

Drug and Substance Abuse among Youth: Factors, Effects and Prevention Methods

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Abstract

Drug and substance abuse has become an increasingly pressing issue worldwide, especially among youth. This conceptual article aims to discuss the factors contributing to drug and substance abuse, the effects of drug and substance abuse on youth, methods of preventing drug and substance abuse among youth, and the importance of spirituality in youth. Drug and substance abuse refers to the uncontrolled, excessive, or illegal use of certain chemicals or substances that can alter a person's mental, emotional, or physical state. Several factors make it easy for youth to get involved in drug and substance abuse, such as being easily influenced by friends, experiencing stress or depression, having poor family dynamics, lacking socioeconomic support, and having neurobiological differences. Drug and substance abuse impacts youth in terms of health, social, and economic well-being. The importance of a holistic approach in prevention should be emphasized by promoting education about drug and substance abuse awareness, fostering protective factors such as spirituality, and recognizing the role of parents and families in forming a positive environment that does not support drug and substance abuse. The importance of the spiritual element in youth is also described as a defense against drug and substance abuse.

Keywords: Drug and Substance Abuse, Youth, Abuse Factors, Spirituality, Prevention.

Introduction

The problem of drug and substance abuse in this country, especially among the youth, is a significant issue that always attracts the attention of many, especially the authorities. Drug and substance abuse has also been linked to various societal issues and problems such as crime, child abuse, mental health problems, and fatal injuries. Malaysia sees drugs as the country's number one enemy, posing an obstacle to national development. According to the Malay Literature Reference Center (2017), drugs are defined as substances used for medicines. The National Anti-Drug Agency (AADK) (2018) states that drugs are psychoactive chemicals that are not used for medical purposes, the use of which is prohibited due to physical and psychological dependence, as well as tolerance that increases with adverse effects on health, self, family, and society. In terms of substance addiction, the World Health Organization (WHO) no longer uses the term drug abuse but rather substance abuse, which provides a broader definition of the scope of substances and their harm to users (World Health Organization, 2016). Next, Wazir et al (2019) discuss the term drug in the context of Islam, which can be equated with the term *khamr* found in the Quran. Therefore, drugs are defined as all intoxicating and hallucinogenic substances that cause addiction, dependence, and behavioral changes.

The United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has released the world drug report statistics in 2018, estimating that 269 million or 5.4 percent of the world's population aged 15-64 used drugs in 2018 (*United Nations on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC), 2020). This estimated increase of 11.0 percent can be seen in line with the estimated increase in the total world population in 2030, which is 299 million people (*United Nations on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC), 2020). Meanwhile, statistics on drug abuse in Malaysia released by the National Anti-Drug Agency (AADK) in 2020 show that a total of 128,325 people have been identified as involved in drug abuse with a decrease of 9.8 percent compared to the previous year (National Anti-Drug Agency, 2020). This decrease is due to the impact of the pandemic where the National Anti-Drug Agency (2020) stated that during the implementation of the Movement Control Order (MCO), the operations carried out were generally small-scale and the arrests made in one operation were also in the amount small. In fact, enforcement operations are more focused on detection actions based on public complaints.

At the same time, the National Anti-Drug Agency (2020) also reported the number of cases of drug and substance abuse among youth aged 19-39 years, which is the category most involved in drug and substance abuse activities which is 83,401 people or 65.0 percent with a decrease of 13.8 percent compared to 2019. This is very worrying because it will have a bad effect on the country. Many youths are involved in drug abuse, resulting in the country lacking human resources that have the potential to lead the country or become individuals of interest to the country in the future. This is also the reason researchers emphasize this study because the prevalence of drug use among youth has been rising globally. Studies show by World Health Organization (WHO) (2023) that early initiation of drug use can lead to long-term addiction and other adverse outcomes. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2023) also highlights that substance abuse in adolescents can result in immediate health risks, such as accidents and injuries, and long-term consequences like mental health disorders and chronic diseases.

Other than that, there are also several reasons why this study is very important to emphasize and needs to be studied. Researcher believes that if a youth is involved in drug abuse it will

necessarily affect the people and the environment around the youth. Bahr (2015) said that drug abuse not only affects the youth but also the social well-being of the youth such as families and communities. It can cause family tension, broken relationships, and increased crime rates, all of which damage the social and economic fabric of society (Bahr, 2015).

