**LIFE COURSE APPROACHES TO HEALTH; THE REASONS WHY PEOPLE TAKE DRUGS**

Human beings across the globe use drugs for various reasons. According to Shaharam (2017), several factors including family background, psychological factors, genetic endowment, and social norms may increase a person’s urge to use drugs. One of the reasons why people use drugs is for recreational purposes (Alcohol and Drug Foundation, 2017). Such people believe that when they take a drug they are having fun and it gives them a sense of enjoyment. A study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2014) indicated that most abused drugs produce feelings of pleasure that are always intense. It is always accompanied by other effects including sensations of euphoria. The views are corroborated in another research by Neil et al. (2016) on the views of confirmed smokers which established that most of the people who smoke do it because it is pleasurable. Neil further affirmed that those who smoke view it as enjoyable. Based on the above, the present essay seeks to explore the various reasons why people use drugs and the consequences that are associated with drug misuse. The paper holds that even though drugs have adverse effects when abused, their medicinal value is critical to human beings.

Generally, people use drugs for recreational purposes. They use various drugs to help them pass time. According to Murray (2013), many young people experiment with illicit substances such as cannabis, amphetamines, cocaine and heroin. Such drugs also fall into the category of reactional drugs. According to Mind for Better Health (2016), some people use drugs to fight stress. The institution notes that in the UK, some of the recreational drugs such as tobacco and alcohol are legal while others like cannabis, heroin, cocaine and ecstasy are illegal which means it is against the law to have them or supply them to other people. The use of most recreational drugs has been criminalised in most countries because they have been perceived as having devastating effects not only on users but also on other non-users and the society in general.

 Over the years, the prevalence of using recreational drugs in the UK has increased significantly with reports indicating that the use of alcohol and cannabis has continued to soar. According to NHS digital (2018), the level of their use among adults in England and Wales between 2016 and 2017 indicated that about 1 in 12 adults aged between 16 to 59 years had taken an illicit drug. The figure mirrors similar statistics that were recorded in 2015.

 According to David, Megan, Brigitte, Lina, Guzman, and Mary (2013), adolescents are always the biggest culprits and are always eager to try drugs in what experts have attributed to peer pressure in a bid to attain their autonomy. Generally, adolescents are most likely to engage in risky behaviour to impress their friends (National Institute on drug abuse, 2014). According to the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (2015), about 40% of teenagers in the UK have tried various substances including cannabis which has other street names including crack, weed, and bhang amongst others. National Institute on Drug Abuse (2014) asserts that several factors increase the risks of adolescents engaging in drug abuse. Some of those factors include lack of parental supervision, vulnerability, prenatal exposure to alcohol as well as stressful childhood experiences. Some teens are also persuaded by their friends to try using drugs and they end up bowing to peer pressure. Across Europe, early addictions have been associated with risky sexual behaviour, violence as well as crime. According to Murphey et al. (2013), the most used illicit drug among adolescents is cannabis with a majority of them smoking it in rolled cigarettes while others ingest it in foods.

Apart from the illicit drugs, drugs are also used for medicinal purposes. Some people take drugs to cure various ailments. In science, some of the drugs that have been criminalised are also being used to administer various medications. As Sivasubramanian (2016) asserts, a number of illegal drugs including cocaine, cannabis, heroin, magic mushrooms, and Ketamine have been investigated by scientists on their medicinal benefits. According to him, some of the drugs have been banned to block people from misusing them. Ketamine can be used to help treat people suffering from depression and can also be prescribed to patients as an aesthetic (BBC, 2017). Although cocaine has also been criminalised and can earn a person several years in prison, it is one of the drugs that are still used by doctors in small quantities as aesthetic. Currently, several countries have invested heavily in the production of drugs used for treating various diseases and have also embarked on research on some of the drugs that are being abused on how to control their effects.

 Some people also use drugs as a result of stress. According to Shraham (2018), a painful childhood experience, as well as poverty, could push people to use drugs. A study by Afsaneh, Jafar, Dordaneh and Zahra (2013) on the relationship between Stress and Addiction found out that stressful life events play a role in the development of drug abuse in people. The study complements another study by Mark (2017) who asserts that continued use of drugs to fight the different types of stress which include Chronic and acute stress in most cases normally leads to addiction of the drug. According to Elements Behavioural Health (2013), stress has the ability to cause brain changes which can lead to addiction. Some of the drugs that are normally abused by people have devastating effects and a majority of them have been criminalised in most countries. They include cocaine, Cannabis, Heroine amongst others while others are used for medicinal purposes. According to the Department of Health in England (2017), about 2,383 deaths as a result of drug misuse were reported in England in 2016 which represented an increase of about 3.6%. The figure indicated that the number of deaths has been on a trajectory trend. As at now, the use of drugs has significantly increased in the UK and in other parts of the world with some being sold online. According to the Kentish (2017), several drug users are now relying on the online platforms to buy illegal substances in the UK.

