

THE USE AND ABUSE OF DRUGS AMONG ADOLESCENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Drug abuse is fast becoming a serious social problem in the home, workplace and educational institutions which is afflicting individuals of all ages and classes and the entire society. This paper examines drugs that are commonly abused such as marijuana, analgesics; barbiturates etc, reasons for the misuse of drugs have been deduced to the home, peer group and the adolescent's life situation. The misuse of drug may have diverse effect on the adolescent's psychological, psychological and socio-economic life of the individual- And finally its implications for counselling will be looked into.

Introduction

A drug according to Anusiem (1987:69) is a chemical substance capable of altering the physical and psychological function of the body. The major action of the substance is the alternation of the functions of the cells of the brain in such a way that basic functions such as perception, learning, thinking, mood, behaviour are affected.

Jenkins (1992) defines drug as any substance which alters the chemistry of our bodies and consequently affects the natural balance of our minds and emotions. By its chemical nature, a drug affects the structure or functions of a living organism. This implies that nearly all things man ingests, inhales or absorbs can be regarded as drug.

Types of Drugs

There are various of drugs such as Analgesic which reduce pains e.g. Novalgin, etc. Depressants are drugs which slow down the activities of the body, induce sleep and acts on the central nervous system, examples includes lager beer, illicit gin, spirits, opium, morphin and heroin.

Barbiturates

These are sleeping tablets such as diazopen, valium, magadon, etc.

Stimulants are drugs which increase body activities, mental alertness and wakefulness, it increases sexual desire in some users, examples are cocaine, Nicotine, caffeine, kola nuts and tea.

Hallucinogens

They are also called psychedelic drugs. These drugs produce radical changes on the user's mental state, examples include cannabis, marijuana, amphetamines.

Drug Abuse Among Adolescents

Janus and Bess (1973) define drug abuse as the repeated use of tin perceived drugs and the illegal' use of substance that affect the emotions, perception and meditation of the individual who uses them. Uever (1999) supports this when he defines drug abuse as an excessive use of any drug that measurably damages health or impairs social or vocational adjustment. While drug addiction is the habitual and compulsive use of any narcotic drug in a way that directly endangers the addict's own health or others, their safely and welfare.

According to Ginott (1971:193) "Millions of young people have experimented with drugs that affect mind and mood. Many try them once or twice and quit while many get themselves hooked before realizing their predicament, they find themselves dependent on a chemical crutch". Priest (1977) is in support of this when he posited that many addicts begin taking drugs before the age of twenty, and many persons start using drugs without realizing how difficult it will be to stop without understanding the serious consequences.

Nigerian is fast becoming a 'drug culture' nation; the adult who smokes cigarettes, drinks alcohol, takes amphetamines to restore energy, tranquilizers to relax, barbiturates to sleep is just as surely a product of drug culture as the adolescents.

Drug abuse is penetrating deep into the Nigerian youths. According to Chukwuka (1988) the most disturbing fact is that our students aged 13-19 years are increasingly being involved in this social malady. Such adolescents become drug addict which causes general deterioration in both physical and moral health, producing psychological dependency and withdrawal syndromes.

Reasons for Drug Abuse Among the Adolescents

Studies have shown that the home contributes to the problems of the adolescents in school, such that some adolescents see the home as the source of their emotional problems. Such parental behaviour like over protection, restriction discrimination among children in the home, physical abuse of the child, not providing enough money for basic necessities in the home and constant harassment have caused emotional disturbance among adolescents and the resultant effect is the individuals behaviour and attitudes to school work and overindulgence in drugs.

Adolescent at one time or another need to assert their independence from their parents. The extent of drug use here depends on the type of relationship the child has with his or her parent. Studies have shown that a child of a democrat, loving and caring parents involvement in drug would be lower than that of a child whose parents are autocratic and do not care for their children.

Another important reason for students' use of drug is peer group influence. Sometimes the pressure of the youngsters to conform to the peer group demands may make them break some of the parental, government or societal rules. It was reported that over 60 of the observed smokers in Nigeria started doing so from the adolescent age when they were influenced by their peers; or when they observed some people smoking (Akinboye, 1987).

Most people agree also that many youngsters are initiated into smoking because of undesirable personal associations and initiation. It was also observed that adolescents are introduced to smoking and other forms of drug by advertisement on the on the radio, newspapers and the television.

GINOTT (1971) posited that teenagers take alcohol as a symbol of maturity. They drink to stimulate sophistication and to defy authority. The drinking represents a daring gesture, a declaration of virility, a proclamation of adulthood. It may also be due to alienation, a profound rejection of the values of an adult society which they regard as cruel and outdated.

Drug use by the adolescent may be due pressure of life, frustration, rejection by peer, emotional isolation and low-self esteem. As a result young people are always vulnerable to the offer of something which maybe 'fun or make them 'feel better'. They often do not know the risk involved or how easy or serious drug problems can develop.

