

Description Of Token Economy

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Tokens economy has been defined as the system of contingency management whereby the study of target behaviour is done by systematic reinforcement. The reinforcers are the tokens or, rather, gifts that can be conveniently exchanged with other reinforcers. Usually, this is used when the research is done by children and sometimes adults when seeking to study behaviour change or when seeking to modify some behaviour, usually by researchers with the aim of minimizing undesirable behaviour in society and promoting good behaviour in various set-ups. In researching drug abuse among university students in the university, the use of this method in studying behaviour is most appropriate given the amount of approval it has gotten and the little criticism it has faced since its time of inception and throughout the time it has been applied.

Drug abuse is a common practice among university students around the world. With the behaviour comes some effects, among them poor concentration in class, hence poor grades in academic performance, poor general behaviour and other psychological, physical and social problems. What has remained a topic of discussion for a long time, however, has been the actual true motivation for these students to smoke since such things as peer pressure have been found to be secondary causes of drug abuse.

To determine this whole problem, the procedures used in the token economy were applied fully. Specifically, chronic marijuana smokers were used, and therefore, marijuana was used as the reinforcer. They were used such that a deal was struck between the researchers and the subject that if they could abstain from smoking for a given period, they would be awarded a roll of the drugs for free and that the rewards would come with a decreasing rate. This could also be a rehabilitation measure as, over time, the amount of addiction would be reduced.

Literature Review

The token economy has been used for a long time to come up with various results that have proved greatly important. For instance, due to its attribute of great flexibility, it has been instrumental in improving such things as reduction in drug abuse and taking care of oneself, among others (Maggin et al., 2011). It has been found that the token economy has also been important in the education sector, where it helped reduce problems such as hyperactivity among students in schools (Mottran et al., 2002). These researchers prove how important the concept of a token economy can be if applied to such a problem as drug abuse among university students.

The Participants

The participants in this study were in a public university in the south of California State in the United States and were pursuing various courses, but more particularity was given to students in the faculty of business. Fifty-four students aged between eighteen years and thirty, pursuing undergraduate courses, were picked for the study; among them, thirty-four males and twenty females. The participants were first picked based on their willingness to admit that they indeed were chronic smokers of marijuana and then accepted to take part in the token economy exercise. This willingness was a major criterion used as it aimed at minimizing resistance from subjects along the research process. Those who felt uneasy and therefore unwilling were left out, ensuring that the selected subjects were sufficient to give convincing results for the research.

The Setting

The setting is in the various halls of residents. The participants were monitored as they lived in their hostels and other halls of residence. This was effective because the results were obtained from the subjects, right from their natural habitats, unlike how it could be if a new environment were introduced to them, for instance, a single location where their behaviour could be altered by such things as the insufficient inflow of drugs or unavailability of money. This setting was effective as a result of a maintained status quo.

The Specific Target For Increasing The Behavior Change

Specifically, the desire and aim of the research were to determine whether or not chronic marijuana smoking could be completely put to an end by one disciplining him/herself not to smoke as frequently as usual. These results would be an eye-opener to knowing what the primary cause of marijuana smoking is- whether it is for psychological or physical reasons. As well this research would seek to comprehensively find out all the possible effects of marijuana use among students, particularly on their academic performance, their physical health and their relationships with fellow students, the general public, and lecturers. Besides, the research would be aimed at finding out ways to reduce marijuana use.

Dependent Variables In The Study

Some key dependent variables were considered when carrying out the research. Key among them would be the financial capabilities of the students, the availability of the drugs, the set rules and regulations from their homes of origin, and their effects on the frequency of using the drugs. Also, the

period from when they began smoking at the time of the research will be considered, together with their ages.

Examples Of Behaviors That Would Likely Meet The Definition Of The Target Behavior

In the research, there were behaviours that were likely to meet the behaviour in question, among them alcoholism and injection of such drugs as cocaine and heroin, among others. These behaviours were likely to impact marijuana smokers and hence should be among the few examples of behaviours to be related to marijuana smoking.

Implementing The Project

The research was carried out by applying the concept of contingency contracting. A request was made to the smokers that they avoid smoking for about a week while their patterns were observed. The availability of the drug and its financial capability was not interfered with so that the scenario could be maintained as much as possible. In return for abstinence, one could be awarded a predetermined amount of marijuana, each participant stating their wish differently, but with each wish to be as reasonable as possible. It is worth noting that the participants did not know each other's participation, at least the researchers did not make deliberate moves to cause their acquaintances.

It is agreed that one will get their reward only if they do not smoke within that period, a close follow up would be done which would take the form of testing their blood at the end of the period to verify the last time of marijuana use. After the agreement is reached, the researchers did not persuade the smokers against the use of drugs but relied on the smokers promise not to smoke, upon completing the period, they are awarded while they are denied the award if they break the promise. As well, they would not be given marijuana if they could want to decline the offer for reasons of not wanting to smoke it again, but would instead be offered edible food whose price was equal to the drug's price. This research took a month.

The award of marijuana, though apparently unjustified for the reason that it is a drug, is right since, being chronic, the complete and sudden withdrawal from the drug may cause devastating effects to the user. The award could be a measure of rehabilitation if, after the research, the researcher advised the smokers to increase the time intervals between smoking.

Monitoring And Analysis Of Outcomes

After the research, data was collected through various methods. One of them was oral interviewing, where the participants were asked questions to which they responded, and these questions were

taped and kept. It is through interviews that information regarding the causes of addiction was gathered. Also, questionnaires were used at the very initial stages of finding out who could be willing to participate in the research, and the general opinion on marijuana use was gathered. The questionnaires and taped conversations were well-stored for future use.

In data collection, emphasis was placed on such dimensions of behaviour as the rate of smoking, the times of drug use, the ease with which the drugs could be obtained, and the amount used in given periods of time. As well, the effect of the set rules and regulations on the availability of drug use was studied. Measurement of these dimensions included the physical counting of the participants and using data obtained from their responses to draw conclusions on general drug use.

From the collected data, it was realized that of the students who were involved in the exercise, a larger number were in such a chronic state that going a whole day without smoking marijuana proved impossible. However, the other, though not as many, showed signs of improving by the day as they realized they indeed could do without the drugs. About a tenth of them, for instance, opted not to take the reward after they had gone for about a week without smoking. They argued that it was unnecessary to take the drug again and, therefore, could not take the promised reward. This proved to be a good sign, that is to say, tokens economy can greatly assist in research and in shaping good behavior.

References

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