

Explanations regarding the influx of drug use and abuse are attributed to the social norms in the present modern world. Understanding the causes behind the prevalence of drug abuse, significantly paves the way for combating this drug problem. Such discussions will also provide important answers that can be fine-tuned into policy reforms for any nation in the world. Three main explanations have been put forward to explain drug use: biological; psychological; and sociological explanations.

According to “Social Problems” (2010/2016), the biological explanation addresses two major concerns: effect of drugs on an individual and the predisposing factors. For the first concern, drug use results accumulation of dopamine, that gives rise to the feel-good sensation, which occurs when the brain neurotransmitters are released and dumped into an individual’s system. Predisposing factors are concerned with the genetic make-up (from his/her parents) of a particular drug user.

Psychological explanations state that individuals portraying personality defects, such as low self-esteem and low self-confidence are more likely to resort to drug use - to feel better - or attempt to develop high self-esteem and confidence. Behavioral psychology also relates drug abuse to operant conditioning. In this classical approach, individuals try drugs to reinforce positive feedback. The feedback can either be direct feedback, which is derived from pleasure during such drug use, or indirect feedback, which is derived from the pleasure experienced while in the company of individuals using the same drugs (“Social Problems,” 2010/2016).

The sociological explanation, “Social Problems” (2010/2016) discusses the effects of inequalities in society stemming from family bonds, social structure, poverty and racial differences. Children who come from families with poor family bonds are likely to reject

accepted social norms, which easily lead to delinquent behavior easily when, compared with their counter-parts in closely-knit families. Consequently, as adolescents explore the social structure, they may feel the need to be associated with certain friends. If the particular company with whom an adolescent chooses to identify uses drugs, the teen will also be drawn to such abuse in order to “fit in”. The years from 1960 to 1980 were met with an explosion of drug abuse in the United States (US). As the economy was growing, the social inequality that flooded the urban areas resulted in poverty and racial inequality. Drug use became an easy escape route from the prevalent economic distress. By following this explanation, rationalizing drug use and abuse as resulting from biological or psychological problems is obviously unjustified. The major cause for the current drug pandemic is sociologically best explained in “Social Problems,” 2010/2016.

Bearing this in mind, the conflict theory, “Social Problems” (2010/2016), puts a clear perspective on the reasons the US public and political support for healthcare remains very difficult to achieve. With the conflict theory emphasizing the negative effects caused by social inequality, (Callaghan, 2016), it can be explained that the insurance industry in 2009 alone contributed a majority of US \$ 100 million, out of the US \$1.2 billion generated to lobbying against the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Emanating from the nation’s unique culture, which favors a classic liberal approach, US citizens advocate for individual responsibility for their health concerns against overall government intervention. As public and political institutions remain complacent to change with regard to social concerns, the conflict theory explains that the multi-nationals will continue to make profits as racial inequality and poverty continue to cripple the health and well-being of its citizens.

References

Callaghan, T. (2016, October 16). The Conversation. *Three reasons the US doesn't have universal health coverage*. Retrieved from: <http://theconversation.com/three-reasons-the-us-doesnt-have-universal-health-coverage-67292>

Social Problems: Continuity and Change. (2016, March). University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Edition, 2015. (Originally published in 2010)