Newspaper Coverage of Illicit Drug Methamphetamine Hydrochloride (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study was undertaken to analyse the newspaper coverage of a dangerous and illicit drug Methamphetamine Hydrochloride (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast, Nigeria. The objectives were to determine the frequency of coverage given to the illicit drug Methamphetamine Hydrochloride in Southeast by the Guardian, the Vanguard and the Punch newspapers among others. The framing theory was adopted by the study. The population of the study consisted of 312 editions of the three newspapers published between 2nd of November, 2020 to 30th November, 2021: a study period of one year (each of the newspapers contributing 104 issues). Philip Meyer's guide for sample selection was adopted to select 248 issues of the three newspapers as the sample of the study. Data were presented in tables and analysis done using simple percentages. Findings of the study revealed that the Vanguard newspaper carried the greatest number of stories on the Methamphetamine in Southeast and the majority of issues covered about the Methamphetamine by the three national newspapers were placed in sundry pages inside the newspapers. The study concluded that the three newspapers gave the dangerous and illicit drug Methamphetamine Hydrochloride issues in southeast low prominence in their reportage, but covered major issues of the illicit drug Methamphetamine hydrochloride. It was therefore recommended that the Southeast should give timely and accurately sensitive information and communication before, during and after dangerous illicit drug issues. Also, the Southeast should help to discover truth and assist in the process of solving social problems by presenting all manner of evidence and opinions.

Keywords: Newspaper, Placement, Frequency, Drug, Methamphetamine, Hydrochloride, Mkpuru-Mmiri

INTRODUCTION

The origin of *Mkpuru Mmiri* – Methamphetamine Hydrochloride – is traced to Japan in as far back as 1919. It was reportedly grossly abused during World War II when it was issued to pilots on a suicidal mission called Kamikaze. But after World War II, it was said to have been briefly used as a medication for depression and for controlling obesity (Marshal & Werb, 2010). It was, however, quickly abandoned and banned by Japanese government thereafter, especially from the 1970s. It was reported that since the 1990s, the production of crystal Meth has been hijacked by Mexican drug cartels and they came to Nigeria to set up laboratories in 2016 (*Vanguard*, 2021). 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. *Mkpuru Mmiri* falls under the drugs called speed which is a street name for various stimulant drugs that teens, young adults and others use to feel more alert and focused, and in some cases, to feel high. It is also called Methamphetamine or crystal Meth, a highly addictive stimulant drug similar to cocaine which is now on high abuse by Nigerian youths. The abuse is seen in all parts of Nigeria. However, in Igbo communities, it has assumed a notorious dimension and is fast destroying the youths. This destructive substance has in fact become so popular among Igbo youths that it is now nick-named *Mkpuru Mmiri*, literally translated as blocked water or ice block. Its negative effect is such that after its consumption, they engage in criminal and immoral acts detrimental to the society at large. The notoriety of the abuse of Mkpuru Mmiri is such that it has attracted the attention of the members of Imo state House of Assembly who discussed it on the floor of the House and suggested that the State Ministry of Health run a vigorous media campaign against its intake.

Mkpuru Mmiri is also taken recreationally, often mixed with other drugs. Despite the sought-after, short-term effects of some forms of speed, all forms of speed are dangerous and addictive. Noting the increasing damage the drug is causing the youths, the Imo House of Assembly also called on Governor Hope Uzodimma to constitute a stakeholder committee that will work with National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to tackle the dangerous dimension it has already assumed in many Igbo communities. Imo Assembly further suggested that the ministry of Health be mandated to educate the youths on the use of the illicit drug. Also, Enugu students have commenced a campaign against Mkpuru Mmiri. It is a common sight to see addicts on the streets of South-East communities. Some of them are seen talking incoherently while walking the street naked or half naked. Young men in their twenties who are victims of Mkpuru Mmiri can mainly be seen looking haggard and unkempt. They entirely operate on a different level from normal human beings. Viral videos are circulated on 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. Under the influence of drug, they respect nobody, look down on whoever they come across and nobody is anything to them.

