

v1: 8 April 2024

## Commentary

# The Possibility of a Silent Methamphetamine Catastrophe in Bangladesh

Peer-approved: 8 April 2024

Md Nasir Ahmed<sup>1</sup>

© The Author(s) 2024. This is an Open Access article under the CC BY 4.0 license.

1. Independent researcher

Qeios, Vol. 6 (2024)  
ISSN: 2632-3834

**This brief Perspective article sheds light on the growing methamphetamine crisis in Bangladesh, focusing on the increasing use of crystal methamphetamine ("Ice") and its impact on various segments of society. It also discusses the prevalence of Yaba addiction and its associated challenges. The article emphasizes the need for urgent government intervention and public awareness efforts to address this emerging threat.**

**Corresponding author:** Md Nasir Ahmed, [nasir.ahmedbd@hotmail.com](mailto:nasir.ahmedbd@hotmail.com)

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is a South Asian country, and in 2021, the country celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence. Geographically, Bangladesh's position is in the middle of the world's most considerable narcotics-growing belt (Kabir and Rashid 2016). For the past three years, a highly addictive recreational white crystalline drug, crystal methamphetamine, commonly known as "Ice," has been smuggled into Bangladesh every month, some of which is reserved for domestic consumption (Khan 2021). The investigation claimed that usually, the consumers are from rich societies like students of private universities, youngsters from wealthy families, and businessmen. It is worth mentioning that since 2006, another group of methamphetamine drugs, Yaba, has been very popular among Bangladesh youth, especially among students

(Chowdhury 2015), and the addiction rate has increased by 30% (Khan 2016). At present, about 75 million drug users are in the country, compared with only 1 million back in 1990, and by the age of 15, 65% of them were drug abusers (Star Online Report 2020).

The history of narcotics addiction is not new in Bangladesh, as heroin was imported into Bangladesh in the 1980s (South Asia Regional Profile 2005) and still exists, as often reported in the national newspapers (see, Dhaka Tribune). The most common drug (65%) is the codeine-based cough syrup Phensidyl®, followed by heroin (45%), marijuana (45%), sedatives (17%), and injectable opioids (11.7%) (Kabir and Rashid 2016). The largest number of students have taken Phensidyl® (about 37%), then Yaba (about 29%), followed by heroin (about 15%) (Ahammed and Ahmed 2019).

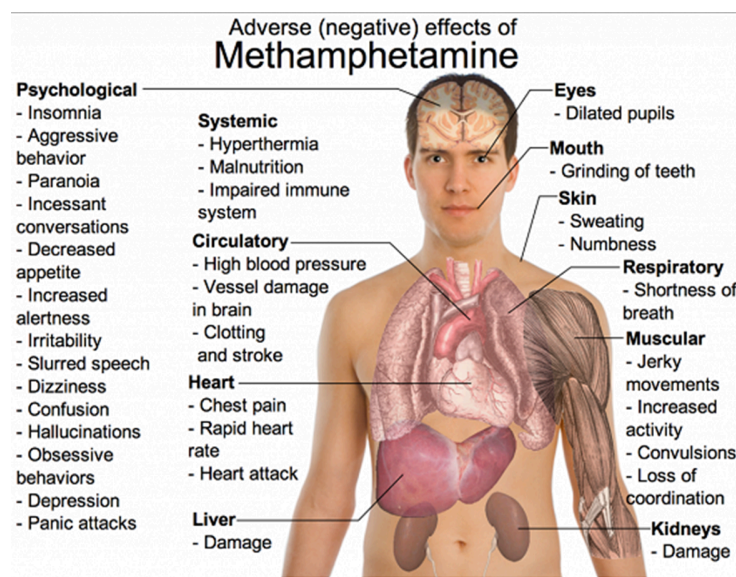


Figure 1. Effects of Meth  
Source: <https://sobornation.com/long-term-effects-of-meth/>

According to the statement issued in May 2018, Bangladesh has 7 million drug addicts, of whom 5 million are Yaba addicted (Haider 2018). According to reports, the abuse of Yaba (a combination of methamphetamine and caffeine) is a national crisis due to its low cost and availability everywhere (Dawn 2018), from the country's capital to every single village. Young people between the ages of 16 and 35 are drug abusers, accounting for about 77%, of whom 20% are women (Alam 2017). According to the head of the Association for the Prevention of Drug Abuse (MANAS), more than 2.5 million children are drug abusers, and Yaba is likely to be popular among children of middle-class or higher-middle-class backgrounds and is additionally at an alarming level (Alam 2018).

