

Social Issues in Societal Setup

Posted on September 19, 2018

Drug Abuse, Social Class, and the Study of Contemporary Social Problems

There are various social issues that affect our societal setup. This particular study intends to examine the issue of drug abuse and alcohol in young adults on their class status, i.e., lower and upper class. There are certain myths that have been prevailing in society regarding this problem. Some people argue that drug abuse is usually present in the lower class because those people do not have access to normal lifestyles and education. The people belonging to the lower class try to cope with their deprived status by indulging in drug abuse activities. They want to replace their disappointments with drug abuse and alcohol. At the same time, rich people tend to adopt drug abuse and addiction because of their luxurious lives, as they do not have any fear of losing a job or money. However, it is considered a myth according to recent research, which employs that people indulge in drug addiction because it is termed a disease now. In addition to that, socioeconomic factors play a critical role in this scenario. This study intends to interlink drug abuse in young adults belonging to different classes and backgrounds.

This study is significant because often, these kinds of issues persist in society, but no one tries to dig deeper into the underlying cause-effect relationship. Economic and financial stability or weakness is imperative in this global age. The influx of technology and advancement has raised the importance of money and social status. It results in social anxiety and increased stress levels. This situation further palpitates many offspring in the form of drug addiction to avoid the real problem. There can be various causes that show that often young adults who have been suffering from family issues or constant failure tend to move towards drug problems rapidly other than the ones who have supportive families. The effects of stress and family pressure are usually evident in high-achieving families. It is also important to discuss that media plays an integral role in shaping the reality of our society. It invokes people to generate certain perceptions about a particular issue. In this context, it is often seen that a young man belonging to a lower-class and middle-class family is portrayed as unemployed and drunk. On the other hand, a young adult belonging to a high-achieving family is shown as a very successful person, even though that person will party with his peers and friends. But the primary focus of people will remain on the young adult who is poor and ultimately drowns in the abyss of drug abuse and alcoholism.

Kendal argues in her books that it is common in the USA for many media agencies, newspapers, and magazines to form certain kinds of stereotypes regarding class status. As an absolute myth, it is often seen that drunk and drug addicts are homeless, unemployed, and uneducated people who have been driven into this maze due to their family status. It is a common assumption now that people associate

weakness and laziness with drug addicts or alcoholism. However, this issue is present in young adults belonging to lower economic status. But it doesn't make it a rule while the media has been investing in these series of stereotypes for years. This is also reviewed and analyzed in Kendal's book, where she argues that the construction of class-based stereotypes is generated by television programs and various newspapers, mainly focusing on the New York Times. She succinctly reaches a solid argument that media has formed the so-called culture of "class" and how it plays its role in societal issues. Such as in this issue, some people have developed a perception of "spoiled rich kids," who tend to engage in fancy parties and drug addictions due to their broken homes and excess money.

Media Representation and the Construction of Class-Based Behaviour

This issue does not affect society, but Kendal argues that the media paves the way for people to move toward a certain issue. For example, the representation of the class is done by the media, so issues are understood according to preconceived notions about class structure. The illustration of this divide is evident in Kendall's book, where she draws a clear picture of the so-called "representation of the class." She argues that young adults are portrayed as successful people who are living remarkable lives full of opportunities and luxuries. The so-called criminals and mafia of the upper world are shown as living a grand life. In comparison to this situation, it shows the hypocrisy present in society that criminals or mafia belonging to the lower class are shown involved in drug abuse, living in dark places, or roaming under stress. They are mainly shown in ridiculous situations with no sense of civilized behavior.

The research based on "media frames" depicts the attitude of society towards the media representation of these people. There is no sympathy shown towards these people, as if they are left there in an underserved situation to suffer. In addition to this, it must be pointed out that even if those lower-class people have an image of drug abuse, they are not shown to be seeking help from professionals. It is already assumed that they are weak, uneducated, uncivilized, and poor. It is also important to highlight that most of the media's perceptions and notions about this issue have been invested in the societal mind. The mindset needs to change to discuss this issue and resolve it through rational thinking based on empirical and theoretical research. It is also argued that victimization of the middle class is also misunderstood regarding class division because the middle class is working-class, different from the lower class.

