Framing of Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) Issues in Select Newspapers in Nigeria

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Abstract

Some youths in Southeastern part of Nigeria are currently being ravaged by the influence of methamphetamine abuse. The negative effect of this crystal meth or Mkpuru Mmiri as it is commonly called cannot be over emphasised, going by the devastation they have wreaked in the south east region. The public rely on the media to be informed, educated and influenced to take positive actions. The media are expected to inform and educate the public on issues of health among other things. The print media, especially newspapers have been identified as one of the most effective means of communication. In view of the above fact, this study evaluated framing of methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) campaign in select newspapers in Nigeria. The study adopted content analysis research design. From the findings, the tone of the stories was favourable. Further findings revealed that the major media source of information in the coverage of Methamphetamine campaign was vigilante officials. The researchers concluded that the select newspapers relied much on vigilante officials/members to get their information on the methamphetamine issues. Based on findings of the study, we recommend that newspapers should not depend on vigilante officials alone in the

coverage of Mkpuru Mmiri issues, but other sources such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), health experts etc.

Keywords: Framing, Methamphetamine, Mkpuru Mmiri Campaign, Newspapers.

Introduction

The South East of Nigeria has been experiencing so much economic losses due to a myriad of factors. This in turn has contributed to a lot of socioeconomic problems resulting unemployment the resultant and increase in insecurity. The global effects of the covid-19 pandemic equally affected the economies of the region. Although, the recent increase in youths addicted to the lethal drug Methamphetamine crystal meth now known in local parlance as Mkpuru mmiri which locally translates to 'seed of water' seems to have become the last straw that may break the metaphoric back of the South East economy and by implication the country as a whole given the global nature of human interactions in the twenty first century. The widespread consumption of this deadly drug is presently ravaging communities in the region. Some youths of both genders have lost their minds, some have died, some are on the streets in States clearly indicative of mental illness (Ogazieechi, 2021).

However, some of the communities have decided to meet out jungle justice to the local sellers and consumers of the drugs. Some communities have formed vigilantes to arrest both the sellers and the consumers. Some of the suspects have

been seen on social media being beaten or punished in different harrowing ways. The negative effect of methamphetamine is such that after its consumption, they engage in criminal and immoral acts detrimental to the society at large. It is a common sight to see addicts on the streets of South-East communities, some of them incoherently walking the streets naked or half naked. You see them, mainly young men in their twenties, murmur to themselves while walking on the streets. Looking haggard unkempt, they are victims of Mkpuru mmiri. They entirely operate on a different level from normal human beings (Okoli, Ujumadu, Agbo, & Oko, 2021). Viral videos are circulated daily basis from various communities in the South-East, of victims of Mkpuru mmiri, with their attendant abnormal behaviours. Some of them were reported to have killed their parents, siblings or burnt their houses under the influence of the drug.

Ojiego (2021) observes that an epidemic has hit Igbo land. No one is safe. Gory tales litter the space. On October 19, 2021, a boy allegedly killed his father in Adazi Ani in Anambra State and took the father's N50, 000 just to buy Mkpuru mmiri. He was apprehended by youths of the community, beaten to stupor and burnt

alive. In Umudioka, Anambra State, two siblings, after taking Guzoro, chased their mother with machetes and prevented the woman from coming to the family house for three days until the village vigilante officials intervened. Scholars in media studies believe that modern issues are largely impossible without adequate media coverage (Ochonogor & Omego, 2012). Nigerian media have played an active role in society relaying news of strife health and stimulating discussions and thinking on matters of public and personal interest (Omu, 1978, cited in Ochonogor & Omego, 2012). The public rely on the media to be informed, educated and influenced to take positive actions. The media are expected to inform and educate the public on issues of health among other things. The print media, especially newspapers have been identified as one of the most effective means of communication. Studies have been carried out on the quantitative content analysis of health related issues. There is gap in studies about the framing of Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) campaigns in select newspapers in Nigeria. This gap needs to be filled.

