

Example of literature review on the effects of methamphetamine

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Abstract

Methamphetamine, known to the world in various names such as “crank” or simply “meth”, is notable for having severe effects similar to that of marijuana. While it is reported and proven to be capable of treating several psychological and physical disorders, the known stimulant is capable of producing heavy complications in terms of a users’ physical, neurological, psychological and social nature that may be difficult to heal. In terms of its effects to children, parents and pregnant women; the effects of methamphetamine vary. However, heavy physical, behavioral and social disorders would be visible to these groups since methamphetamine can cause users to become psychologically incapable for analyzing and decision-making. Treatment for methamphetamine abuse is plausible, however, the effects of methamphetamine abuse may become permanent given the conditions of the patient. This paper will discuss the effects of methamphetamine to users; especially to children, parents, and to pregnant women.

The Effects of Methamphetamine

Unknown to many, there are other drugs similar to marijuana that had held much speculation and controversy despite its visible benefit and history. Out of all these other drugs with the similar nature found in marijuana, methamphetamine has been identified as a dangerous drug that could pose serious health risks and conditions that now influences families all across the globe. As noted by Fitzgibbon and Loeser (2010), the stimulant was also colloquially known throughout the globe as “crystal meth”, “crank”, “ice”, “

chalk” or even “ Tina”. While the drug itself is capable of treating ADHD or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and be a weight-loss drug for obese patients, methamphetamine’s stimulant characteristic and content could become deadly to children and pregnant mothers especially if used in abusive quantities. Not only would the user experience heavy physical, behavioral and social conditions, methamphetamine would also render users psychologically incapable as the drug could impact the nervous system directly.

According to Sheff (2008), Methamphetamine is similar to the drug known as amphetamine, discovered in 1887 in Germany. Amphetamine was closely studied by researchers throughout the 1920s, proving its capacity to treat epilepsy, alcoholism and even psychological disorders such as depression and schizophrenia. In 1927, scientists noted that amphetamine is also a viable decongestant. Shortly after this discovery, the drug known as Benzedrine, an inhaler, is released to the public. Benzedrine was available at most local pharmacies and stores, given if the patient comes with a prescription. Patients who purchased this drug noted that they slowly feel euphoric effects, which in time caused the government to ban Benzedrine as there were already cases of drug misuse. At the same time, a Japanese chemist synthesized in 1919 the chemical Methamphetamine. It was discovered that it had the same effect to users to amphetamine, however, methamphetamine was much potent and cheaper to make. The drug was then released sometime in 1942 as the Second World War took place. Records have noted that methamphetamine was distributed to soldiers in both Axis and Allied camps, which aided their soldiers to remain awake and

active throughout the fighting. Soon after the end of the war in 1945, Japan slowly developed a population dependent on meth to overcome their loss and an epidemic that reached to Guam, the Marshall Islands, and the US West Coast. Sheff noted that by 1948, Japanese citizens aged 16-25 were using meth and almost 55, 000 people were diagnosed with meth-induced psychosis. They ranted and raved regarding their life, as well as became violent. Babies were abused by their parents while their mothers continued to grow dependent to the drug. While there were negative sentiments over meth, pharmaceutical companies continued to develop methamphetamine pills as treatments for narcolepsy, alcoholism, and obesity. Meth also became a notable drug for treating sinus inflammation and ADHD. Aside from this, the Food and Drug Administration approved that meth would be good for narcolepsy, post-encephalitic Parkinsonism, and various other depressive states .

As noted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2010), methamphetamine usually in powder form that is bitter and yet odorless. Users could easily dissolve it in water or alcohol and could be taken orally, injection, smoking or intranasal. The drug is noted as a Schedule II drug, which means that it can only be bought with a prescription but could not be refilled.

Methamphetamine is a central nervous system stimulant, which fosters the increase and blocks reuptake of dopamine. Dopamine is usually the brain chemical that enables a person to feel pleasure or satisfaction, which is why the drug's capacity to release dopamine in rapid succession throughout "rapid regions" entices intense euphoria . In addition to this, Colker (2004) noted that users of meth could instantly create a tolerance for the drug,

especially as most would wish to remain in their rush.

While methamphetamine remains regulated in the market as a prescription drug for obesity, psychological disorders, ADHD and narcolepsy, experts have already noted that methamphetamine would cause severe consequences to users, especially those who become addicted to the drug. Children and parents, especially pregnant mothers are prone to its risks due to their sensitive physical and mental attributes. However, studies have noted that even the slightest dose of methamphetamine could be dangerous for anyone. Colker noted that small doses of meth could already increase alertness and physical activity, decreasing appetite at the same time. Studies noted that for users who smoke or inject the drug, they tend to immediately feel a rush or euphoria, which only happens in brief moment. Users who ingest the drug tend feel a long-lasting high that would last half a day. It is also noted that a single high dose of meth is capable of damaging nerve terminals wherein dopamine is prominent. Since the drug is capable of producing large amounts of dopamine, it produces a toxic effect in the brain. High doses could also cause convulsions and may increase body temperature that may exceed in regular levels .

For the long term effect of using meth, Lyman (2010) noted that long-term methamphetamine abuse would eventually lead to addiction, which in itself is a chronic and relapsing disease. Aside from developing an addiction, methamphetamine users tend to exhibit symptoms such as anxiety, confusion, insomnia, mood disturbances, and violence. They may also develop psychotic tendencies, especially undergoing a state of paranoia and delusions. According to various studies, psychotic symptoms of long-time

users tend to last for months or years, depending on the length of use or if the user had withdrawn from its usage. Stress is also common to long-time users, especially if they are in need for immediate euphoria. Withdrawal is also common with users, especially for those who have not taken a dose of meth for a short period. Symptoms of withdrawal tend to vary, from depression to fatigue, and even craving. The brain is also affected by long-term methamphetamine use, showcasing a reduced verbal learning capability and motor speed impairment. Studies have also revealed that the brain also undergo structural and functional changes, especially in the area which controls emotions and memory. While it has been discovered that it could be reversible, long-term and chronic methamphetamine use would still take time in recovering damaged brain regions and physical capacity. The high risk of acquiring stroke would also prove fatal as it may lead to permanent brain damage for the user .