The involvement of the youth in drug abuse has a huge economic impact on the country. Health care costs, lost productivity, and increased spending on law enforcement are among the economic burdens borne by governments and communities (Keyes, 2015). Researcher views that the economic burden that occurs is solely to restore and treat the youth involved because they are confident that the youth will recover and achieve the future of the country.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) state that abuse of drugs and illicit substances has serious implications for the health of youth. Drug abuse can cause various physical and mental health problems for the youth such as infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, mental disorders such as depression and anxiety, as well as death due to overdose. So with that, the researchers see that this study needs to be studied to form a visionary youth group.

However, the needs of this study are to understand the causal factors. This study is needed to identify and understand the various factors that encourage youth to engage in drug abuse. These include psychological, social, economic, and environmental factors that can help in designing more accurate and effective interventions. Understanding the factors or causes of drug and substance abuse needs to be explored first before overcoming these risks with prevention programs. Researchers are confident that understanding the factors contributing to drug and substance abuse can help prevention program practitioners to design more effective prevention programs. According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) (2020), identifying the causes of drug and substance abuse is one of the basic principles for conducting prevention programs.

Additionally, measuring the effects of drug abuse. In the view of researcher, an in-depth study of the effects of drug abuse on youth health, education, and socio-economics is important to measure the extent to which this problem affects individuals and society. This data is important for planning a comprehensive prevention and support program. In fact, Dodgen and Shea (2020) support by state that a holistic approach can be taken where comprehensive research can reveal the nature of various aspects of drug abuse, including psychological, social and environmental factors. This knowledge is essential to creating a holistic approach that addresses the root causes of substance abuse rather than treating the symptoms.

After that, research that focuses on prevention methods is important and also one of the needs in this study. This includes studies on the effectiveness of educational programs, community support, government policies, and other initiatives that can help reduce drug abuse rates among youth and indirectly can develop effective prevention methods. Based on Abdullah et al (2020), in developing effective prevention methods, targeted interventions play an important role by understanding the specific factors that contribute to drug abuse among youth. For example, interventions can be designed to address peer pressure, increase family support, and promote resilience and coping skills in youth.

From the researcher views, findings from this study can be used to form policies and policies that are more effective in dealing with the issue of drug abuse. This includes health, education and legal policies tailored to current needs and challenges. Indirectly, too, research in this area is to inform data-driven policies and programs. Policy makers and stakeholders need strong evidence to design and implement effective prevention and intervention strategies tailored to the unique needs of youth.

The study of this topic is important or beneficial to youth. For youth themselves, understanding drug abuse and its consequences is important to making healthier choices and informed decisions about their health and future. Yidian (2023) said that this can be seen in programs that educate youth about the risks and consequences of drug use have been shown to reduce attempts and abuse. This study also benefits to parents and families because they are at the forefront of preventing and dealing with drug abuse among youth. Understanding the factors and effects of substance abuse is important for them to identify issues early and seek help (Duncan, 2018).

Besides, it is also importance to educators and community leaders. Educators and community leaders play an important role in shaping the environment in which youth thrive. Alhammad et al (2022) state that understanding drug and substance abuse is important to these stakeholders for a number of reasons and one of them is that educators can develop and implement a comprehensive health education curriculum that addresses the risks and consequences of drug use. The program can be adapted to different age groups and cultural contexts, making it more effective.

Alhammad et al (2022) continued by state that community leaders can mobilize local resources to create a supportive environment that discourages drug use. This includes organizing community events, support groups and outreach programs that educate and engage youth in meaningful activities. Successful community interventions often involve collaboration between schools, parents, law enforcement and health care providers.

Therefore, this conceptual article aims to understand the factors that contribute to drug and substance abuse among youth, the negative effects associated with it, as well as effective prevention strategies. Since this problem is a big problem and involves the future of the country, it is appropriate and reasonable to understand the factors and effects of drug and substance abuse so that a holistic approach in prevention can also be implemented by emphasizing the role of spirituality as an effective strategy to reduce the phenomenon of drug and substance abuse in among the youth.