The use of drugs, however, has a horde of consequences and gravely affects not only individuals but also affects societies. From families breaking up, to poor health conditions, to jail terms, to deaths, the effects of drug abuse cannot be ignored. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017), about 29.5 million suffer from disorders associated with drug abuse. Thomas (2013) asserts that most drugs have long-term chronical consequences and their use over time is a recipe for health problems. Apart from the health problems, the use of drugs has also been linked with societal vices such as increased crimes. In the UK, drug abuse comes hand in hand with crime and increases the chances of illegal activities. Consequently, a number of drug-related gangs have cropped up and have been involved in crimes like drug trafficking which attracts penalties of life in prison.

According to a report by BBC (2018), about 50 murders related to drugs have been reported in London in 2018. Another investigative piece by Weaver (2018) asserts that Albanian Criminal Gangs have come up and are controlling the illicit drug trade in the UK. It is estimated that the UK is losing up to £24 billion a year to organised crime which it rates as a serious national security threat (Home Office, 2018). This means that drug abuse also has negative impacts on the economy. According to the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (2015), drugs can escalate existing criminal activities. Consequently, the effects of drugs can push an individual to commit a violent or criminal act. Other individuals commit economic-related crimes where they smuggle drugs or engage in other unlawful activities such as money laundering. According to The House of Commons (2017), drug-related crimes hit 243,536 in 2008/09. This shows that drugs play a role in the crime and this has an impact on the society.

Misuse of drugs also results in deaths especially in cases of an overdose. According to the Department of Health of England (2016), there were an estimated 2383 deaths in England as a result of drug misuse. Statistics from the UK government indicates that most of the deaths have been as a result of heroin misuse which has since doubled in the 20 years preceding the year 2006. In the UK however, there are laws that have been put in place to control drug use. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2017) indicates that The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 which is used to regulate drug control divides-controlled substances into various categories and has penalties for either the use or possession of controlled drugs. A 2014 report by BBC also notes that drugs in the UK have been categorised A, B, and C where category A includes drugs like crack cocaine and heroin. The class A drugs attract penalties of up to life in prison (The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2017). Generally, there are legal provisions that have been put in place to control drug use. According to The Statistics Portal (2018), about 69,000 people were arrested for drug-related offences in England and Wales.

**Theories of Addiction**

Over the years, many researchers have attempted to explain addiction and how it can be resolved. This is in line with attempts to shed light on the devastating effects of drugs and the dangers of addiction. According to Gene (2013), addictive drugs can change brain areas that play key roles in biological functions that sustain life. Basically, the more a person uses a drug, the more he becomes accustomed to using it. A study conducted by Nora, George and Thomas (2016) on the Neurobiologic Advances from the Brain Disease Model of Addiction found out that voluntary drug use can interact with environmental and genetic factors to result in addiction in some persons but not in others. Nora et al.’s (2016) study are supported by another publication by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2018) which contends that as a person continues to use drugs, the brain adapts by reducing the ability of cells in the reward circuit to respond to it. The institution also affirms that factors like the environment, biological aspects as well as development are some of the contributors to addiction. According to a UN report (2016) corroborating the study by Nora et al (2016) as well as that of The National Institute on Drug Abuse, most people who normally use drugs, especially addictive substances, are always unwilling to quit using them.

There are many theories that explain how addiction occurs. Nora (2013) identifies Moral Model, Temperance Model, Disease Model, Psychological or Character Logical Model, Social Education Model and Coping models as some of the theories of addiction. Other researches identify other theories of addiction. Stanton and Bruce (2016), for instance, groups theories of addiction into genetic theories, biological theories, exposure theories, and adaption theories. Genetic theories entail inherited mechanisms that cause or predispose people to be addicted (Stanton et al., 2016). Just Believe Recovery Center (2018) affirms that proponents of moral addiction argue that those who are addicts engage in reckless behaviour. However, it states, addiction can be treated in various ways.