It is established by Kendall that media has been playing a very significant role in shaping our minds about the reality and myths of the lower and middle classes. People have associated various factors and issues with both classes. Similarly, this issue is also viewed from the perspective of media, which shows that young adults from the lower class tend to adopt harmful habits and lifestyle choices such as drug abuse involvement. Another interesting point raised by Kendall is that people tend to buy products that are usually promoted by the media.

Consumer Culture, Stress, and the Normalization of Substance Use

Sometimes, the goods and lifestyle are shown in TV programs or movies, which shows that people are drinking so much that some lower-class or high-class people turn to drug abuse to handle their life stress. They have turned into control freaks who have lost control over their life, so drugs become their way to the so-called “salvation.” It stimulates the desire to be whatever is shown on the big screen, indicating that people have inherited their social issues from media representation. This conflict has also been influenced by this social construction of media and its members.

Kendall argues that these two dimensions have been constructed in such a frivolous manner that people tend to ignore the seriousness embedded in these perceptions and views, which are reflected by the media. As she states in her book, “As a result, it is easy for us to buy into the dominant ideological construction that views poverty as a problem of individuals, not of the society as a whole.” (Kendall) This issue becomes more critical when the issues are associated with a lower class. People have become immune to the idea that if someone indulges in drugs or criminal activities, that person will be from the lower class because the upper class has been raised in a “sophisticated manner.” Socio-economic conditions have framed the class-based constraints that have affected the information available on social issues.

The reports have been collected on this topic of drug abuse among young adults, which have shown varying results due to many socioeconomic, political, and demographic factors. It shows that mostly immature and young adults (between the age of 18-21) were involved in drug abuse. The decline in drug abuse was noticed among those young people who were under the watch of educated parents. These young adults were under constant monitoring. There was a percentage of those children whose parents left high school, and less change was reported in these students and young adults. It might be concluded from this study that the latter happened because parents were not aware of the consequences of drug abuse or they were ignorant of their children’s situation. It can also be assumed from the driven research that young people’s parents were also involved in these activities, and they belonged to the lower class. The situation has a significant impact on a person’s lifestyle. It is most likely that environment and societal setup shape a person’s personality and interests, but it must not be considered a rigid rule to draw results.

Economic Disadvantage and the Structural Causes of Addiction

It was argued in a report published on drug addiction and its causes, which showed that drug addiction is linked to many factors like low financial status and limited opportunities in the economic system. Drug addiction was presented as a byproduct of certain factors, which incorporated

producing adult abusers and drug abusers. It was argued that there were some risk factors involved in drug abuse. They will be briefly discussed here, such as some adults who experience neglect and parental abuse during their childhood. They tend to repeat those actions and experiences by adopting them as their lifestyle. The role of genetics is also vital; for example, if a mother is a drug abuser and she intakes drugs or alcohol during pregnancy, it results in “DNA gene sequencing,” which suggests that due to the mutation in genes, her child might be drug abuser to prone to this illness.

It was also suggested that education, poverty, race, wealth status, parental substance abuse, and mental health play a significant role in triggering this issue, which creates chaos in society. It was stated that it would be wrong to associate drug abuse with lower class or poverty directly. However, the indirect influence can be examined in this issue. For example, there is a growing tendency for these factors to contribute to this issue. It denotes the significance of factors by illustrating that it is not necessarily true that rich people indulge in drug abuse. However, the chances for the lower class to indulge in such activities are higher because they face the traumas of a financial crisis, unemployment, education deprivation, and poor household problems. (“Economic Status And Abuse | Dual Diagnosis”) The sociological and material factors tend to push poor people towards excessive substance use, which results in bad health and mental condition as well as a destructive lifestyle. It impacts society in a negative way; it portrays a demolishing image of the societal setup and its downward movement toward a negative attitude. It also creates many problems for families who are severely affected by this issue and its consequences. (Mackenbach)