Factors of Drug and Substance Abuse among Youth

Drug and substance abuse among youth remains a concern for communities around the world. Despite widespread efforts to curb drug and substance abuse, statistics reveal a continuing trend of youth involvement in drug addiction. To effectively address this issue, it is important to understand the various factors that drive youth towards drug and substance abuse. By examining the latest research and insights, a deeper understanding can be gained about these factors and formulating targeted prevention. Various factors and reasons drive youth involvement in drug and substance abuse. Domestic and foreign research identifies the factors of drug and substance abuse among youth as follows :-

1. Social Influence

Recent research by Kelly and White (2022) states that social influences such as peer pressure that provide exposure to drug and substance use in social circles significantly influence youth experimentation with drugs. Based on statistics on drug involvement factors in Malaysia, the influence of friends is the highest factor compared to other factors with a total of 8,059 cases compared to the second highest factor which is curiosity with a total of 4,432 cases (Drug Information, 2021). Steinberg and Monahan (2017) stated that social learning theory posits that youth acquire behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement in their social environment. Thus, witnessing peers engaging in substance use behaviors may normalize and reinforce similar behaviors in adolescents. Additionally, social identity theory suggests that individuals derive their self-concept and social identity from their membership in social groups, such as peer groups or peer networks. As adolescents strive to establish and maintain a social identity, they may conform to group norms and behaviors, including drug and substance abuse, to increase their social status and acceptance within their peer group (Brechtwald & Prinstein, 2021).

A study by Thoma et al (2020) showed that the influence of peers on drug and substance abuse among youth is direct or indirect. Direct peer pressure characterized by Thoma et al (2020) is like a clear push or compulsion to engage in drug and substance abuse so that it can have a strong influence on the decision-making process of the youth. In contrast, indirect peer influence operates through social norms, peer modeling, and social comparison processes that shape perceptions of the acceptability and desirability of substance use within peer networks.

A survey study **conducted** by Akers and Lee (2022) **aimed** to examine the influence of peer groups on drug and substance abuse among youth. The results of this study show that peers significantly influence drug abuse behavior, directly supporting the principles of social learning theory. This latest study also **demonstrates** the **continued** importance of peer influence. It is possible that due to the passage of time, *the feeling of loneliness* leads a person to find as many friends as are able to break the feeling of loneliness without filtering in choosing friends. In fact, it is yourself who will perish with negative activities.

Therefore, peer influence plays an important role in shaping youth attitudes and behaviors regarding drug and substance abuse. By understanding the mechanisms underlying peer influence and harnessing the potential of peer networks as agents of change, stakeholders can develop targeted prevention and intervention strategies to effectively address drug and substance abuse among youth. Through collaborative efforts involving peers, families, schools and communities, it is possible to create a supportive environment that empowers young people to make informed, healthy and thriving choices on their journey to adulthood.

2. Psychological factors

Psychological factors are also not left behind such as anxiety, depression, trauma, and mental health disorders that occur, contributing to the vulnerability of youth to drug addiction. According to Casey et al (2018), depression, anxiety, trauma-related symptoms and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), are commonly associated with drug and substance abuse among youth. Youth use drugs and substances as a form of self-medication to reduce symptoms of psychological distress or escape from painful emotions and traumatic

experiences. In addition, Crone and Dahl (2022) explained that youth with low self-esteem and self-efficacy may turn to drugs and substances as a way to cope with negative emotions, reduce feelings of inadequacy, and increase their sense of self-esteem and confidence. Substance use can provide temporary relief from psychological distress, reinforcing maladaptive coping strategies and patterns of dependence.

Yidian (2023) stated that drugs and illicit substances are often used for psychoactive effects, including euphoria, relaxation, and altered states of consciousness. Youth may seek substances to enhance positive emotions, reduce boredom, and amplify pleasurable experiences. The pursuit of hedonic gratification and the desire for immediate rewards drive youth involvement in illicit substance-seeking behavior. Ariffin et al. (2019) also told that youth who face stress, difficulty, or interpersonal conflict may turn to drugs and substances as a coping mechanism to manage negative emotions and reduce psychological stress. Substance use offers a temporary escape from reality, providing a sense of relief, freedom, or escape from life's challenges and stresses.

Therefore, psychological factors play a major role in shaping the attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of youth regarding drug and substance abuse. By understanding the psychological vulnerabilities, motivations, and processes underlying drug and substance abuse behaviors among youth, stakeholders can develop targeted prevention and intervention strategies to effectively address this pressing public health issue.