It is now a glaring omission in Bangladesh that crystal meth may be the next popular addictive substance, and one gram of crystal meth is equal to 10 Yaba pills (Staff Correspondent, 2019), which is stronger and more addictive than the Yaba pill. Drug addiction is a massive burden on families and society. It has contributed to specific crimes such as rape, murder, snatching, etc. In Bangladesh, rape is the fastest-growing crime, and it can be confirmed that Yaba, which is known as the "Crazy pill," arouses sexual excitement and imagination, is the foremost reason for the increase in the rape rate because many drug addicts in the country are fascinated by Yaba (Das, 2021). However, another new methamphetamine drug, crystal meth, is currently making its way to become popular among Bangladeshi youth. In recent years, the Drugs and Narcotics Department and the security forces of Bangladesh have done excellent work. The government of Bangladesh should take more initiatives with the highest priority given to creating and raising public awareness. It is high time to turn our attention to the potential threat of the methamphetamine epidemic in Bangladesh. Otherwise, the country will need to declare a new war on recreational drugs in the upcoming days.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

## References

- Ahammed, F., Ahmed, S. (2019). The Impact of Drug Addiction Among the Students of Tertiary Level in Bangladesh. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 10(7):17-21.

## Declarations

**Funding:** No specific funding was received for this work.

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

- Alam, S. (2017). Bangladesh government urged to end rampant drug abuse. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/bangladesh-government-urged-to-end-rampant-drug-abuse/1018969>. Accessed 9 March 2021
- Alam, S. (2018). Drug use among Bangladeshi children at alarming level <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/drug-use-among-bangladeshi-children-at-alarming-level/1023044>. Accessed 9 March 2021
- Chowdhury, S.T. (2015). Yaba, the 'Madness Drug', Is Finding New Routes Into Bangladesh. <https://www.vice.com/en/article/59a73b/yaba-the-madness-drug-is-finding-new-routes-into-bangladesh>. Accessed 8 March 2021.
- Das, S. (2021). Rape in Bangladesh: An Epidemic Turn of Sexual Violence. <https://hir.harvard.edu/rape-in-bangladesh-an-epidemic-turn-of-sexual-violence/>. Accessed 22 March 2021.
- Dawn. (2018). Yaba drug crisis in Bangladesh out of control. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1409442>. Accessed 6 March 2021
- Dhaka Tribune. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/hashtag/heroin> Accessed 9 March 2021
- Haider, L. (2018). Bangladesh has 7 million drug addicts, 'over half of them are addicted to yaba' <https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2018/05/21/bangladesh-has-7-million-drug-addicts-over-half-of-them-are-addicted-to-yaba>. Accessed 8 March 2021
- Kabir, M.A., Rashid, M.H. (2016). Drug Addiction- Its Causes, Symptoms and Remedies. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1, 1-4.
- Khan, M.J. (2016). Yaba addiction rises 30%. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/crime/2016/12/19/students-top-consumer-yaba>. Accessed 8 March 2021.
- Khan, M.J. (2021). Methamphetamine in Bangladesh: Crystal death summoned. <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/methamphetamine-bangladesh-crystal-death-summoned-2055273>. Accessed 18 March 2021.
- South Asia Regional Profile. (2005). Bangladesh. [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south Asia Regional Profile Sept](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south%20Asia%20Regional%20Profile%20Sept) Accessed 8 March 2021
- Staff correspondent. (2019). 'Aiming to popularise crystal meth in Bangladesh'. <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/news/aiming-popularise-crystal-meth-bangladesh-1763893>. Accessed 9 March 2021
- Star Online Report. (2020). Youth most at risk of drug abuse: Home minister. <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/drug-abuse-in-bangladesh-youth-most-risk-1848514>. Accessed 8 March 2021.