It is also reported that smoking is more common among poor-class and lower-class adults than those belonging to upper strata, which shows the effect of financial inequity. (Siapush) Another research shows that American society is divided into two main classes regarding the use of drugs and drug abuse (also known as drug addiction/ substance abuse); the lower and middle class is involved in drugs. It shows that middle-class people are involved but not to a greater extent; in fact, it has reduced in the past years, especially in the educated class. While the poor class contains homeless people who have less financial means, several cases of drug abuse, mainly cocaine and heroin, and cases of AIDS were also reported. The use of alcohol is viewed as a persistent issue, while the use of illegal drugs is also on the rise. (KERR, PETER)

Professor David (professor of psychiatry at Yale) stated that society is dealing with two different worlds regarding drug abuse and substance use. It shows that the core problem is excessive use of cocaine among young adults, this use got hype during 1960s-70s. It was stated that “The question we must be asking now is not why people take drugs, but why do people stop,’ ”In the inner city, the factors that counterbalance drug use – family, employment, status within the community – often are not there. It is harder for people with nothing to say no to drugs.” (KERR, PETER) People have been moving towards drug abuse due to the hopelessness of their situation and devastating economic status. Economic inequality is giving birth to various other issues, including drug abuse, which must be handled with immense strategic care and research before it becomes a large epidemic.

Education, Awareness, and the Prevention of Drug Abuse

The issue of drug abuse is strongly linked to the deprivation of education and less awareness. It increases the chances for individuals to indulge in drug abuse. It was also reported in recent research that people who were less likely to indulge in drug abuse belonged to big financial homes and educated parents. The number of students who attained more marks on the SAT was actually of high economic status. While young adults belonging to the lower income class were involved in drug abuse and excessive usage of drugs. It can be concluded, as they say . “wealth breeds wealth.”

Mental illness is also considered a significant factor incorporated in drug abuse. It was reported that approximately 43 million US citizens were engaged in drug abuse and mental illness issues. It is argued by experts that many rich people were reportedly diagnosed with mental health issues, bipolar disorder, drug abuse, and depression. It was also reported that the chances of mental illness due to drug abuse were high for young adults who belong to lower economic status. It is argued that economic status can be incorporated into the development of drug abuse and mental illness.

The issue of poverty and drug abuse is also problematic because adults who are involved in this problem usually do not seek professionals to resolve this issue. In addition to this, it is also argued that if a drug abuser is homeless, then the particular person is left alone, and due to lack of support, it becomes worse. The National Council for Homeless People stated that drug addicts lack the motivation to leave their drug addiction because they have poor living conditions. It can be concluded that most of the myths have been developed by media in society, but the division of social classes and economic status is incorporated into the issue of drug abuse.

Bibliography

KERR, PETER. “Rich Vs. Poor: Drug Patterns Are Diverging”. *Nytimes.Com*, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/30/us/rich-vs-poor-drug-patterns-are-diverging.html?pagewanted=all>.

“Economic Status And Abuse | Dual Diagnosis.” *Dual Diagnosis*, 2017, <https://www.dualdiagnosis.org/drug-addiction/economic-status/>.

Kendall, Diana Elizabeth. *Framing Class*. 1st ed.,.

Mackenbach, Johan P. “Socioeconomic Inequalities In Health In High-Income Countries: The Facts And The Options.” *Oxford Textbook Of Global Public Health*, 2015, pp. 106-126. Oxford University Press, doi:10.1093/med/9780199661756.003.0008.

Siahpush, Mohammad, et al. “Socioeconomic variations in nicotine dependence, self-efficacy, and

intention to quit across four countries: findings from the International Tobacco Control (ITC) Four Country Survey." Tobacco control 15.suppl 3 (2006): iii71-iii75.

Patrick, Megan E. et al. "Socioeconomic Status And Substance Use Among Young Adults: A Comparison Across Constructs And Drugs." Journal Of Studies On Alcohol And Drugs, vol 73, no. 5, 2012, pp. 772-782. Alcohol Research Documentation, Inc., doi:10.15288/jsad.2012.73.772.

Center, Sunrise. "Addiction Among Socioeconomic Groups | Sunrise House." Sunrise House, 2017, <https://sunrisehouse.com/addiction-demographics/socioeconomic-groups/>.