As at 2019, the drug was said to be more costly than cocaine and that its Africa production was rated highly in the international drug market. People were not too

aware that the drug was also consumed in Nigeria which would later become the destroyer of youths of the South-East. Many Igbo communities are currently facing the dangerous effects of Mkpuru Mmiri and youths are into it, and incidentally, they have become a burden to their families and communities as some of them were reported to have killed or maimed members of their family because the drug is said to affect the brain adversely. Aside from being unable to sleep, users exhibit anti-social behaviours arising from paranoia and hallucination. The drug takes a toll on the physical look of its users. It typically makes them look older and their faces prone to acne – sometimes, excessive use leads to damaged gum and teeth, commonly called Meth mouth. What is most frightening is that Meth addiction is one of the most difficult to treat because no drug can cure it, except by behavioural therapy which at the moment is not readily available in the country. Since the launch of the offensive action campaign early this year, NDLEA has recorded significant seizures of kilograms of the drug. Likewise, the Agency has located and destroyed not less than 18 Meth producing laboratories in the country in the past few years (*Vanguard*, 2021).

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency has been monitoring the trend in Meth production, abuse and trafficking. And because of the rampant abuse and production of the drug, especially in the South-East, the Chairman/CEO recently gave specific instructions to relevant directorates of the Agency on how the agency should respond to the development. Questions are still being asked how Mkpuru Mmiri became popular in the South-East region of Nigeria. The rate at which it has spread across most towns and even remote villages is unbelievable. It was even suspected that the hard drug contributed in no small measure to the problem of the unknown gunmen in parts of the South-East in recent time, particularly in Anambra State before the recent governorship election in the state. 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 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 (*Vanguard*, 2021). In the countries 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.

Currently, some communities have started identifying those who peddle the drug in their areas and are banishing them, while their youths who were known to be

taking it are publicly punished by flogging them in village squares. For instance, the Umudioka Improvement Union in Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State has proscribed the sale and consumption of all illicit drugs and substances in the community and warned those still undertaking such business to desist forthwith as they stood the risk of being arrested and proscribed with the support of the relevant security agencies (*Guardian*, 2021). In Okija, Ihiala Local Government Area, youths of the community early this month of November, 2021 marched through the major roads to drive home their full commitment towards eradicating the menace of cultism which is linked to drug abuse, particularly Mkpuru Mmiri in the town. Some stakeholders from the town joined in the campaign during which they warned that anyone found guilty would be seriously dealt with. Several communities like Obosi, Enugwu, Okija, Uli, Awka, Umueri, Umudioka and many others have also taken similar measures, but it is left to be seen how effective the measures would be.

The traditional ruler of Oriendu autonomous community, Umuahia North Local Government Area, Abia State, Eze Philip Ajomiwe has decried the devastating effects of Mkpuru Mmiri and other hard drugs among the youths. There are other substances the youth mix and consume which do a lot of damage to their organs. They feel those things they sip give them energy but it is gradually eating them up. That is why youths develop kidney stones, heart disease and even strokes. Dr. Okwuonu advocated aggressive campaign and sensitization against the harmful effects of Methamphetamine and other harmful drugs to save the future of our youths. He also urged State Houses of Assembly to legislate against the harmful drug so that the distributors and consumers could be punished as a deterrent to others. (*Vanguard*, 2021).

Addicts can take Methamphetamine by smoking, sniffing, swallowing, snorting or injecting the powder that has been dissolved in water or alcohol. The “high” from the drug starts and fades quickly, people often take repeated doses in a binge and crash pattern. In some cases, people take Methamphetamine as a “run” giving up food and sleep while continuing to take the drug every few hours for up to several days. Taking even small amounts of Methamphetamine can result in the same health effects as taking cocaine or amphetamines. These include increased wakefulness and physical activity, decreased appetite, faster breathing, rapid and or irregular heart-beat and increased blood pressure and body temperature with little or no advanced warning from the press (Zorick et al., 2010).

The press is an agency responsible for the dissemination of information. This is the overriding function of the press in every society, which is to inform the citizens about issues of national interest and dangerous illicit drugs so Methamphetamine issue is no exception. As a result of this function, citizens rely on the press as their major source of news, particularly news events outside their immediate domains. The news gathering and information dissemination basically refer to surveillance of the environment. The surveillance means keeping a close watch or guard over someone or something. It is the duty of the press to alert the society and to create awareness through the provision of information concerning events and happenings. Such information provided can come in form of warning to the people about impending damage or dangerous illicit drugs disasters.

