

Methamphetamine (Mkpuru-Mmiri) Prevalence in Southeastern Nigeria: Exploring Peoples' Perception of Public Flogging as a Control Measure

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the peoples' perception of public flogging as a control measure for methamphetamine (Mkpuru-Mmiri) use among youth in Southeastern Nigeria. The study adopted mixed methods. The questionnaire comprised (12) items administered to a sample size of 1055 through the online mediated platform – Google Forms, while the qualitative data were collected from (12) participants via face-to-face interviews. The quantitative data were processed using SPSS version 20.0 and displayed in descriptive statistics. The hypothesis was tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. The NVivo 10 software was used to analyze the qualitative data thematically. The study revealed that the practice seems to have been accepted as a social control measure for drug misuse in Southeast Nigeria. In addition, the hypotheses stipulate that educational level influenced the acceptability of public flogging as a methamphetamine deterrent with human rights concerns. The study concludes that preventing methamphetamine misuse can be accomplished by creating job opportunities for young people and rehabilitating users.

Keywords: Perception, Public flogging, Prevention, Methamphetamine abuse

INTRODUCTION

The impact of substance misuse on society has become a topical issue and a major public health concern (Lo et al., 2020). According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2021), in the previous year, 271 million (5.5%) of the global population (aged 15 to 64 years)

were projected to have misused substances. According to the estimate, nearly 35 million people will have a drug use disorder, and 585,000 people will die due to drug usage (UNODC, 2021). In Nigeria, Dumbili and, Ebuenyi (2022) stated that drug misuse has posed a significant health challenge to the extent that youths within the country misuse even prescription drugs. Similarly, the

National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria 2018 released findings from the National Drug Use Survey, which found that 14.3 million Nigerians aged 15 to 64 years old were used to drugs. Additionally, the survey revealed that approximately three million Nigerians are drug users or suffer from substance-related diseases (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA), 2018).

According to reports from media organizations, youths in Eastern Nigeria are using methamphetamine and other narcotics (Njoku et al., 2021; Ulasi, 2021). Methamphetamine, popularly known as Mkpuru-Mmiri, in local parlance in Southeast Nigeria, is a potent and highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system (Declan, 2021; Ojiego, 2021). The substance is highly addictive (Dumbili & Ebuenyi, 2021) and is also associated with specific harmful effects, some of which include: cardiac arrhythmia, hallucination, insomnia, paranoia, stomach cramps, and stroke (Anglin et al., 2000; Brecht et al., 2004). Long-term effects of methamphetamine include extreme weight loss, severe dental issues known as "meth mouth," intense itching that leads to skin sores from scratching, changes in brain structure and function, confusion, memory loss, sleeping problems, violent behaviour, paranoia—extreme and unreasonable distrust of others—and hallucinations (Declan, 2021; Ojiego, 2021).

Despite efforts made by Stakeholders to curb the menace of methamphetamine and other

substance misuse in Nigeria, its prevalence in terms of use and distribution rate to other markets among the youth has continued to rise in developing countries like Nigeria (Maiga, & Tompkins, 2014). One of the most current popular methods adopted in southeast Nigeria for preventing the use of methamphetamine is public flogging. However, public opinions on the awareness, effectiveness, and acceptability of public flogging in Southeast Nigeria vary in group and class. Human rights activists in Nigeria seem to perceive public flogging of drug offenders as a clear violation of international human rights law, equating it to cruelty, inhumane, and degrading treatment or punishment (Human Rights Watch, 2004). On the other hand, many locals in Eastern Nigeria are seemingly mainstreaming the practice of public flogging as a cost-effective, immediate, and innovative indigenous solution to deter and shame drug users. It is a mechanism envisaged to bring about desired behavioral changes. This differs from the age-long debate on punishment versus rehabilitation, which is appropriate or effective in handling anti-social behaviour. Some theoretical frameworks have justified the inherent use of punishment as a deterrent to drug use, as the fear of consequences (such as jail time or fines) may dissuade people from trying drugs in the first place or from using them again in the future (Beccaria, 2016) while the supporters of rehabilitation argue that drug addiction is a medical condition and that punishing drug users is ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst (Etienne,