Statement of the Problem

There are numerous trending videos on social media platforms from different communities in Igbo land of young men, and in some cases, women and under-aged, being tied to beams and trees at public squares, beaten mercilessly for dealing in and taking Mkpuru mmiri. Information emanating

from the zone shows that many Igbo youths are going insane, even as some have completely gone mad after drug use. Some people actually believe that only people who take such drugs could be killing people and destroying property without any provocation and without showing remorse. Okoli, Ujumadu, Agbo, & Oko, (2021) note that in Anambra State, for instance, the drug has become a house hold name in such communities like Obosi, Enugwu Ukwu, Agukwu, Agulu, Okija, Uli, Awka, Nteje, Awkuzu, Umueri, Umudioka and many more. In the communities where Mkpuru mmiri has become common, rape has also become rampant as it is believed that the drug increases the libido of the affected youths. Another surprising thing is that some women also indulge in it and, in their case, the result is usually madness.

However, the role of mass media in health promotion and intervention goes more than just creating awareness on a particular health issue; it also means placing emphasis on sources of reportage of such issue. These media angle of presenting health issues take the form of media reportage to influence public perception and induce attitudinal response, leading to positive behavioural changes. A search on previous studies showed that various health-related matters have been investigated, by scholars such as: Anho, Muoboghare, (2021),Odionye, Ezegwu & Yare (2019), Ono (2021) and Egwuaba & Olisa (2021). Further search showed that

there is literature lacuna in the area of framing of Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) campaigns in select newspapers in Nigeria. An attempt to fill this knowledge gap prompted this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to guide the study:

RQ1. What is the story format used in the coverage of the Methamphetamine issues in Nigeria?

RQ2. What are the news sources of Methamphetamine issues in the sampled newspapers?

RQ3: What is the dominant tone used in the coverage of Methamphetamine related stories in Nigeria?

RQ.4 What is the dominant frame used in the coverage of Methamphetamine issues in the sampled newspapers?

An Overview of Methamphetamine

What is Mkpuru mmiri? It is a hard drug called *Methamphetamine* or *meth* for short. It is called Mkpuru mmiri or ice in local parlance because it looks like ice block. It is also called Guzoro because of euphoria effect one gets after taking it. Crystal Meth or Mkpuru mmniri was developed in Japan in 1919 and grossly abused during World War II when it was issued to pilots on suicidal mission then called KamKaze (Ojiego, 2022). After the world war, it was used briefly as a medication for depression and for controlling obesity, but it was quickly abandoned and

banned thereafter, especially in the 1970s.

Methamphetamine is a potent central nervous system (CNS) stimulant that is mainly used as a recreational drug and less commonly as a second-line treatment for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder obesity (Nwabughiogu, 2021). The US National Institute on Drug Abuse described methamphetamine as a powerful, highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. It takes the form of a white, odourless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder that easily dissolves in water or alcohol. Meth was developed early in the 20th century from its parent drug, amphetamine, and was used originally in nasal decongestants and bronchial inhalers. Like amphetamine, methamphetamine causes increased activity and talkativeness, decreased appetite, and a pleasurable sense of well-being or euphoria.

However, methamphetamine differs from amphetamine in that, at comparable doses, much amounts of the drug get into the brain, making it a more potent stimulant. It also has longer-lasting and more harmful effects on the central nervous system. These characteristics make it a drug with a high potential for widespread misuse. In time, it became clear that methamphetamine dangerously addictive. In the 1970s, the drug was added to the Schedule II list of controlled substances and became illegal except when it is prescribed by a physician for a very

limited number of medical conditions. But it is now produced locally. It was reported 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. It is a very addictive stimulant that renders the user hyperactive and prone to destructive tendencies which may include suicide or homicide at the slightest provocation and without a feeling of remorse.

In March 2019, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, discovered a residential building that turned into a drug factory at No 1 Zion Avenue, Phase 6, Trans-Ekulu, Enugu, where Methamphetamine (Mkpuru mmiri) was being produced in commercial quantities for export to overseas, particularly to South Africa. Three factory workers were arrested, but the main drug baron, whose name was given as Christian Chibuzor, was not arrested since he had fled the country (Okoli, Ujumadu, Agbo, & Oko, 2021).