According to Scott (2013), in temperance model, the use of alcohol is viewed as sinful. Consequently, societies can control access to substances that are considered dangerous, for example, illicit drugs (Tom,2016). The disease model, according to Michael's House Treatment Centres (2018), is premised under the notion that addicts can only stop their drug abuse after they get the right treatment and with the proper tools. It focuses on the loss of control in the use of drugs. Proponents of the theory argue that addicts can be rehabilitated through medication. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2018) asserts that medications and devices can help suppress withdrawal symptoms during detoxification. Nathalee (2018) affirms that the medical model contends that excessive drug and alcohol use is the result of a myriad of factors, including biology or genetics, trauma and adverse life experiences, personal loss, rejection, and fear of intimacy. Critics of the theory, however, argue that it is not workable, that addicts do not require medical help. The help addicts need is not medical; it is psychological (Nick, 2017). Social Education Model, on the other hand, describes how human beings learn from direct experiences (Tom, 2016).

**Why People Take Drugs**

            The history of drugs uses dates back to prehistoric times. According to Haidan, Qianqian, Li, and Guangchun (2017), humans have used natural products, such as plants, animals, microorganisms and marine organisms as drugs to help them achieve various goals since pre-historic times. Archaeological evidence shows that humans were taking opium and ‘magic’ mushrooms as far back as 10,000 years ago (Liza, 2016). Human beings could have discovered drugs in the form of herbs when they were seeking food, long before the fire was invented (Haidan et al, 2016). Historians claim that early human beings always consumed poisonous foods which consequently led to severe reactions including vomiting, diarrhoea, and even death. By experimenting with the various natural plants that were available, humans identified drugs. In this way, early humans were able to develop knowledge about edible materials and natural medicines (Haidan et al., 2016). There have been rapid developments in drug use as well as the discoveries of new drugs.

           According to Recovery First (2013), the evolution of drug use started in 58,000 BC with several developments taking place across the ages until the usage of some of the drugs were identified as a problem to societies. Cocaine and heroin, which are regarded as two of the most dangerous drugs, were discovered in 1859 and 1874 respectively (Recovery First, 2018). Subsequent years saw governments coming up with legislation to ban some of the drugs which people started abusing, with reports indicating that they led to the loss of lives and had other devastating effects to the society (Josh, 2017). New drugs have also emerged.

          In several societies, most illegal drugs are used for recreational purposes with different places having their most common recreational drug. Henderson (2017) contends that the most common recreational drug in the UK, for instance, is Cannabis while cocaine rates second. Another recreational drug that is also commonly used in the UK is Opium. According to Mann (2014), the proposition of Britons taking illegal drugs is increasing over time with the use of Cannabis on a steady rise. According to National Statistics (2017), about 2.2 million people used Cannabis between 2016 and 2017. The history of Cannabis dates back to 1912 when an international treaty was signed to end the sale of the drug (Tom, 2012). By the start of World War 1, however, the use of Cannabis was still legal in the UK. The American Psychiatric Association (2017) on its part traces the ban to 1868 when the Pharmacy Act was adopted to restrict the sale of Cannabis. In the preceding years, a raft in constitutional amendments saw the UK government impose a total ban on it. Flynn (2018) asserts that Cannabis illegalised in 1928 as an inclusion in the Dangerous Drugs Act of 1920. Currently, there have been calls to legalise it for medical reasons, a ban that was imposed in 1971 (Bursby, 2018). According to UK laws, drug offences including the use of Cannabis have severe legal consequences which include jail terms of up to 14 years in prison (Gov.UK, 2018).

            Although Cannabis remains an illegal drug in the UK, there are efforts to legalise it for medicinal purposes. According to the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (2018), plans to legalise medical cannabis are in advanced stage with scientific evidence already completed. The National Institute of Drug Abuse (2018) also asserts that continued research on the Cannabis will lead to more discoveries on its medicinal value. A study by Mary and Daniel (2017) on medical cannabis indicated that cannabis contains chemicals that can be used to treat many illnesses. The study further found out that cannabis-based medications may be useful for treating chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.