2003). However, the perception of public flogging is unclear as a drug abuse preventive/control strategy in Southeast Nigeria. The varying views on public flogging as a social control mechanism elicited the interest of the research. Therefore, the study fills the gap by providing empirical data on the people's perception of public flogging as a methamphetamine use prevention strategy among youths in Southeast Nigeria.

Literature Review Prevalence of Usage of Methamphetamine

Mihalcikova et al. (2019) asserted that methamphetamine metabolizes slowly and is a powerful addictive psychostimulant. It has been reported that over the last decades (Marwick, 2000), methamphetamine has gained popularity in other countries besides the Czech Republic, where it is highly abused, and its global spread is attributed to the relatively low price and easy production in comparison with other drugs such as cocaine. Similarly, (Mihalcikova et al., 2019) maintained that methamphetamine abuse has emerged as one of the most abused drugs causing serious well-being challenges to humanity. However, Anglin et al. (2000) traced the origin of methamphetamine abuse to Japan, where it was first discovered, though it did not gain popularity until World War II (1939 – 1945) when nations such as Japan, the United States of America and Germany gave it to their soldiers to improve on their resilience. Anglin et al. (2000) traced the first misuse of the drug to Japan due to its excessive supply to

the military. Right after that period, methamphetamine gained global notoriety as nations such as the USA, Australia, and Thailand have reported its harmful spread in their communities (Sommers et al., 2006; German et al., 2006, Degenhardt et al., 2017).

The drug is not very recent in Sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, a report by the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) conducted in Benin (2012), Ghana (2016), and Liberia (2017) found that male and female adolescents in these countries abuse methamphetamine (Onyeaka et al., 2020). Other studies in South Africa were reported to have discovered the use and effects of methamphetamine on young people (Okafor et al., Pluddemann et al., 2010). Some studies in Nigeria have revealed the prevalence of methamphetamine abuse in the country, though such studies are few (Uzuegbu-Wilson, 2019). The UNODC (2018), in their National Drug Survey, found the prevalence of methamphetamine use at 0.1%, representing (89000) users, while the South East recorded 0.06% (67,000) users of the substance (Dumbili & Ebuenyi 2021). Further studies found that among 12 study participants, two persons had used methamphetamine in their lifetime (Akpabio et al., 2019), methamphetamine use was associated with acute urinary retention issues in a clinical study (Ojo et al., 2021) and Lorvick et al. (2012) found sexual risk behavior (unprotected vaginal or anal intercourse) among female study participants who use methamphetamine to enhance their sexual pleasures.

Substance Abuse Prevention Mechanism

Substance abuse prevention is an effort to prevent substance misuse and minimize its adverse health and societal implications (Medina-Mora, 2005). Substance abuse, like other anti-social behaviour can be addressed using a variety of social control tactics. For instance, addiction prevention professionals adopt different shapes and styles based on the intervention's goal(s), target(s), locations, and participants (Robertson et al., 2003). However, Public health practitioners classify substance abuse prevention into - primary prevention, which involves intervening before the behaviour appears; secondary prevention, which involves intervening after the behaviour appears but before it becomes habitual; and tertiary prevention, which involves intervening after the behaviour has become habitual, intending to reduce or eliminate the behaviour (Kuhar, 1998). Aside from the professional dimensions, (Robertson et al., 2003) maintained that prevention can occur at the home, school, and community levels, particularly for youths. Moreover, stakeholders at various levels have implemented a variety of measures to prevent drug abuse among youths, including, but not limited to, drug awareness campaigns, peer group resistance, and communication skills training, prohibitions on the import and production of illegal drugs and substances, community outreach, and mobilization against substance abuse (UNODC, 2017). However, with the escalating rate of methamphetamine

abuse and other substances, it seems that the efforts of some agencies, such as the government, non-governmental organizations, and other informal sectors, over the years, geared towards drug abuse prevention have, perhaps, not yielded the anticipated results, or, at most, have declined.