In the case of parents, children and pregnant women, the effects of methamphetamine could be severe unless it is prevented through care. According to the study done by Otero, Boles, Young, and Dennis (2006), parents who are meth users tend to influence their children in using the drug. Whether or not the parent is just a regular abusive user or the main transporter for the drug, children tend to mimic this trend. In 2004, almost 418, 000 users had been reported to use methamphetamine for a month. Episodic methamphetamine use is common amongst parents, and some to children. Parents who are proven to be meth users, especially in high amounts, can threaten their children and anyone around them. When they are on their high, the parent might lose a sense of judgment and alertness,

especially when speaking with their children and doing chores. Some tend to become confused and others irritable; while a few would become violent and in the state of paranoia. With the parents on a high, the family and social environment for the children would slowly become dangerous, the children would also be placed at risk to abuse and neglect, even be forced to take meth by their parents. If either one of the parents smokes meth, children or anyone in their family may be exposed to secondhand methamphetamine smoke, which is also similar in effect to tobacco smoke. Once parents become dependent on the drug, it would also eventually lead to chronic neglect to their children and their environment would be less adequate for anyone. Parents would also become lazy and ignorant of their own responsibilities, making their living conditions similar to those from the slums. Children would even be at risk due to the lack of medical and dental care; which would be dangerous as they grow older .

Using meth while on pregnancy had been proven dangerous according to various studies. Harding (2010) had noted that new research indicated that babies, whose mothers are addicted to methamphetamine, tend to be at risk higher to serious birth defect as compared to their counterparts. The study showcased that pregnant women would open themselves to uncontrolled high blood pressure, which would then lead to additional complications. The study had reflected that the problem within the country of high pregnant women abuse has been going on for the last 15 years, indicating the reason as to why many pregnant women in the US have asked for drug counseling. The study had also identified that the number of pregnant meth users have increased gradually: 22 from 2001, to 43 and to 77 in 2004 and 2005

respectively. It was noted that 20% of the respondents had uncontrolled high blood pressure while 10% had been reported to suffer placental abruption. While the data could still be considered inconclusive due to the lack of data, researchers had noted that the complications themselves were rare. Placental abruption alone only happens less than 1% in the births in the country. Aside from these complications, the study had also noted that 2/3 of the pregnant users had only visited their doctors once for their prenatal checkup. Aside from this, it was noted that 6% of the babies of meth users tend to score low in health screenings, 4% dying soon after birth. The study had also noted that most pregnant meth users had rough background. A quarter of the users were reported to be victims of domestic violence and others were forced to give up their children to others for adoption or for temporary care .

With regards to children, methamphetamine is also capable of affecting children; mostly on their physical, mental and social development. As noted above, Weisheit and White (2009) noted that the effects of methamphetamine to neonates or fetuses tend to vary. Nonetheless, it eventually leads to underweight babies and small stature on their gestational age. If the parent had indeed stopped taking meth upon their pregnancy, it is plausible that withdrawal would affect the fetus' development and growth. Once the child is given birth, studies noted that methamphetamine-exposed infants tend to appear normal in their first years, however, they tend to become more lethargic and less alert. In a long term notion, children exposed to methamphetamine since their development in their mother's womb tend to exhibit problematic social adjustment. They also become

aggressive as the time passes, which could be contributed to their mother's body being exposed to amphetamine (which also produces the same effect similar to methamphetamine) and the use of alcohol in the developmental stage. The child also would exhibit signs of learning disabilities, including physical development. Children also become more emotional, have issues with sleeping, and tend to become irritable in the longer years.

Studies had also noted that ADHD children who are exposed to the stimulant drug tend to also exhibit the development of addiction. In the analysis done by a study in the 1990s, children given amphetamine and methamphetamine drugs to counter ADHD in higher dosage opens them to the risk of abusing the drug in the future. In a recent study in 2006, the medical community had questioned the Food and Drug Administration that the drug known as methylphenidate, known stimulant drug for ADHD, had reported cases wherein children suffer from hallucinations, which took form of sensations of insects crawling inside the body of the child. The revelation had shocked the public as it is also similar to how methamphetamine affects its users. In addition to this, some children have been reported to also develop or succumb to heart complications when taking meth and methylphenidate. In 2008, the American Heart Association released a statement that calls for children to be screened for medical conditions that may be triggered upon drinking stimulants for ADHD. The report was released after a reported 19 sudden deaths with 6 succumbing to heart-related problems in children after taking stimulants like methamphetamine .

Treating methamphetamine abuse would be plausible, but nonetheless difficult considering as to how psychic, environmental and social factors

would influence how the treatment would fair to the patient. Since patients tend to develop a serious case of withdrawal from being deprived of the drug, they also tend to become depressed and crave intensely for a dose. Fitzgibbon and Loeser had noted that the treatment would combine various cognitive, behavioral and psychological approaches to ensure that the patient not only performs well after treatment, but would stick to his therapy. A drug known as Medafinil is also noted to be useful in reducing methamphetamine levels, especially for those who are considered of high risk and severely dependent . Given the risks it poses to children, parents and pregnant women; it is crucial to take extra caution when it comes to utilizing methamphetamine as the effects, although curable in some extent, may produce permanent damage to a person that would ultimately make the person's future bleak and uncertain.

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