Ndolo (2011) maintains that the press is expected to constantly draw the attention of government and spirited individuals to the problems around them. The attention will not only keep the citizens abreast of the happening but will prepare them on how to manage its menace. In the view of Udoudo and Esuk (2011), good reporters are essential to their communities and their nations. A populace needs to be well informed in order to be good citizens of their countries. Journalists must learn what is of interest to their readers, listeners and viewers and provide them with reports that are useful to them**.**

Apart from the food, clothes, shelter of man, man needs information to survive. The press is therefore expected to give accurate and objective information to the citizens to enable them to take decision on how to live on the environment. The fairness, truth, objective, and balance reporting are the major concepts or variables usually seen in a given media industry. The press must therefore cover, report and interpret issues the way issues and events unfold without fear and favour. And the issues should be given prominence and reported timely as to cause public discourse and attention. The press over the years has been accused of poor coverage of issues of national interest more especially illicit drug issue (Okonu et al., 2012). Some of the factors that contributed to poor coverage include lack of accessibility to the affected areas, fears of wild behaviour of the victims of drugs and the drug barons, problem of finance, inadequate technological reporting appliances, unqualified reporters, inadequate manpower and skills. This study seeks to examine the national newspapers coverage of the illicit drug Methamphetamine Hydrochloride (Mkpuru Mmiri) in South-East, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Mkpuru Mmiri - Methamphetamine or meth - is an Igbo name for a crystal clear white, dark brown, canary yellow or blue rock that is known as Meth - Methamphetamine Hydrochloride, an addictive hard drug that is wasting the destiny of the youths. According to the National Institute of Health in 2021, Methamphetamine is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. Meth users talk and behave abnormally. They dress dirty and look dirty. The drug makes them lazy and pushes them to all sorts of crimes, mainly stealing so as to get money to refill their damaging brain. Despite the acute health risks associated with its consumption - such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular-related illness - a growing number of young people in Nigeria especially in the Eastern part of the country reportedly take drug. Mkpuru Mmiri or meth also acts as a stimulant, which means users typically do not sleep for as long as they are actively using it. Merely looking at the users, one will know that they are no longer normal human beings. One of the visible health dangers of using Mkpuru Mmiri or Meth is that it damages the brain tissue of the users. The following are some health risks of Mkpuru Mmiri: persistent sleep deprivation leading to poor rebound on all fronts and degrades the ability of the conscious and subconscious. It also acts as an unnaturally effective appetite suppressant. Meth is composed of toxic chemicals and fillers which severely dehydrate the human body. It also increases heart rate, which is detrimental to cardiac health (Hamanoto & Rhodus, 2019).

The unprecedented devastating Mkpuru Mmiri – Meth - issues happening in many towns and villages of the South-East zone of Nigeria has resulted in the destruction of many youths. This, therefore, becomes a challenge to the government, the public and even the media organizations in Nigeria. Reporting dangerous and illicit drugs incidence as an issue with two sides (truth/falsity; and how/what causes Meth incidence) introduces diversionary debates, uncertainty and scepticism into the discourse. This, in a way, can negatively affect people's understanding and government readiness to check the dangerous and illicit drugs (Mkpuru Mmiri) incidence and its vulnerabilities. Ndolo (2011) maintains that the press is expected to constantly draw the attention of government and spirited individuals to the problems around them. The attention will not only keep the citizens abreast of the happenings but will prepare them on how to manage the menace. Fairness, truth, objectivity, and balanced reporting are the major concepts or variables usually seen in a given media industry. The press must therefore cover, report and interpret issues the way issues and events unfold without fear or favour. Also, the issues should be given prominence and reported timely so as to elicit public discourse and attention. Based on these, the researchers are interested

in providing empirical evidence that will establish the true trend of coverage of the incidence of illicit drugs with specific reference to Methamphetamine Hyrochloride (Mkpuru Mmiri) by the *Guardian, the Vanguard* and the *Punch newspapers*.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in order to achieve the objectives of this study:

1. What was the frequency of coverage given to the illicit drug Methamphetamine Hydrochloride (Mkpuru Mmiri) in the Southeast by *Guardian, Vanguard* and *Punch Newspapers*?
2. What were the major issues covered by *Guardian, Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers about the Methamphetamine Hydrochloride (Mkpuru Mmiri) in the Southeast?
3. What prominence was accorded to Methamphetamine Hydrochloride (Mkpuru Mmiri) in the Southeast by *Guardian, Vanguard* and *Punch* newspapers in their reportage?