Earlier than the Trans-Ekulu discovery, a similar factory was discovered in Ozalla, Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State. The NDLEA, however, refers to the factories as laboratories where it arrested three persons working there. The agency said their arrests were based on credible intelligence which led to initial arrest of the first two suspects with 100 kilograms of Ephedrine used as one of the raw

materials in the production Methamphetamine, otherwise known as Mkpuru mmiri. NDLEA said that due to the hazardous nature of the chemicals involved, the agency dismantled the clandestine laboratory, while the precursor chemicals and paraphernalia and other equipment for production, and were seized by the agency. The Enugu State Public Relations Officer of NDLEA, Mrs. Mmeka Calista, however, said that the fleeing Christian Chibuzor was later arrested in South Africa and prosecuted together with his clandestine group members.

Empirical Reviews

Odionye, Ezegwu & Yare (2019) carried out a self-affirmative discourse on the expected roles of mass media in the fight against Lassa fever in Edo State. The researchers adopted qualitative research method. The researchers opined that despite their awareness level and media health messages on Lassa fever, the residents of Edo State, especially those in the rural areas still exhibit attitudes and practices that favour the spread of the disease. The researchers recommended that the traditional institutions should employed to champion campaign at the grassroot level.

Egwuaba & Olisa (2021) examined health-seeking Behaviour among care-givers for febrile illness/common fever in under-five children in Ukwulu, Anambra State, Nigeria. The researchers used the health belief model to explain the

social phenomena studied and adopted the mixed research method where survey and Focus Group Discussion were adopted. The findings indicated that 43.4% of care-givers were aware of the aetiology of febrile illnesses among under-five children in Ukwulu, opted for couple's 53.2% prescribed drugs from pharmacies, 46.8% utilised the hospitals for treatment. The prevention and researchers, recommended. among others, that serious educative awareness campaigns be embarked upon by both state and local health authorities on the dangers posed by febrile illnesses for under-five children in Ukwulu.

Anho & Muoboghare (2021) coverage studied newspaper coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Nigeria with a focus on the frequency of coverage, prominence given to the issue, story format, news sources and media tone. Three widely read newspapers (Guardian, Vanguard and *Punch*) published between January 2020 and February 2021, were content analysed. Results revealed that the newspapers gave much attention to COVID-19 reportage; however, they did not give much importance to COVID-19 in terms of story placement and space allotment. The researchers further found that newspapers predominantly used straight news reports without pictures to provide information about the pandemic. The researchers recommended that media organisation should utilise pictures more in their reportage of COVID-19

in ways that would facilitate believability.

Tsafa, Nkwam-Uwaoma, Tetsoma. (2022)investigated of Covid-19 newspaper framing vaccination in Nigeria. The researchers adopted quantitative content analysis approach. The findings showed a high tone of favouring vaccination. The researchers recommended that media outlets should favourable adopt coverage of vaccination to reduce vaccine hesitancy and encourage uptake.

Ono (2021) investigated online version of mainline newspaper readers perception of NCDC updates of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Anambra State in the year 2020. Survey research method was employed by researcher. It was found that 84% of the readers in Anambra perceived NCDC updates to be misinformation. The researcher recommended that the institute should include pictures and places of abode of people so confirmed as infected alongside its updates for more believability and Covid-19 compliance.

Nwala, Umor & Njoku (2020) investigated newspaper reportage of preventive measures of coronavirus and behaviour change in Rivers State. Content anaylysis method adopted. The findings showed that stories relating to self-isolation of people were the most frequently published about coronavirus. study recommended that the newspapers should publish series of stories with adequate information

about preventive measures of diseases to allow individuals make choices on the measure that suit their situation.