Adolescents have special needs which must be fulfilled in order to avoid protest and behaviour outbursts. He is concerned with search for identity. In doing this, the adolescent can unwillingly break social and institutional rules to acquire recognition and to gain acceptance among his peer groups.

Drug abuse is noted to have several effects on the user especially the adolescent. Such effects can be classified into physiological, psychological and socio-economic.

Physiological effects: abuse of drug causes serious problems to the body of the user. Smoking of tobacco and Nicotine potent can cause cancer of the lips, tongue, lungs throat, bronchitis etc. in support of this view Werner (1988) posited that smoking increases ones chance of suffering or dying from heart diseases or stroke. He is also of the view that alcohol on the other hand causes cirrhosis of the liver which damages the liver, loss of sight, deterioration of muscular control, loss of balance nausea, paralysis of the heart.

Other physical effect of drug abuse include stroke, aborting, bareness, loss of weight, blindness, deafness, structural deformity (Gbera, 1990). I-Cehinde and Oguntayo (1991) revealed that cannabis cause mental illness as well as precipitated social disorder.

Psychological Effects

Drug abuse according to encyclopedia Britannica Vol. 5, causes change in the feelings and the awareness of the user, inability to sleep, loss of appetite, or increased tendency to violence and antisocial acts. An addict becomes a prisoner of his own chemistry. His existence hinge on obtaining drugs. All other sources of satisfaction are neglected or given up, including friends, family, food and sex. To regain the craven sensation he may even risk his life. Drugs causes the adolescent to live in fear, he is frustrated, worried, anxious and depressed.

Anusiein (1987) asserted that cocaine induces sleeplessness, produces nervousness and heart palpitation. Some psychological effect of drugs as mentioned in Encyclopedia Vol. 5 includes mental and physical impairment, drowsiness, clouding of consciousness, poor concentration and attention, reduced hunger or sex drives and sometimes apathy. Other psychological effects of drug abuse includes perceptual dislocations, abnormal behaviors, delusion, mental disorder, strange feelings, impaired judgment, impression of well being even under difficult situation. The adolescent's sense of

personality is altered.

Socio-Economic Effects

Drug abuse has social and economic effects on the user and the society at large. Bakerman (1991) asserted that drug abuse is a social malady which has embarrassed the government and people of the country and is threatening to ruin cultural purity. Also worried over the dramatic calamities of drug, Kehinde (1991), in his findings, discovered that many young dissolve their villages, sell their belongings to enable them sustain their drug habit.

Drug abusers lack commitment to work. They create some difficulties in their work place that hamper smooth operation of the organization or establishment. A drug user is socially unacceptable in the society and is seen as a criminal. Drugs cost a lot of money. When the urge to take the drug is not met by the adolescent, he may turn to burglary and the girls to prostitution or any illegal activity. By taking illegal drugs one is risking heavy fine or imprisonment and even death.

Implication for Counselling

Adolescent drug abuse remains a problem whose solution lies solely within the adolescent himself. The counsellor can only aid him to release himself and his world. Here the counsellor should use all the available opportunities.

At his disposal to inculcate the virtue of drug free societies to his client through group and individual counselling. Parents can also help by guarding their children against drug abuse and to keep open the lines of communication, to talk to them, listen to them and encourage them.

The transition from childhood to adulthood demands responsibility and maturity. It calls for increasing ability to endure anxiety, tolerance in dealing with, and coping with conflict and live with frustration. All these need the understanding and the attention of the counsellor. The counsellor has to accept the client and recognize the dignity and worth. The adolescent must be encouraged to adopt self-control techniques. The notion of self-control is often associated with ideals of freedom and self improvement, for a free person is one who guides, directs and controls his action. He is a master of himself and his environment.

Denga (1982) is in support of this view when he said that

Setting out to stop smoking, loss weight, restrain one's temper. improve one's relation with others, issues and being rational are some ways in which a person can regulate his behaviour.

Psychotherapy could be used in order to give the addict insight into his problems and the stress of life that will help him return to normal life. Group psychotherapy is also necessary for the families of some addicts. The goal of treatment is to help the addict attain a feeling of well-being and reasonable adjustment to life problems. The parents to co-operate to restore the formal addition to his proper place in the home and society and to help him avoid associations that would influence him return to the use of drugs.

Parents are to present models of stable, responsible behaviour, facing their problems in a realistic way so that their child would emulate them.

The youth should be assisted by counsellors to appraise themselves through self-appraisal test. Youth and group counselling would definitely help reduce the moral laxity (hat is often precipitated by the exaggerated excitement of the age. There is need for the adolescents to have adequate information about themselves and their environment. There should be massive and intensive public lectures and enlightenment campaigns organized on the side effects of drug abuse. Excursions and debates among the students is to be encouraged.

Conclusion

The specific solution to drug dependence cannot be directed from the general problem of personality development. The more the parents learn to meet their children's legitimate needs, the less they will resort to illegal gratifications. The more self-dependence, the less drug dependence. The more self-direction the less chemical escape.

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