Review of Related Literature

Ojebuji and Salawu (2015) did a paper on decongesting the dodgy hub: the role of mass media in curtailing illicit drug trafficking and use in Nigeria. The failure or success of the government agencies to combat the problems of illicit drugs depends largely on how the mass media are engaged. The paper examined the role that mass media can play or are supposed to play, and the relevant mass media campaign strategies that can be used to curtail the menace of drug abuse and trafficking in Nigeria. Also, the paper examined the relevance of media access and literacy in a successful media campaign against drug abuse and trafficking, and finally suggested some ethical obligations expected of the mass media professionals while using the news media to fight the problem of illicit drug use and trafficking in Nigeria. This paper, after presenting some statistics on the prevalence of drug problems in Nigeria, suggested that the nation's mass media should be more aggressively involved in fighting trafficking and use of illicit drugs in the country. With the Agenda-Setting theory as the theoretical framework, the paper discussed different social change strategies that the Nigerian mass media could adopt to fight drug-related vices. However, the researchers recommended that these media campaigns should be effectively complemented with other communication approaches.

Abraham, Egbe and Ayo-Yusuf (2019) did a study on new media coverage of Shisha in Nigeria from 2014 to 2018. The increasing popularity of shisha is possibly driven by the attractive flavours and the misperception that it is safer than traditional cigarettes. Since the media plays a significant influence on public awareness, perception and understanding of various issues, the study examined the coverage of shisha use by five national newspapers in Nigeria. Five newspapers were selected based on their website traffic (online readership). The software NVIVO 12 was used to organise the content of the articles into themes. Between 2014 and 2018, the study found 30 relevant publications about shisha. Some newspaper articles reported that shisha smoking was gaining popularity among youths, especially in tertiary institutions across the country. Similarly, some misconceptions about the safety of smoking shisha among shisha users was reported. Addiction to shisha was also reported as being so common that many shisha users were no longer satisfied with just visiting nightclubs and shisha cafes but now own the shisha paraphernalia. There were also reports that the tobacco in shisha was in some instances being replaced or mixed with other hard drugs like marijuana. Subtle advertisement of shisha lounges, which is a violation of the Nigeria National Tobacco Control Act, was also observed. The study recommended that there is a need for increased sensitization of the public through the media on the dangers of shisha smoking and other tobacco product use. Also, there is also a need for a national survey to determine the prevalence of shisha use in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework Framing Theory

Framing theory was propounded by Tversky and Kahneman in 1981. The theory focuses on how media organizations design and package information or messages about issues to influence or change the perception of the receivers concerning the particular message (Ibagere, 2009). Media framing is the way in which information is presented to its audience. Coffman was the first to concentrate on framing as a form of communication and defined "framing" as a " schemata of interpretation" that enables individuals to "locate, perceive, identify and label" occurrences or life experiences. Entman (1993) states that to frame a communicating text or message is to promote certain facets of a 'perceived reality' and make them more salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation. It focuses on a deliberate packaging of media contents by media practitioners to change or influence the audience understanding of an issue of dangerous illicit drug message. If print media should embrace the framing theory to design dangerous illicit drug issues coverage message using interviews,

editorials, cartoons, investigative news, press releases, Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) issues in South-East will drastically reduce.

Newspaper in Nigeria

McQuail (2011) sees a newspaper as "a print media form, appearing regularly (usually not less than a week), containing (at least) reliable reports of recent or ongoing events of general interest and offered for public sale" (p.562). Reverend Henry Townsend, according to Ndimele and Innocent (2006), is credited with the introduction, in December 1859, of modern newspaper in Nigeria – Iwe irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba (which means the newspaper for the Egba and the Yoruba), generally known simply as Iwe Irohin. The newspaper later became bilingual by adding an English language edition. Newspapers perform the tripartite functions of the mass media: information, education and entertainment. Newspapers in Nigeria are either owned by private entrepreneurs or government. Due to improvement in technology, many newspapers in Nigeria undergo multi-location printing of the same issues, mostly in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja. A newspaper refers to any paper containing public news, intelligence, occurrences or remarks, observations or comments printed therein for sale and published periodically or in parts or numbers.