3. Family Factors

Family influence plays an important role in shaping the attitude, behavior and involvement of youth in drug and substance abuse. The family environment serves as a primary context for socialization, providing youth with a foundation for understanding norms, values, and expectations regarding substance use. Family dynamics, relationships and practices influence drug and substance abuse among youth. According to Mogahed (2021), family dynamics such as adverse childhood experiences, dysfunctional family relationships and parental substance abuse contribute to youth vulnerability to drug addiction. Family dysfunction, conflict and poor communication can increase adolescents' vulnerability to drug abuse and involvement in substance-related behaviors (Bahr, 2015).

Bahr (2015), also stated that the presence of drug and substance use in the family, whether from parents or siblings, greatly influences the attitude and behavior of youth regarding drug use. Youth raised in households where the use of illicit substances is normalized or permitted may perceive drug and alcohol use as acceptable or desirable behavior. Additionally, exposure to illicit substance abuse by parents or siblings increases the likelihood of early initiation into drug and substance use among youth. This statement is also supported by Duncan (2018) stating that parental modeling of alcohol, smoking or excessive drug use increases the risk of modeling and imitation among youth and can maintain the intergenerational cycle of substance abuse.

With regard to family factors on the future risk of youth to turn to drug and substance abuse, a study by Alhammad et al (2022) discussed drug and substance abuse among medical students. The results show that a family history of drug and substance abuse is one of the risk factors that make individuals vulnerable to the abuse of any subtype of substance.

Additionally, a study by Kumpfer and Alvarado (2023), on methadone maintenance therapy and a positive parental history concluded that patients with a positive family history had more severe opioid dependence symptoms so that they could be classified as highly dependent.

Kumpfer and Alvarado (2023) also explained that authoritarian or permissive parenting styles can contribute to the increased risk of drug and substance abuse among youth. Authoritarian parenting can lead to rebellion and defiance in youth, while permissive parenting may lack the structure and guidance needed to prevent drug and substance use. Understanding parenting styles and their impact on youth development is important to addressing family influences on drug and substance abuse.

4. Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic factors such as poverty, and lack of access to resources exacerbate youth involvement in drug abuse, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Keyes (2015) explains that economic deprivation and poverty are associated with increased rates of drug and substance abuse among youth. Youth growing up in economically disadvantaged communities face a variety of stressors and challenges, including limited access to educational and employment opportunities, inadequate health care services, and exposure to violence and crime. These adverse conditions contribute to feelings of hopelessness and increase the likelihood of using illicit substances as a coping mechanism or means of escape.

Recent research by Karriker-Jaffe (2017) shows that youth from low-income households are more likely to engage in drug and substance abuse than their higher-income counterparts. Economic disparities exacerbate social inequalities and structural barriers that perpetuate the cycle of drug and substance abuse in marginalized communities. Galea (2021) explains that unemployment and economic uncertainty are significant risk factors for drug and substance abuse among youth. Youth facing limited job prospects and economic insecurity may turn to drugs and substances as a way to cope with stress, boredom, or frustration. Unemployment not only deprives young people of financial resources but also affects their sense of purpose, self-worth and social identity, increasing their tendency to use substances as a form of self-medication or distraction.

5. Genetic Factors

Genetic predisposition and neurobiological differences in brain function also contribute to variation in adolescent susceptibility to drug addiction (Volkow & Boyle, 2018). Genetic predisposition refers to inherited traits or characteristics that increase an individual's susceptibility to certain conditions or behaviors, such as drug and alcohol dependence. Twin and adoption studies have provided strong evidence for the heritability of substance use disorders, showing that genetic factors account for a large proportion of the variance in susceptibility to drug and alcohol abuse (Volkow & Boyle, 2018). Recently, there are studies from Kendler (2022); Vargas-Perez (2023) related to genetic factors in drug and substance abuse. A study by Kendler (2022) found that genetic factors accounted for approximately 50% of the liability to drug and substance abuse, highlighting the large genetic component involved. This study compared rates of drug and substance abuse between monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal) twins, as well as among family members. In summary, researchers can see that twin and family studies consistently show a strong genetic influence on drug and substance abuse.

