metropolis. These programs can help to raise awareness about the dangers of substance abuse, promote healthy behaviors, and build resilience among young people.

These recommendations are intended to provide a starting point for further action and should be tailored to the specific needs of the youth population in Jalingo metropolis. It is important to recognize that Methamphetamine use is a complex issue, and that a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is needed to effectively address it.

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