Public Flogging as a Control Measure

Igbo, one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, is situated in the Southeast region and comprises Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo, where the Igbo language is spoken. In several towns and villages in eastern Nigeria, "public flogging" is fast becoming a popular and acceptable preventive mechanism to reduce substance abuse, particularly methamphetamine or Mkpuru-Mmiri addiction. Public flogging, also known as "Cane Deliverance" among the locals, is a situation whereby drug users and peddlers of Mkpuru Mmiri are tied to a tree, stake, or pole in a public place and flogged severally as means of deterrence from the drug (Ojiego, 2021). The essence of public punishment is usually to shame the users, and this has been practiced across the globe. In Europe, it was in the form of whipping (primarily for petty larceny), penance (for defamation and sexual immorality), and the pillory (primarily for 'unnatural' sexual offenses, seditious words, extortion, fraud, and perjury) performed in public in London (Shoemaker, 2004). In Australia, (Edmonds and Maxwell-Stewart, 2016) explored how public punishment was framed and the strong objections to using the lash. According to accounts in Ghanaian media, two lovers

were publicly flogged for engaging in sexual behaviours caught on tape (Amnesty International, 2022). However, public flogging as a deterrent against anti-social behaviour is mainly used in Islamic countries; for instance, Indonesia (Panjaitan & Tjandra, 2022) and Afghanistan (France 24, 2010). In addition, Saudi Arabia (Sebar & Ismail, 2021) reported that with the prohibition of alcohol consumption, offenders are sanctioned through public flogging. Similarly, in Northern Nigeria, with Islam as the dominant religion, there have been several occurrences of public flogging for offenses such as smoking marijuana, adultery/fornication, indecent dressing, etc. (Human Rights Watch, 2004). This report notably suggests that public flogging is not an entirely new mechanism in Nigeria's drug abuse prevention and control.

In many developed and developing countries, corporal punishment, including flogging, has been abolished as stipulated in international treaties and laws (Odeyinde, 2020). Furthermore, some countries have domesticated these international conventions in their laws/policies. The whipping act of 1530 England was entirely annulled by the criminal justice Act of 1948 (Tiwari and Agarwal, 2020). In Saudi Arabia, the supreme court abolished flogging as a form of punishment in 2020, while the anti-torture act of 2017 in Nigeria completely abolished torture, including public flogging (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018). The absolute prohibition of torture also forms a part of customary international law, the general rules of

international law binding on all States whether or not the State is a party to any particular treaty (Obiagwu, 2019). Though national and international laws have condemned public flogging as a social control measure for anti-social behaviour, little or no study has been done to systematically investigate peoples' perception of this practice as a control measure for drug use in Southeast Nigeria." This is the main thrust of this paper.

METHOD

The study adopted a mixed research design (Krol & Neri, 2009). The researchers consider this research design appropriate because it uses quantitative and qualitative methods to generate extensive data for the study. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaires and semi-structured in-depth phenomenological interviews (IDI) guide. The questionnaire, specifically, was used to collect quantitative data and was highly structured. It contains two different sections. The first section contains the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, while the second section addresses the substantive issues of public flogging as social control for Mkpuru Mmiri substance abuse. The questionnaires were crafted in the English language for quantitative data. The semi-structured in-depth phenomenological interviews (IDI) guide was used for qualitative data. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it emphasizes what matters to or is at stake for specific individuals around shared events (Mattingly, 2010).

Secondly, it helps examine changes over time in the experiences of individuals paying attention to their particularities. This was deployed to gather qualitative data to complement the quantitative data in the study. The IDI guide was completely unstructured questions with necessary probes.