Furthermore, the field of epigenetics has shed light on how environmental factors can interact with genetic predispositions to influence drug and substance abuse. Epigenetic modifications such as DNA methylation and histone acetylation can regulate gene expression and impact individual vulnerability to drug abuse. The statement appears in research by Vargas-Perez (2023) which shows that chronic exposure to drug and substance abuse can lead to epigenetic changes in the brain as well as changing gene expression patterns associated with addiction-related behaviors. Agrawal (2022) supports that opinion by explaining that although genetic factors contribute to an individual's predisposition to substance abuse, they interact dynamically with environmental influences to shape drug and substance use behavior. Gene-environment interaction refers to the interaction between genetic predisposition and environmental stressors, social context, and developmental factors that influence the expression of genetic traits. Agrawal (2022) further explains that youth who have certain genetic weaknesses, such as polymorphisms in genes associated with reward processing or impulse control, may be more vulnerable to environmental influences, such as peer pressure or family dysfunction, which promote the initiation of drug and substance use.

Thus, researchers see that genetic factors contribute significantly to an individual's tendency towards drug and substance abuse. Twin and family studies and advances in genetic research techniques have provided valuable insights into the genetic basis of drug and substance abuse. Understanding the genetic basis of drug and substance abuse can inform researchers about targeted prevention strategies. Although genetic factors contribute to the risk of drug and substance abuse, researchers think it's important to realize that they don't solely determine individual decisions.

Effects of Drug and Substance Abuse on The Youth Group

When young people navigate the complexities of adolescence by succumbing to the lure of drugs, it can have a profound and detrimental effect on their lives. Examining the latest research and views, it turns out that the effects of drug abuse in the youth include health, social and economic.

1. Effects on Health

Chronic drug and substance abuse can lead to the development of dependence and addiction, which is characterized by compulsive drug-seeking behavior, tolerance and withdrawal symptoms to the point of experiencing disruption in daily functioning and affecting their overall quality of life. According to Abdullah et al. (2020), drug and substance abuse can cause widespread damage to vital organs, such as the liver, lungs, heart and brain and increase the risk of chronic diseases and life-threatening conditions. For example, long-term alcohol abuse can cause cirrhosis of the liver, cardiovascular disease and neurological disorders, while smoking can cause respiratory diseases, cancer and cardiovascular disorders. Moreover, injection drug use, especially among youth who share needles or engage in risky sexual behavior, increases the risk of contracting infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C (Volkow, 2019). Volkow (2019) also added that sharing contaminated needles and syringes can facilitate the transmission of blood-borne pathogens that can pose serious health risks and public health concerns among vulnerable youth populations.

Drug and substance abuse is associated with an increased risk of emotional disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder among youth. Youth may use drugs or alcohol as a form of self-medication to reduce symptoms of depression or anxiety, and these things exacerbate

mental health issues and affect emotions (Courtney & Polich, 2019). Certain substances such as cannabis and hallucinogens can cause psychotic symptoms and worsen existing psychiatric disorders in susceptible individuals. Psychosis and delusions may occur as a result of substance-induced changes in brain function and neurotransmitter systems (George & Koob, 2020). In fact, long-term drug and substance abuse can affect cognitive function, and decision-making abilities leading to a lack of attention, memory and problem-solving skills. Youth who engage in excessive alcohol or drug use may experience long-term cognitive impairment that affects their academic performance and future prospects (Volkow & Boyle, 2018).

The health effects of drug and substance abuse among youth are multifaceted and include dimensions of physical, mental and social well-being. By addressing the physical health consequences, mental health effects and underlying health-related factors associated with substance use behavior, stakeholders can develop more effective prevention and intervention strategies to reduce the adverse effects of drug and substance abuse on young people's health and well-being.

2. Impact on Social

One of the most significant effects of drug and substance abuse is the disruption of social relationships and support networks. Galea (2020) explains that substance abuse can strain interpersonal relationships, erode trust and create conflict in families and friendships . Individuals struggling with addiction may prioritize obtaining and using drugs over fulfilling social obligations, leading to isolation, withdrawal from loved ones. Recent research by Mogahed (2021) underscores the adverse effects of substance abuse on family dynamics, including increased rates of domestic violence, child neglect and domestic discord. Children who have parents with substance use disorders are at higher risk for adverse experiences such as trauma, neglect and emotional instability, which can have long-term consequences for their social and emotional development.

Abdullah et al (2020) also support by stating that drug addiction disrupts interpersonal relationships and social functioning that isolates youth from their family, friends and community. The erratic behavior associated with addiction often leads to strained relationships, conflict, and social isolation. In addition, involvement in criminal activities to maintain drug habits can exacerbate social marginalization and stigmatization (Mogahed, 2021).