The plurality of these studies forms empirical strength for this study. However, from the studies reviewed, most of them used survey approach and qualitative methods, few others employed content analysis. This opens up a gap for our research to fit in. Similarly, there is no study, especially on the area of media and Mkpuru mmiri (Methamphetamine). It becomes very relevant to conduct this study to present another angle to support the works previously done and fill the literature gap. Thus, this work seeks to look into meth from content a content analysis perspective, by looking at framing of methamphetamine (Mkpuru mmiri) campaigns select newspapers in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the framing theory. Framing is the way a news item is presented by the media, how it is interpreted and understood by the audience. The basis of framing theory is that the media focus attention on certain events and then place them within a field of meaning. Framing theory suggests clearly that the manner something is presented to an audience (called "the frame") influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Framing theory explains that the media have the capacity to selectively focus on a phenomenon of interest within a field of meaning (Hassan, Mathiassen &

Lowry, 2019). According to the theory, people make sense of their experiences using interpretational packages called frames. To frame means to slant a story towards a particular direction. This theory suggests that the way information is presented (framed) determines the way people understand such message (Ezegwu, Uduak, & Obichili, 2021).

In order words, the choice of words and sentences used in reporting a story may influence how audiences think about the issue, not by making aspect of the issue more salient, but by invoking interpretive schemas that influence the interpretation incoming information. In relation to the current study, the words selected, organised and presented by newspapers about the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmmiri) consumption or usage could contribute to public understanding, perception and reaction to the issue in Nigeria and beyond.

Methodology

The researchers adopted quantitative content analysis to study newspaper framing of methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) campaigns in select newspapers in Nigeria. Three national newspapers (The Guardian, Vanguard and *Punch*) were purposively selected because of their wide reach and readership. By implication, the one thousand ninety-five issues of the three newspapers published between June, 2021 and May, 2022 constituted the study population. In a bid to get a representative sample for the study, the composite week sampling technique, where one day is drawn every week of every month throughout the study period was adopted to select 48 issues of each of the three newspapers. Sundays were excluded and the overall sample size was 144. Riffe, Aust & Lacy (1993) cited in Wimmer and Dominick (2011).

Also, Okoro & Anho (2015, p. 170) said "the composite week sampling technique is superior to both a random sampling and a consecutive day sampling techniques when dealing with newspaper content".

The instrument for data collection was the coding sheet and it contained all the relevant **content categories** such as: Story format, dominant news sources, dominant tone of reports and dominant Frame:

- Story Format: This refers to pattern of Mkpuru mmiri reportage, which could be in form of: Straight news, features. editorials, opinions, columns. letters to the editor and photographs.
- ii. Dominant News Sources: This refers to major sources where stories on Mkpuru Mmiri come from. The identified sources are: Medical/health experts, vigilante/community leaders, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), family members of the victims and Government officials.
- *iii. Dominant Tone:* The tone was categorised into *alarming*

(unfavourable), 'neutral' and reassuring (favourable). In general, a report was judged as alarming when the situation is defined in terms of risk and hazard. For example: 'How Mkpuru mmiri is destroying and killing Igbo youths' (Vanguard, November 24th, 2021), 'Mkpuru mmiri, death on demand (The Guardian, December 8th, 2021). 'Mkpuru mmiri: 'The destroying Igbo vouths' 20th, (Vanguard, November 2021). A report is reassuring or favourable when risks related to Mkpuru mmiri are put in a broader perspective that downscale the risk or indicate a solution. For example: 'Mkpuru mmiri: South-East governors to take action against sale of hard drugs (Punch, December 1, 2021). While neutral tone is the report neither favourable unfavourable to Mkpuru mmiri issue or when the tone is undecided.

iv. Dominant Frame: This refers to various frames used in the coverage or reportage of Mkpuru mmiri issue. Such as: Solution or reform frame, punishment frame, hopeless frame, ethnic frame and government frame.

The **units of analysis** were: straight news, features, editorials, opinions, columns, letters to the editor and photographs on framing of methamphetamine campaign in select

newspapers in Nigeria. The inter-coder reliability for the study was calculated using Holstics formulae (cited in Ezegwu, Udoyo, & Ovuike, 2017).