The study was conducted in the eastern states of Enugu and Anambra, respectively. Using a simple random sampling technique, two states were selected from the five states that make up Southeast Nigeria. This is the sequel to the fact that the abuse of Methamphetamine (Mkpurummiri) substance is prevalent in the states (Dumbili & Ebuenyi, 2021), and the adoption of public flogging seems to be growing within different communities in the areas in question. The participants for the study were recruited among residents within the region using convenience sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). In this study, the participants included are adults (18 years and above) residing in Enugu and Anambra states at the time of the study. In other words, respondents below 18 years old and those not residing in the study states were excluded.

A total of 1,111 online questionnaires were administered by the researchers with the help of 2 research assistants, while only 1055 were correctly filled. The questions were developed on Google Forms and administered electronically through social media. The instrument was pre-tested, and necessary adjustments were made before being used for data collection. A total of twelve in-depth interviews were

conducted by the researchers with the help of two research assistants. The participants of the IDI were purposively selected using maximum variation sampling, including town union leaders, youth leaders, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and student union leaders. The selected respondents have expertise and roles as well as different features and context to show that data from such categorization best explain the variables under investigation. The research assistants interpreted the question in Igbo dialects as relevant to the community. The researchers moderated the interview while the two assistants took notes and digitally recorded the procedure using a voice recorder with permission from the participants. The data collection was done from August to December 2021. The researchers adopted the iteration process in conducting the interviews, which helped to build on the quality of the interviews and data collection.

The quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. Analyzed data are presented using descriptive statistical charts and tables with frequencies and percentages. For the qualitative data, the recordings were first transcribed and translated into the English language. For the essence of trustworthiness and data quality, membership checking was employed. Four respondents were given the transcripts to crosscheck/validate their originality, and necessary adjustments were made before being brought into NVivo 10 to analyze. Both the qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated.

The study hypothesis was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Enugu State Ministry of Health research ethics committee with ref. no.: MH/MSD/REC21/295. The researchers secured the voluntary consent of all the respondents to participate in the study. The privacy of all the respondents was respected throughout the process, following best practices.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The findings are presented in line with the study's objective and stated hypothesis for easy understanding. The result shows that 593 (56.2%) respondents were from Anambra while the rest were Enugu residents. As for the place of residence, the result shows that 762 (72.2%) reside in an urban area while 132 (12.5%) reside in a semi-urban. The gender of the respondents shows that 590 (56%) were male while the rest were female. The age distribution shows that (32.9%) are between 18 –27, while (2.10%) are 68 years and above. The table also shows that 651 (61.8%) were single, while 4 (0.3%) were divorced and separated. Regarding educational attainment, 423 (40.1%) had their B.Sc and HND, while 1 (0.10%) had no formal education. Close observation shows that (96.2%) were Christians while (0.8%) were Muslims, and lastly (38%) were unemployed while (and 2.5%) were farmers.

Awareness of the Prevalence of Public Flogging

The result shows that (76.90%) of the respondents are aware that public flogging is adopted as a methamphetamine abuse preventive strategy. The qualitative data corroborated the quantitative as one of the participants stated thus;

I do not know where they learned this strategy from, but I have seen the youths tying some other boys to a tree, or some boys will hold such a person firm while he is flogged at the community square for abusing mkpuru-mmiri. It was done in public, so we are aware." (Enugu State, Woman, Trader, 45 years).

Another participant went further to assert that:

The flogging against mkpuru – mmiri is becoming common nowadays though it has not become too popular like in Northern Nigeria. I have not seen it myself, but my son talked about it the other day, I think boys mostly do it -"ndi ntoro obia," that is, the youths (Anambra State, Man, Civil servant, 52 years).

