

**48. ATTRIBUTES AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE USERS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY**

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**BACKGROUND:** Crystal methamphetamine (CM) is a powerful CNS stimulant, which causes a psychological disorder known as "ice psychosis," characterised by paranoid delusions, hallucinations, and strange, violent, or aggressive behavior. Permanent structural brain damage may also occur. It was reported that negative attitudes about medical conditions can directly affect patients' health and the quality of healthcare they receive, posing a major hurdle to healthcare delivery. Not enough studies were conducted to investigate the attitude towards CM users among medical students, especially here in Sudan. **Aim:** In this study, we aim to determine the prevalence of negative attitudes towards CM users among medical students and investigate the correlation between certain attributes and that may affect their attitude. **METHODS:** A cross-sectional study was conducted from March to July 2023 using an online questionnaire to examine the attitude of Sudanese medical students in Al-Neelain University towards CM users. The questionnaire was structured from a total of 31-items to assess other covariates including the demographics, experience with addiction, and previous CM use. **RESULTS:** The study included 300 students, 191(63.7%) of them are females. Age median 21.1 years (IQR=2.3). 153(51%) were in preclinical levels. Most students 274(91.3%) were single. 79(26.3%) of students had monthly income  $\geq$  100,000 SDG. Majority of students 252(84%) resided with family, in urban areas 266(88.6%). Students with GPA  $\geq$  4.1 were 137(45.7%). 12(4%) of students smoke. 48(16%) of students have a close one who uses CM. Only 5(1.7%) of students reported prior or current use of CM. Of those who use CM, only 2(0.7%) said they faced discrimination due to CM use. Students' attitudes mean score was  $47.4 \pm 6.8$ . Most students held a negative attitude against people who use CM, with majority reluctant to accept them. There was significant difference in attitude scores between females (Md= 47, n=191) and males (Md=49, n=109), p value = 0.002. Furthermore, those who used CM had a median of 38 in comparison to those who never used CM (Md=48), p value = 0.01. Indicating that males and non-users showed higher degrees of stigmatization towards people who use CM.

**CONCLUSION:** Majority of students had negative attitude toward CM users with males and non-CM users representing most of the stigmatizing group. Therefore, stigma reduction initiatives and community educational programmes are required especially among higher stigmatizing group. Further in-depth studies are required at a national level.

**Table:** Frequencies and Percentages of Participants Demographic Variables.

Characteristic	M	SD
Age	21.1	2.3
Attitudes towards people who use crystal methamphetamine	47.4	6.8
	n	%
<b>Negative Attitudes</b>		
I won't associate with people who use ice if I can help it	99	33
I avoid people who use ice whenever possible	206	68.7
Use of ice is just plain wrong	198	66
People who use ice are dangerous	197	65.7
A person using ice could recover if they just stopped using	57	19
If I had a problem with ice, I would not tell anyone	43	14.3
Use of ice is immoral	198	66
Using ice is a sign of personal weakness	187	62.3
People who use ice should be locked up to protect society	141	47
<b>Positive Attitudes</b>		
People should feel sympathetic and understanding of people who use ice	127	42.3
People who use ice are mistreated in our society	152	50.7
People who use ice should be accepted completely into our society	39	13
People who use ice have a perfect right to their lifestyle, if that's the way they want to live	22	7.3
The use of ice is merely a different kind of lifestyle that should not be condemned	41	13.7

**Key Words:** Medical students, Methamphetamine, Attitude.