Where; Reliability =
$$\frac{2M}{N1 + N2}$$

Where M = number of coding decision the coders agree on.

N1 +N2 = Total number of coding decision by the first and second's coder respectively.

Therefore;
$$\frac{24}{31} = \frac{48}{62} = 0.72$$

For the study, each of the coders identified and categorized 31 themes, but they agreed on only 24 of them. The reliability coefficient is 0.77. The Descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the data obtained and the data were presented in the form of tables for easy understanding.

Data presentation and Analysis

The studied newspapers published a total of 63 stories within the study period. *The Guardian* newspaper reported a total of 21 stories, *Vanguard* published 25 while the *Punch* newspaper published 17 stories.

Table 1: Story formats used by *Vanguard, The Guardian* and *Punch* newspaper

Story formats	Vanguard	The Guardian	The Punch	Total	Percentage
Straight news	8	5	4	17	27
Feature	4	3	3	10	16
Editorial	1	0	0	1	2
Opinions	4	4	3	11	17
Columns	3	5	4	12	19
Letters to the Edite	or 2	1	1	4	6
Photographs	3	3	2	8	13
Total	25	21	17	63	100

The data above showed the coverage of Mkpuru mmiri issue was reported mainly in straight news format, with over 27% of the stories.

Table 2: Sources of the newspapers coverage of Mkpuru Mmiri story

Sources	Vanguard	The Guardian	Punch	Total	Percentage
Medical/Health Expert	3	4	3	10	16
NDLEA	4	3	2	9	14
Vigilante/Community le	eaders 9	7	5	21	33
Family members	3	2	3	8	13
Government Officials	6	5	4	15	20
Total	25	21	17	63	100

The data in table two revealed that the major sources of stories on Mkpuru mmiri stories were through the Vigilante/Community leaders, which accounted for 33% of the reports.

Table 3: Tone of newspapers coverage of Mkpuru Mmiri issues

Tone	anguard	The Guardian	Punch	Total	Percentage
Favourable Tone (Reassuring	g) 13	11	9	33	53
Neutral Tone	5	4	3	12	19
Alarming tone (Unfavourable	e) 7	6	5	18	28
Total	25	21	17	63	100

The implication of the data in the above table is that the newspapers used favourable tone mostly in their coverage of Mkpuru mmiri issues.

Table 4: Dominant frames used by *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers

Dominant Frames	Vanguard	The Guardian	The Punch	Total	Percentage
Solution/Reform frame	e 5	3	3	11	17
Punishment frame	3	4	2	9	14
Hopeless frame	9	7	5	21	33
Ethnic frame	4	5	4	13	21
Death frame	4	2	3	9	14
Total	25	21	17	63	100

The implication of that in table four is that the studied newspapers used hopeless frame more than other frames identified in the study.

Discussion of Findings

reporting framing of methamphetamine issues in select Nigerian newspapers, the newspapers published 27% straight as compared to 16% feature, 2% editorial and 17% opinion articles. While columns had 19%, letters to the editor had 6% and photographs accounted for 13%. This indicated that the coverage dominated by straight news items. This outcome agrees with Akinwalere & Asekere study (2022), they observe that The Guardian & The Nation newspapers in Nigeria reported Covid-19 pandemic issues in a traditional

news format. They found that 82% of the stories were straight news while 24% was feature stories. Also, since editorial article recorded 2% of the stories, this means that not much attention was paid to editorials published during the period of study. It is regrettable that editorials, being the newspapers' views on topical issues, have not effectively presented their stands framing on the methamphetamine issues in select Nigerian newspapers.

The Mkpuru mmiri issue is fast ravaging the lives of Nigerian youths and it calls for urgent attention to stop the menace. Nigerian newspapers ought to have carried editorial on the issue. Nwabueze (2017) asserts that by exposing certain topical issues for public debate and discussion, the editorial sets the agenda for the public. The good and bad ideas, harsh and people-oriented policies and other current issues are brought-up for discussion on the editorial page as matters for general debate in the society.