Perception of public flogging as a good and acceptable practice

The result shows that most respondents, 28% agreed that public flogging is a good practice, and 31% also agreed that public

flogging is an acceptable practice to deter drug use in the study area., while 20% and 18% strongly disagreed. The qualitative data supported the quantitative data as some respondents stated thus;*I think nothing is wrong with it; we have accepted it as a good practice. Let them be flogged; after all, what they do after taking mkpuru-mmiri is also woeful. Everyone accepts the practice, so let it continue; if it can help our community end this mkpuru-mmiri drug addiction, we have a nice prevention practice. (Is it approved by everyone?). Yes, the chiefs are aware of it, and they have never questioned why; they encourage it too" (Enugu State, Trader, Female, 57 years of age)*

Another respondent corroborated the first assertion;

It has become an acceptable practice in our community; these boys that take mkpuru-mmiri their actions good at all? So, you see, disgracing them too will become an acceptable practice. An adage in our community says that when the bird learns to fly without patching, the hunter must learn to shoot without aiming, so we are learning new local practices to ensure social order" (Anambra State, Traditional titleholder, 69 years of age).

Perception of public flogging as deterrence to drug use

The result shows that 30.9% of the respondents agreed that public flogging

served as a deterrent to drug use, while 18% strongly disagreed. The qualitative data provided divergent views as some study participants affirmed that some youths would not dare use methamphetamine again while others thought of it as only a temporary measure, whereas for some, it has no effect.

I will say yes, it will make some youths stop taking mkpuru-mmiri, (researcher: why do you think so? Because the flogging itself is not very simple or painless. So, they will stop because of the severe pain, and again what about the 'Ifere'?that is a shame.... Everyone is there to witness the lashing that's a public disgrace (Anambra State, Man, Community Chief, 56 years)

Another young respondent affirmed the above view

Nna' my brother, let me tell you something the flogging is not like a celebration, 'na serious matter' it is a very mean process, these boys will flog you like you are a 'nama' (cow). In fact, 'nama' will be better than you after that kind of merciless flogging; even if you are mad or your village people are following you, the memory of that flogging will surely make them leave you alone." (Anambra, Undergraduate Student, Male, 26 years).

Cattle farmers are known for the brutality associated with flogging animals to get them to move in the desired direction. Thus, there is an obvious comparison between the treatment meted out to cattle and the manner with which the users of the substance (mkpuru mmiri) are flogged. However, another participant said, "Well, I do not know if it is all that effective, but I think it is far better than the police that will arrest them, collect money (bribe), and release them. Although sometimes, we feel pity for those who are being flogged (Enugu State, Farmer, Male, 47 years).

It might be very effective, though we cannot ascertain the extent of its effectiveness at the moment because the practice is very new in our community. We will determine its effectiveness if the practice is sustained after a while. Maybe it is effective for now anyways, especially as many youths are forcing others who abuse mkpuru-mmiri (Enugu State, Teacher, Female, 32 years)

From another respondent;

The study also investigated if public flogging follows any form of social stratification, and the following results were obtained as presented below:

Public flogging as stratified punishment

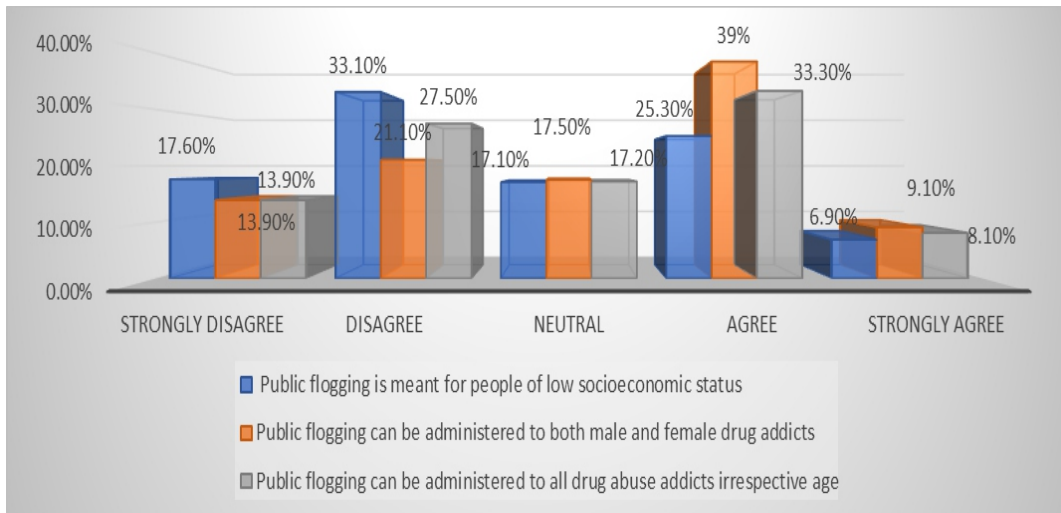


Fig 1: Public flogging as stratified punishment

The study examined three variables of public flogging as stratified punishment, including public flogging due to low economic status, public flogging mechanism devised for both genders indulging in drug abuse, and public flogging administered to all ages. The figure 1 shows that 33.10% of the respondents disagree with the view that public flogging was enforced based on socioeconomic status, while 25.30% agree. Looking at gender, the figure shows that 39% of the respondents agreed that public flogging is based on people's gender, while 21% disagreed. Of people of all ages, 33.30% of respondents agreed, while 27.50% disagreed that public flogging should be dispensed to people of all ages. The qualitative data revealed more details about the issues interrogated.

One of the participants stated thus:

To the best of my knowledge, we don't discriminate at all. You know most times we ambush and pick these boys from their hideout; at that point, we don't know who is from the rich or poor family we treat all same. There is nothing like social class, if one is from the upper class then don't take mkpuru-mmiri else we will flog the person very well... Regarding gender women don't do this drug or I will say we have never caught any females so we have not flogged any girls; it is just boys that take the drug there is nothing like age difference." (Anambra

State, Trader & Youth leader, Male, 37 years)

Another respondent affirmed the above assertion:

There is no need to discriminate. We flog anyone that takes the substance; we do not care about social class. Suppose a big man is in your house. Our people say he picks ant-infested firewood and must be ready to bear ants all over his or her body. Anyone with mkpuru-mmiri must be treated the same in this community." (Enugu State, Youth leader & Motorcycle rider, 32 years).

TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between the level of education and the perceived acceptability of public flogging in preventing methamphetamine abuse among youths in Southeast Nigeria. To test this hypothesis, the educational level of the respondents was categorized into a lower and higher level.

Mann-Whitney U statistics test was run to determine if, statistically, a significant difference exists in public flogging practice as human rights abuse among lower educated and highly educated respondents in Southeast Nigeria. The result of the test shows that public flogging was seen as human rights abuse more among highly educated respondents ($M = 670.65$) than for the lower educated respondents ($M = 221.40$), $U = 17,890.000$, $p = .000$. There is, therefore statistically significant evidence to accept the stated hypothesis:

implying that educational attainment determines if public flogging is considered human rights abuse or not. The result may suggest that education enlightens respondents on other better punishments and effective mechanisms to enforce deterrence rather than public flogging, which might cause bodily harm and would possibly not reshape their drug addiction behaviour which is primarily a psychological condition.

DISCUSSION

The increasing rate of methamphetamine 'mkpuru-mmiri' use in South East Nigeria elicited the interest of this study. The study showed that participants were aware of the prevalence of public flogging as a mechanism to control the misuse of methamphetamine by youths within the region, as was found from both quantitative and qualitative data. This is mainly because the flogging is done in the open, not secrete. This finding supports Sebar and Ismail (2021), who reported that public flogging against alcohol misuse in Saudi Arabia was done publicly. The media coverage given to public flogging, especially on social media platforms in the Southeast, may have given it visibility.