History of Methamphetamine

Amphetamine and methamphetamine were drugs originally developed as synthetics to be used as substitutes for ephedrine, a far older, natural substance derived from the herb Ma Haung, or Ephedra, a plant used for centuries for treatment of respiratory problems. The active ingredient in Ephedra, ephedrine, was isolated in the 1880s by German chemists, but not marketed until the 1920s, when it was formulated for use in bronchial inhalers. Japanese scientists synthesized methamphetamine in 1919. In 1932, Smith, Kline, and French introduced these drugs in over-the-counter inhalers for asthma and congestion (Karilia et al., 2010). In the 1930s, the American Medical Association approved the use of amphetamines under names like Benzedrine for treatment of a range of disorders—narcolepsy, depression, Parkinsons, attention deficit disorder, and alcoholism. Other uses soon followed. By 1943, half of manufacturers' Benzedrine prescription sales were for weight control, depression, or simply to stay awake, and new variations on the popular, legal compounds of amphetamine and methamphetamine flourished under over 100 names (Grinspoon & Hedblom, 1975). Its effects on sleep and fatigue were recognized early on. Soldiers and pilots in World War II were given amphetamine and methamphetamine to combat fatigue. In 1940, the Burroughs welcome company introduced methamphetamine

tablets to commercial markets under the name Methedrine, and amphetamine and methamphetamine were both widely available in the early 1940s. In Japan, use of the injectable form of methamphetamine grew dramatically after World War II supplies used by the armed forces were released to the market at the end of the war, leading to serious problems with addiction. The first Japanese methamphetamine epidemic peaked in 1954, with up to 2 million people (over 2% of the total population) using meth intravenously. Meth use continues in Japan today: in 1998, 90% of all drug arrests in Japan were methamphetamine-related (UN General Assembly, 1998).

Methodology

The researcher adopted content analysis to achieve the objectives of this study. Content analysis was used to examine Nigerian newspaper stories on Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast, Nigeria. The population of the study was all the editions of *Guardian, Vanguard and Punch* newspapers published between 2nd of November, 2020 to 30th November, 2021. The population of this study consisted of 312 editions of the three newspapers published within the study duration.

The sample size of this study was made up of 248 editions of the three newspapers through Philip Meyer's guide. They are *Vanguard, Punch, and Guardian* newspapers. These newspapers were selected based on the 2021 newspapers web ranking which ranked these Nigerian newspapers as the top three in Nigeria. The period was chosen because it marked the time the use of Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) was most prevalent in the Southeast, Nigeria. The motif approach was used to select the Nigerian newspaper articles. This was done with the use of the key words like Methamphetamine, Hydrochloride, amphetamines, Mkpuru Mmiri, crystal Meth, among others. In each case, only stories that were within the study duration were selected for analysis.

Content categories

The category system is the heart of any content analysis used toclassify media content based on the objectives of the study.

The researcher used the following measures:

The following were used:

Swallow crystal Meth: Frames that project damaged blood vessels of heart, nose tissue and brain.

Snort dark brown Meth: Frames that project heart attacks, strokes and deaths.

Sniff blue rock Meth: Frames that project the destruction of property, killings and madness.
Smoke blocked water Meth: Frames that project respiratory problems and tooth decay
Inject blocked ice Meth: Frames that project abscesses, sleep disorder and hyperactivity disorder.
Prominence accorded coverage: this measured the level of importance that was accorded coded contents. Here, page placement was the major element of consideration. The rating schemes were:
High- for stories on the front page
Average- for stories on back and editorial pages.
Low- for stories on all other inside pages.

Unit of Analysis/Reliability
The article such as news, editorials, columns, opinions, and letters to the editor was the unit of analysis for this study. The researcher assessed the inter-coder reliability with the use of two coders who tested 15% of the stories as recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2013). The Holsti's formula was used to determine the inter-coder reliability and the result revealed the inter-coder reliability of 0.82 for story source, 0.78 for framing causes and 0.88 for framing recommendations. In the analysis of the data, simple percentages were used for the study.