The data indicated that major sources of stories on Mkpuru mmiri stories were through the vigilante/community leaders, which accounted for 33% of the reports, it was followed by government officials while the least sources was the family members. It is generally believed that news sources play a significant role in assigning importance to certain issues and having vigilante officials/community leaders as major news source showed that efforts are being made to tackle the issue.

Also, this result is slightly different from Apuke & Omar (2020) who found that NCDC, followed by other government officials, health sector. medical experts Virologists) and WHO/United Nations were the most frequently cited sources the coverage of COVID-19 pandemic. According Daily to Independent newspaper editorial, "there must be involvement of communities, religious bodies as well as families, parents and private individuals to tackle the Mkpuru mmiri issue. After all, drug addicts are

originally from individual homes and families" (*Daily Independent* Editorial, December 8, 2021). It is our view that if family members of victims of Mkpuru mmiri were used as news sources, with relevant pictures, it would have been easier for Nigerians to believe and understand the negative effect of the deadly drug.

Further finding showed that the used favourable newspapers reassuring tone mostly in their coverage of Mkpuru mmiri issues, which accounted for 53%; it was followed by neutral tone with 19% of the items while the unfavourable or alarming tone was 28% of the items. Examples of the favourable tones are: "Mkpuru mmiri: South-East Governors to take action against sale of hard drugs" (Punch newspaper, December 1, 2021), "NDLEA nabs Mkpuru mmiri cook in Imo, five airport drug syndicate" (The Guardian, March 31, 2022), "Halting the havoc of crystal meth, other narcotics" (Vanguard, Editorial, February 8, 2022).

It was also found that the newspapers used varieties of frame in their coverage of methamphetamine issues in Nigerian newspapers. Although, the dominant frame used by the newspapers was hopeless frame. The frames used includes: Solution or reform frame, punishment frame, hopeless frame, ethnic frame and government frame. The use of these frames by the newspapers aligns with the submission of De Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, (2001), cited in Ezegwu,

Okon & Chime-Nganya (2019), that newspapers used news frames to select, organise and emphasis certain aspects of the reality to the exclusion of others. Also, framing theory assumes that the mass media give interpretations in specific representation, using certain words or phrases, choosing certain films or pictures, making certain contextual references, referring to certain sources, giving examples as typical, and so on such that audience do not just read about an issue but view it from a particular perspective.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to assess the framing of Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) campaigns in select newspapers in Nigeria. The findings suggest that the coverage dominated by straight news items. The researchers noted that the major sources of stories on Mkpuru mmiri through issues were Vigilante/Community leaders, which accounted for 33%. It was also established that the newspapers used more favourable or reassuring tone mostly in their coverage of Mkpuru mmiri issues.

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) campaigns is a serious issue because of the devastating effect it is having in our society,

- the media should adopt other formats beyond straight news in reporting about it, such as interviews, the use of photographs, features and editorials. This will provide or create more awareness to members of the society.
- 2. Newspapers should not depend on vigilante officials/community leaders alone in the coverage of Mkpuru mmiri issues, but other sources such as National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), health experts etc.
- 3. The newspapers should use tones that can discourage people from engaging in drugs like Mkpuru mmiri.
- 4. Newspapers in Nigeria should use solution frames in coverage or reportage of Mkpuru mmiri issue as it will help to solve the problem.
- 5. Future researchers should carry out survey research method to find out how audience perceives the media coverage of Mkpuru mmiri campaigns in Nigeria.

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APPENDICES



guardian.ng

https://guardian.ng > opinion > re-...

Re: Mkpuru-miri, death on demand The Guardian Nigeria News

3 Jan 2022 - Mkpuru Mmiri (Methamphetamine or Crystal Meth). Sir: The article, "Mkpuru-miri, death on demand" written by Matthew Agboma Ozah which ...



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Mkpuru mmiri: Drug chaos in Igboland escalates!

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