Furthermore, the study investigated the perceived good, acceptability, and use of public flogging as a deterrent to methamphetamine abuse. The findings revealed that public flogging is a good and acceptable practice and could serve as a deterrent against Mkpuru-Mmiri addiction. This is consistent with related studies on harsh punishment and public

shaming/public flogging, which showed that it could effectively deter crime or anti-social behaviour (Dezhbakhsh et al., 2003; Funk, 2004; Hansen, 2015). Also, the data from the qualitative analysis gave in-depth-subjective perceptions of public flogging as an effective deterrence to mkpuru-mmiri addiction. The qualitative data demonstrated that state law enforcement authorities unethical tactics in dealing with drug misuse have given legitimacy to the perceived efficacy of local measures like public flogging. Public flogging is thought to provide instant justice and ensure that the person does not bribe the authorities and go unpunished, as would be the case if they were arrested. This is in agreement with previous studies that showed that the institutional weakness, corrupt practices, and poor State of justice delivery constitute failures for the criminal justice agents (the police and courts), thus creating a fertile ground for community violence on crime suspects (Osasona 2015; Olonisakin et al., 2018; Shodunke, 2022)

Also, the practice is perceived to be effective by the locals because the pains inflicted and shame by the flogging would serve as demotivating feedback on the individual and others never to indulge in the act. This finding implies that local people in southeast Nigeria may have lost trust in the state law enforcement agencies, hence validating a culturally engraved solution.

On the other hand, it appears worrisome that the majority of the people's consciousness is being reawakened to the use of corporal punishment, such as public flogging as a

means of social control measure for drug use in southeastern Nigeria even after many years that international and national laws have abolished the practice. The acceptability of this practice implies that it may further deepen the incidence of the use of inhuman treatment that promotes the abuse of human rights of vulnerable drug users, which has been seen as unacceptable and unsustainable in line with interannual and national conventions. This suggests that even if policymakers want to redefine and use indigenous behavior modification methods to achieve the desired result, they should be aligned with good international practices to avoid abuse.

On cross-cutting issues, in terms of social stratification, as it influences public flogging, the study showed that participants disagreed that public flogging is meted out to all gender, given that the male gender is known to have been flogged within the communities. Gender disparity in punishing criminal/anti-social behaviours seems to exist not only in the literature. A study on gender disparity in punishing criminal behaviours showed that females are less likely than males to receive severe punishments for committing the same crime (Fernando et al., 2006). It implies that the perception of most of the respondents in this study is that young men mostly use Mkpuru-mmiri, so there is no reason for females who are not seen or involved to be flogged. This could be misleading and needs further investigation on female drug use and control measures that can be used within the local communities in

southeast Nigeria. Also, the study revealed that age is a factor in using public flogging to deter drug use. The apparent reason is that the youths who enforce public flogging apprehend those involved, mainly young people, in their numerous hideouts and march them straight to the public square to be publicly flogged. However, the present study lacked insufficient data to draw home the points on all the possible outcomes of the variable of age as a factor that can influence the use of public flogging to deter drug use. More qualitative probes were not done to interrogate whether older people who were not victims of public flogging because it is mainly young people who were caught at hideouts using the drug that was immediately punished. Whereas older people who are not seen using the drug at the convenience of their home go unpunished. This is part of the limitation of this study. However, the study further showed that most respondents perceived that similar treatment would be given to all offenders despite their socioeconomic status.

Lastly, educational status stands out as a factor with a significant relationship with the acceptability of public flogging as a control measure. It is expected because highly educated people (670.65) considered the practice human rights abuse. Instead, they would prefer the civil procedure to establish deterrence; to public flogging. This agrees with the views of human rights organizations, who vehemently condemned the practice of public flogging based on human rights standards (Amnesty International, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2004). The

prohibition of torture and all other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment is specifically codified in all relevant international human rights and humanitarian treaties (Obiagwu, 2019). According to Section 3 of the Anti-Torture Act 2017, torture is not justified, including public flogging (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018). It states that no exceptional circumstance, a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability, or any other public emergency may be invoked to justify torture. These national and international frameworks exist in the public space, but it could be implied that uneducated locals may not be aware or knowledgeable about these laws. Hence abuse seems inevitable.