Results
The results of the analysis are presented in the table below:
Table 1: Frequency of Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) Items in Newspapers

Newspaper	No. of Editions	No. of Items	Percentage
The Guardian	83	58	33
The Vanguard	83	69	39
The Punch	82	49	29
Total	248	176	100

The data presented in the table 1 indicated that *The Vanguard* newspaper carried the most number of stories (39%) on the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast compared to the other two newspapers. This implies that *The Vanguard* newspaper and *The Guardian* newspaper gave adequate to the stories concerning the Methamphetamine hydrochloride Mkpuru Mmiri in Southeast.

Table 2: Major Issues on Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) Covered by Newspapers

Issues/Newspapers	The Vanguard		The Punch		The Guardian		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Heart, nose tissue and brain damage by Meth	11	6	9	5	10	6	30	17
Strokes and deaths caused by Meth	10	6	12	7	7	4	29	16
Respiratory issues and tooth decay caused by Meth	9	5	6	3	8	5	23	13
Destruction of property, killings and madness caused by Meth	22	12	15	9	20	11	57	33
Sleep and hyperactivity disorder caused by Meth	17	10	7	4	13	7	37	21
Total	69	39	49	28	58	33	176	100

The data presented in the table 2 showed that the majority (33%) of the major issues covered about the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast by the three newspapers under study were destruction of property, killings and madness caused by Meth (Mkpuru Mmiri). This was followed by sleep disorder, abscesses and hyperactivity disorder (21%). This implies that the newspapers under study undertake the role of helping to discover truth, and assisting in the process of solving social and health problems by presenting all manners of evidence and cases of destruction of property, killings and madness caused by Meth with a view to eradication of the menace.

Table 3: Prominence accorded Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) Issues by *The Vanguard*

Contents/Prominence	Front Pages		Back/Editorial Pages		Other Sundry Pages		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Heart, nose tissue and brain damage by Meth	5	3	0	0	9	5	14	8
Strokes and deaths caused by Meth	0	0	0	0	7	4	7	4
Respiratory issues and tooth decay caused by Meth	4	2	2	1	7	4	13	7
Destruction of property, killings and madness caused by Meth	5	3	3	2	11	6	19	11
Sleep and hyperactivity disorder caused by Meth	6	3	2	1	8	5	16	9
Total	20	11	7	4	42	24	69	39

The data presented in the table 3 indicated that a majority (24%) of the major issues covered about the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast by *The Vanguard* were placed in sundry pages inside the newspaper. This was followed by stories on the front pages (11%). This implies that *The Vanguard* newspaper gave the Methamphetamine hydrochloride Mkpuru Mmiri low prominence. This position was taken following the finding that majority of the items on Methamphetamine Hydrochloride were placed on pages other than front (high) or Back/editorial pages (average).

Table 4: Prominence accorded Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) Issues by *The Punch*

Contents/Prominence	Front Pages		Back/Editorial Pages		Other Sundry Pages		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Heart, nose tissue and brain damage by Meth	3	2	0	0	6	3	9	5
Strokes and deaths caused by Meth	2	1	0	0	5	3	7	4
Respiratory issues and tooth decay caused by Meth	0	0	0	0	6	3	6	3
Destruction of property, killings and madness caused by Meth	2	1	3	2	10	6	15	9
Sleep and hyperactivity disorder caused by Meth	4	2	0	0	8	5	12	7
Total	11	6	3	2	35	20	49	28

The data presented in the table 4 which pertained to the level of prominence accorded Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) issues by *The Punch*, indicated that the majority (20%) of the stories were placed in sundry pages inside the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages (6%). This implies that *The Punch* gave Methamphetamine Hydrochloride Mkpuru Mmiri low prominence because major issues were placed on other pages other than front and back pages.

Table 5: Prominence accorded Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) Issues by *The Guardian*

Contents/Prominence	Front Pages		Back/Editorial Pages		Other Sundry Pages		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Heart, nose tissue and brain damage by Meth	4	2	0	0	6	3	10	5
Strokes and deaths caused by Meth	0	0	2	1	5	3	7	4
Respiratory issues and tooth decay caused by Meth	3	2	0	0	5	3	8	5
Destruction of property, killings and madness caused by Meth	8	5	3	2	9	5	20	12
Sleep and hyperactivity disorder caused by Meth	6	3	3	2	4	2	13	8
Total	21	12	8	5	29	16	58	33

The data presented in the table 5 - showed that majority (16%) of the stories published by the *Guardian* newspaper about the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast were placed in sundry pages inside the newspaper. This was followed by stories placed on the front pages (12%). This implies that The Guardian newspaper gave Methamphetamine Hydrochloride Mkpuru Mmiri low prominence.