Drug and substance abuse can undermine community cohesion and social capital, weakening the fabric of neighborhoods, schools and workplaces. Communities struggling with high rates of substance abuse may experience increased crime, disorder and social unrest, creating a sense of insecurity and instability among residents (Degenhardt, 2020). Additionally, stigma and discrimination related to substance abuse can exacerbate social divisions and hinder efforts to address underlying health issues. Recent studies highlight the impact of drug and substance abuse on community well-being, including higher rates of crime, unemployment and homelessness in areas affected by the drug epidemic (Mogahed, 2021). Communities with limited access to treatment and prevention services may struggle to address the root causes of substance abuse, perpetuating cycles of poverty, inequality and social exclusion among vulnerable populations (Degenhardt, 2020).

In conclusion, drug and substance abuse has a significant negative impact on social dynamics, including the disruption of relationships and the erosion of community cohesion. These effects extend beyond individual health outcomes to affect families, communities and society at large. Addressing the social impact of drug and substance abuse requires comprehensive interventions by encouraging community mobilization, strengthening social support networks, supporting evidence-based policies and raising awareness. Stakeholders can work towards reducing the social impact of drug and substance abuse and fostering healthier and more resilient communities.

3. Impact on the Economy

French (2017) explains that one of the main economic effects of drug and substance abuse among youth is the loss of productivity and human capital. Substance abuse can impair cognitive function, academic performance, and vocational skills thus reducing an individual's ability to participate effectively in the labor market and contributing to economic recession. According to Ariffin et al (2019), drug and substance abuse among youth imposes a significant economic burden on society. The costs associated with health care services, criminal justice interventions, lost productivity and rehabilitation programs are substantial. Moreover, the cycle of poverty perpetuated by addiction further saps socioeconomic resources and perpetuates cycles of intergenerational disadvantage.

Galea (2021) also expressed the same opinion that drug and substance abuse among youth imposes significant costs on the criminal justice system, including expenses related to law enforcement, incarceration and rehabilitation. Drug-related offenses account for the majority of arrests, prosecutions and incarcerations among youth, leading to overcrowded prisons and pressure on criminal justice resources. A study by Bouchery (2020) outlines the economic burden of substance abuse-related crime, including the costs associated with police investigations and court proceedings.

Drug and substance abuse among youth imposes significant health care costs on society, including costs associated with prevention, treatment and health care services. Medical emergencies related to drug and substance abuse, hospitalizations and treatment admissions strain healthcare resources and contribute to increased healthcare costs, placing a financial burden on individuals, families and the public health system (Larochelle, 2019). Drug and substance abuse treatment, including expenses related to detoxification, rehabilitation programs, medication-assisted therapy and mental health services further highlight the high economic costs (Degenhardt, 2020). Additionally, health complications associated with drug and substance abuse, such as infectious diseases, injuries, and chronic conditions, further increase health care expenditures and resource use, especially among vulnerable youth populations (French, 2017).

Methods of Preventing Drug and Substance Abuse to The Youth Group

While addressing the effects of addiction is important, prioritizing prevention efforts is also important in stemming the tide of drug and substance abuse among youth. By leveraging evidence-based strategies and the latest research, communities can take proactive steps to protect youth from the dangers of drug addiction.

1. Drug and Substance Abuse Education Awareness Program

Kelly and White (2022) explained that promoting drug education by increasing awareness of the risks of substance abuse is fundamental to prevention efforts. Comprehensive school-based programs, community workshops, and multimedia campaigns play an important role in providing accurate information about the consequences of drug use. By equipping youth with knowledge and empowering them to make informed decisions, educational initiatives serve as important deterrents to drug and substance abuse.

In the meantime, Chapman and Gopalan (2020) also conveyed that drug and substance abuse education programs play an important role in empowering youth to make healthy choices and avoid addiction traps. The program offers information about the risks associated with various types of drugs and illicit substances such as alcohol, tobacco and prescription drugs and educates youth about the effects of substance abuse on physical and mental health as well as relationships and future prospects.

Research has consistently shown that early prevention through educational programs can significantly reduce the likelihood of drug and substance abuse among youth. According to a study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, youth who receive comprehensive drug and substance abuse education are less likely to initiate drug use and more likely to abstain from drug and substance use in the long term (Marschall-Lévesque et al., 2017). Furthermore, effective educational programs help dispel myths and misconceptions about drugs and alcohol, foster a culture of critical thinking and informed decision-making among young people. Hands-on activities, role-play exercises and interactive discussions are effective methods of engaging young people and reinforcing key concepts. Experiential learning allows youth to explore real-life scenarios and develop problem-solving skills in a safe and supportive environment (Kelly & White, 2020).