            Opium is another illegal drug that is used across the UK. It is grown in various parts of the world and some of the countries that grow it include Afghanistan and Mexico where drug cartels smuggle it to other countries. According to Guillemo, Jorge, and Martin (2018), Opium has been used for centuries by different cultures as an effective natural substance for alleviating pain. Opium is used in making heroin which is one of the most addictive drugs that the International Community are waging war against. According to Castella (2012), the drug was banned in 1912 when the International community committed to stopping the trade on Opium and Cocaine during the 1912 International Opium Convention. The commitment targeted opium, morphine, and cocaine (Castella, 2012). Despite the ban, people have continued to use Heroin across the UK. Ed and Claire (2018) assert that the number of heroin users aged 40 and above has been increasing over the years with trends indicating that the figures are likely to rise. Consequently, the number of deaths as a result of an overdose is also increasing. According to Yeginsu (2018), several deaths were reported in England as a result of an overdose of a new drug fentanyl, an opiate painkiller.

              Apart from the deaths reported from drug misuse, other ills have also emerged that have prompted the UK government to react by intensifying the war on drugs. But critics of the move by governments across the globe to tackle the drug menace contend that it is a lost cause. A study by Mackey (2018) investigating drug control along the border between the United States of America and Mexico found out that there is no clear solution to the drug problem. According to Hunt’s (2013) article on the war on drugs which corroborates the findings by Mackey (2018), the global war on drugs is failing. Deaths associated with drugs, especially cases of poisoning, have increased (Chris, 2015). Another researcher by Marc (2017) contends that the war on drugs is costing taxpayers a lot of money but it is still far from being won. Peter (2012) however claims that the UK lost the war in 1970 and blames it on lenient laws. Since the war on drugs was started, violence in the streets has reportedly increased. In May 2018, London’s murder rate overtook New York’s (Keith, 2018).

**Music and Drugs**

            Music and drugs can always be linked together. A study by Niamh, Joshua, Shireen, Benjamin, Franklin, and Sabrina (2018) on music festival illicit drug use found out that most people are likely to use a drug at a festival. The study also reported high drug use at festivals. Niamh (2018) et al. contends that music is closely linked with drugs. According to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (2017), most people who use drugs in nightclubs or parties have a notion that drugs are key to having fun. Most of the drugs such people use are for recreational purposes and they include Shisha, Cannabis, alcohol alongside others.

Also referred to as Hookar Tobacco, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service (2018) describe Shisha as a type of Tobacco that is smoked with a water pipe. In the UK, Shisha is one of the emerging drugs that are common among young people and in parties. According to Merylin and Ford (2014), the use of the drug is rapidly growing among college students. The use of the flavoured tobacco among young people has been on the rise with the number of bars specialising in it having increased by about 210%. The bars are always centres of entertainment where people meet to dance to music and also in concerts. According to Kirby (2012), Shisha is also covered by the UK smoking ban. According to Gov.UK (2018), the smoking ban prohibits people from smoking in public.

              According to The Conversation (2018), while music listeners always use drugs to increase their pleasure, a number of artists use various drugs to enhance creativity. Over the years, the deaths of some music celebrities have been reported across the world as a result of drug overdose. Most of them have mentioned illicit drugs in their songs. In fact, the link between music and drugs took centre stage during the 90’s rave culture. According to Techno Station (2016), when the rave culture took over, the UK youth embraced it. It involved musical parties. According to Sara (2011), the new trend involved music and drugs and ecstasy was widely used. Eleanor (3013) described the rave atmosphere in her column in the *Telegraph* as “amazing and the drugs suited me perfectly – I had never been a big drinker, so I started taking Ecstasy”.

**Conclusion**

         Generally, drugs are a part of human life. Almost all human beings have used drugs for some purpose, either to treat diseases or abused illicit ones for various reasons. This paper, however, holds that drugs have adverse effects on human beings. Basically, people use drugs for reactional purposes, to fight stress, for curiosity and also to respond to social pressure. Human beings also use drugs for medicinal purposes. Continued use of drugs is capable of turning one into an addict as illustrated by studies and the theories of addiction. Among the issues that are associated with drug abuse include death, sicknesses as well as a plethora of social problems. As a result, the International Community has agreements in place to control drug use. The policies include the 1912 international treaty to end the trade on Cannabis. Societies have also put in place measures to control drug abuse which includes hefty penalties on those who violate laws for drug control. In the UK, The Misuse Drugs Act 1971 regulates drug control. It is also worth noting that the use of drugs is rooted in history and have had both negative and positive impacts on human beings. Current pieces of research that are being carried out on the various drugs, as well as the reviews on drug control laws, may lead to the discovery of drugs with medicinal value.

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