Discussion of Finding

The result of research question one revealed that *Vanguard* newspaper carried the most number of stories on the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast. This was followed by The *Guardian* and *Punch* newspapers respectively. This finding is buttressed by Ashraf (2013) when he observed that in watchdog role, the media can play an important role to promote transparency, accountability and public scrutiny of drug issues. Also, it is in line with Abraham et al.'s (2019) when they stated that there is need for increased sensitization of the public through the media on the dangers of shisha smoking and other tobacco products. The framing theory which this study was anchored in gives backing to the

findings of the study. Framing theory proposed that the idea or information which people have about public issues tend to be proportionate to the amount of emphasis placed on such issues by the media. This implies that the way the media see and regard issues is the same way the masses would regard such issues. Invariably, the frequency at which issues or stories of a particular problem are presented to the public go a long way in making the public to see such problem as being important and therefore worth thinking about and discussing.

The result of research question two showed that destruction of property, killings and madness issues were the most reported issues covered about the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) in Southeast by the three newspapers under study. This was followed by abscesses, sleep disorder and hyperactivity disorder. This finding agrees with that of Udoakah (2013) when he stated that the press as the watchdog of the society barks at strange things thereby alerting members of the society to rise and fight the abnormality or evil in the society. This means that the press undertakes the role of helping to discover truth and assisting in the process of solving social problems by presenting all manners of evidence and opinion.

The result of question three indicated that the majority of issues covered about the Methamphetamine (Mkpuru Mmiri) by the three national newspapers were placed in sundry pages inside the newspapers. This was followed by the front pages and the back or editorial pages of the newspapers. This finding is in direct contrast to the finding of Ojebuji and Salawu (2015) who found out that the nation's mass media were more aggressively involved in fighting trafficking and use of illicit drugs in the country. The framing adopted for this study buttressed this finding. This theory has it that framing emanates from the understanding that journalists have a moral right, apart from legal restrictions, to restrict what is to be published and be socially responsible to their readers in whatever material they package for the masses. Framing amounts to screening of information before dissemination to the public. This can be done by a reporter, editor or the publisher. The reporter of event is the first editor and gatekeeper of the news event. Perhaps this is because a reporter is always at liberty to select events or angles to take the news. By this action, reporters can control the public's knowledge by giving more prominence to some events or news stories than others.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study as summarized above, it is concluded here that the three newspapers gave the illicit drug Methamphetamine Hydrochloride Mkpuru

Mmiri issues in the Southeast low prominence in their reportage, but covered major issues of the illicit drug Methamphetamine hydrochloride Mkpuru Mmiri. Also, since *The Vanguard* newspaper carried more stories on illicit drug issues in the Southeast than the other three newspapers, the study concluded that the southeast region correspondents are the most active and effective among the correspondents of the three newspapers or that the newspaper is the most southeast-friendly among the newspapers under study.

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded here that dangerous and illicit drugs are a public issue which needs the attention of government and the reportage of the press, just like in other countries of the world like Argentina, Guyana, India, Brazil and in other parts of the developing world. However, only a modest volume of research has been conducted on the subject in Nigeria, reflecting the lack of interest of clinicians, researchers, policy makers and, perhaps, research grant providers on the subject. Finally, there is urgent need for concerted efforts between media stakeholders to conduct aggressive campaigns to sensitize the public on drug abuse and its effects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Southeast should give timely and accurately sensitive information and communication before, during and after dangerous illicit drug issues. It will help the newspaper houses to play an important role to promote public scrutiny of drug issues.
2. The Southeast should help to discover truth and assist in the process of solving social problems by presenting all manners of evidence and opinion. This will discourage subjectivity and negative approach to reportage on national issues like the use of illicit drugs such as Methamphetamine Hydrochloride, Mkpuru Mmiri.
3. The Southeast should give prominence to reports on the negative implications of regional issues in terms of priority placement on the pages of newspapers.

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