The prevalence use of punishment as a deterrent mechanism for anti-social behaviour has continued to elicit debates in academic and policy arenas. In addition, the issue of punishment versus rehabilitation for drug use is a complex and contentious, with valid arguments on both sides. Those who support punishment argue that drug use is a crime and that individuals who break the law by using drugs should be held accountable for their actions (Fargher, 2019). In addition, some theoretical frameworks have justified the inherent use of punishment as a deterrent to drug use, as the fear of consequences (such as jail time or fines) may dissuade people from trying drugs in the first place or from using them again in the future (Beccaria, 2016). Also, some argue that punishing drug users sends a message to society that drug use is unacceptable and reinforces the idea

that drugs are harmful and should be avoided (Draper, 2002).

On the other hand, supporters of rehabilitation argue that drug addiction is a medical condition and that punishing drug users is ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst (Etienne, 2003). They argue that drug addiction should be treated as a health issue, not a criminal justice (Fagan, 2003). Furthermore, rehabilitative approaches, such as counseling, therapy, and medication-assisted treatment, aim to address the root causes of addiction and help individuals overcome their dependence on drugs. This approach is seen as more effective at reducing drug use and preventing relapse. Rehabilitative approaches also address the social factors contributing to drug addiction, such as poverty, trauma, and lack of access to healthcare (Daley, 2013). By addressing these underlying issues, rehabilitative approaches aim to improve public health and well-being.

Overall, the debate between punishment and rehabilitation for drug use hinges on different beliefs about the nature of drug addiction and the best way to address it. While punishment may be a way to hold individuals accountable for their actions and deter drug use, rehabilitation is seen as a more effective way to address addiction as a medical condition and improve public health outcomes. Ultimately, finding the right balance between these two approaches will require a nuanced and evidence-based approach that takes into account the needs of individuals, communities, and society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Methamphetamine use and prevention have ushered in a public flogging approach that is widely accepted and appears effective among locals in Southeastern Nigeria, where conventional techniques are seen as no longer sustainable. Hence, employing traditional indigenous solutions to local challenges is gaining traction. However, regarding human rights principles, acceptance has been questioned, particularly among the educated. Job creation and methamphetamine users' rehabilitation appear to have been prioritized as feasible options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several strategic recommendations were made by the researchers on how to prevent the use of methamphetamine among the youths in Southeast Nigeria. The study recommends that state actors re-strategize, possibly by employing effective indigenous solutions that can be regulated to prevent and control drug/substance abuse and misuse in Nigeria. Also, meaningful engagement of the youths through the creation of employment opportunities should be prioritized in all government and private sector development plans in Nigeria. Finally, there is a need for sustained youth-friendly sensitization campaigns against substance use by all relevant stakeholders in Nigeria.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study have

contributed to deepening the conversation on drug use control measures. However, there are several limitations to the study. The present study is limited to peoples' perceptions and not the natural effectiveness of public flogging as a control measure of methamphetamine use among youths in southern Nigeria. Also, the design for this study was limited to cross-sectional, which could not explore the dynamics of the independent variable (public flogging) on the dependent variable (use of methamphetamine) for an extended period to determine the actual extent of cause and effects of the variables.

Suggestion for future study

The need for future studies to interrogate the effectiveness of public flogging as a control measure for methamphetamine use among youths in Nigeria needs to be investigated. Also, there are variables such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status that have been implicated in influencing the use of public flogging to control the use of methamphetamine, but the findings from this study are not comprehensive to explain how these factors interplay and influence the use of public flogging. Hence further in-depth interrogation on these variables is very imperative.

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