Recent research in the field of drug and substance abuse prevention has focused on approaching the elements of self-assertion and awareness in drug abuse education programs. For example, as early as 1975, self-assertiveness has been seen as a value that can prevent a person from engaging in drug and substance abuse (Al Haadi Shafie et al., 2023). This study was conducted by Horan, D'Amico and Williams (1975) who examined the relationship between self-assertiveness and drug use among university students. The results of the study found that students involved in drug abuse had lower self-assertiveness scores than students who did not use drugs. Drug awareness is a concept pioneered by Bryan (2000) through knowledge, attitude and belief in the symptoms of drug abuse (Al Haadi Shafie et al., 2023). According to Bryan (2000), community awareness of the dangers of drug abuse is important to ensure that the government's policies can be followed and implemented.

As new research and trends continue to emerge, it is important to adapt educational awareness program strategies by applying protective factors to meet the evolving needs of today's youth and ensure the long-term success of prevention efforts. Protective factors are the foundations on which resilience is built, offering young people the strength and support they need to navigate life's complexities. Prevention that focuses on risk factors and protective factors refers to the implementation of prevention by identifying existing risk factors and to identify protective factors that can reduce those risk factors (Hogan et al., 2003).

The theory of risk factors and protective factors was pioneered by Hawkins et al (1992) through a long-term study that has been conducted for 30 years. Based on this theory, risk factors are factors that can contribute to drug and substance abuse, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, dropping out of school and violence while protective factors are factors that can curb risk factors. Therefore, the more protective factors there are, the less the impact of risk factors on an individual. According to Hawkins and Catalano (1992), protective factors are divided into three categories, namely individual character, relationships and healthy beliefs.

Individual character refers to the character possessed from birth and the character that is difficult to change. For example gender, resilience, intelligence and positive social orientation. The second category is relationships. Relationships formed from a positive environment of family, friends and community will reduce the probability of an individual from being involved in social problems. Studies show that the success of children raised in high-risk areas has a positive relationship with caregivers. The third category is healthy beliefs. Caregivers, teachers, or any adult who has an interest in children need to have positive and clear standards of behavior. If the standard of behavior is consistent, then the child is more likely to have a positive standard of behavior.

Dodgen and Shea (2020) explain that fostering protective factors such as spirituality can increase resilience and well-being among youth is important to prevent drug and substance abuse. A growing field of research has highlighted the important impact of spirituality on individual well-being, including its role in reducing drug and substance abuse among youth (Galen & Rogers, 2017). While traditional approaches often focus on psychological, social and environmental factors, understanding the influence of spirituality offers a holistic perspective that includes the inner journey and search for meaning.

Spirituality is often defined as the search for meaning in life and a relationship with something greater than oneself, including beliefs, values, and practices that guide individuals in their efforts to achieve purpose and happiness in life (Zou et al., 2017). Research suggests that spirituality can function as a protective factor against drug and substance abuse by providing individuals with a sense of meaning, purpose, and identity that reduces the appeal of drugs and alcohol as coping mechanisms (Galen & Rogers 2017).

A study published in the *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* found that adolescents who reported higher levels of spiritual beliefs and practices were less likely to engage in substance use and exhibited lower levels of drug and substance abuse-related problems (Zou et al., 2017). . Furthermore, spirituality has been linked to greater resilience, coping skills, and overall well-being, which contributes to healthier behaviors and lifestyle choices among youth (Laird et al., 2015). A lot of research in this spiritual approach has been done both in Malaysia and abroad. This is because, spirituality is seen as a value in humans that can help humans to distinguish between good and bad things as well as being able to control themselves not to do things that are forbidden in religion (Shafie et al., 2023). As is well known, prevention is better than cure. Preventing drug and substance abuse through Islamic spiritual approaches is effective in returning people to their nature as servants of God (Rushdan & Osman, 2015). In conclusion, drug and substance abuse education awareness programs play an important role in promoting healthy behavior and preventing addiction among youth. By providing

accurate information and teaching important life skills, this educational awareness program can empower youth to make informed decisions and resist peer pressure and live a life free from drug and substance abuse.

2. Role of Parents and Family

Parents and families play an important role in shaping their children's attitudes, behaviors and choices, especially in preventing drug and substance abuse among youth. As a primary influence and source of support, parents have the power to create an environment that fosters open communication and instills values that encourage healthy decision-making. White and Kurtz (2016) stated that support from parents and families also plays an important role in preventing drug and substance abuse among youth by strengthening the parent-child bond, fostering open communication, and setting clear expectations regarding substance use are important components in family-based prevention efforts. Parenting programs can be done by offering guidance on effective communication, discipline strategies and monitoring behavior to empower families to create a nurturing environment that discourages drug experimentation.

Building a strong and supportive parent-child relationship is fundamental to preventing drug and substance abuse among youth. A positive parent-child bond characterized by warmth, trust, and open communication creates a sense of security and connectedness that reduces the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors (Van Ryzin et al., 2012). Research consistently shows that adolescents who have a close and supportive relationship with their parents are less likely to try drugs or alcohol and are more likely to seek parental guidance and support when faced with peer pressure or difficult situations (Fosco et al., 2012).

Effective open communication and trust between parents and teens is essential to fostering trust, understanding, and mutual respect. Parents who engage in open and honest conversations with their children about the risks of drug abuse, set clear expectations, and provide guidance and support, create an environment where youth feel comfortable discussing their concerns and seeking guidance (Houck et al., 2016). Research shows that adolescents who perceive their parents as approachable and nonjudgmental are more likely to disclose their experiences, seek advice, and comply with parental rules and expectations regarding substance use (Van Ryzin et al., 2012).

Setting clear boundaries and expectations regarding substance use is important to preventing drug abuse among youth. Parents who set strict but fair guidelines, monitor their children's activities, and enforce consequences for breaking the rules can send a clear message that drug abuse is not and will not be tolerated (Dishion et al., 2018). Research suggests that parental monitoring and supervision is associated with lower levels of substance use among adolescents, as youth are less likely to engage in risky behaviors when they know their parents are actively involved in their lives and aware of their presence (Van Ryzin et al., 2012).

Set a good example through leadership in the family where parents act as strong role models for their children. Their own attitudes and behavior towards the use of drugs and illicit substances greatly influence their children. Parents who demonstrate healthy habits, make responsible decisions, and have effective coping strategies can show their children the importance of making positive choices and avoiding harmful substances (Bauman et al.,

2016). Research has shown that adolescents whose parents are involved in substance use are more likely to use drugs or alcohol themselves and this highlights the critical importance of parental behavior in shaping youth attitudes toward substance use (Van Ryzin et al., 2012).

Parents and families play an important role in preventing drug abuse among youth by fostering strong parent-child relationships, encouraging open communication and trust, setting clear boundaries and expectations, and setting good examples of leadership. By creating a supportive environment, providing guidance and support, and modeling healthy behaviors, parents can empower their children to make positive choices and resist peer pressure and societal norms.

The Importance of Spirituality in Youth

In an increasingly fast-paced and materialistic world, the search for meaning and purpose in life becomes more important, especially among youth who are going through the complexities of adolescence. Although the challenges of this developmental stage are manifold, spiritual cultivation offers a profound path to inner strength, resilience, and well-being. Spirituality is often defined as the search for meaning in life and a relationship with something greater than oneself, including beliefs, values, and practices that guide individuals in their efforts to achieve purpose and happiness in life (Zou et al., 2017).

Research consistently shows that spirituality plays an important role in promoting mental health and well-being among youth. Adolescents who report higher levels of spiritual beliefs and practices tend to experience lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress (Cotton et al., 2015). Spirituality provides youth with a sense of comfort, calm, and hope during times of distress, helping them cope with the pressure of academic performance, and identity formation (Cotton et al., 2015). Furthermore, spirituality fosters resilience by empowering youth to face life's challenges through inner strength (Wong, 2016). By fostering self-awareness, and acceptance, spirituality equips youth with coping skills and psychological resources to deal with stress, trauma, and negative emotions (Burke et al., 2018).

Spirituality also serves as a catalyst for personal growth, self-discovery, and self-transformation among youth. Engaging in spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, fasting or worship allows youth to explore their values, beliefs and aspirations and foster a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world (Fisher et al., 2020). In addition, spirituality encourages youth to cultivate empathy and compassion, towards others, promoting prosocial behavior and meaningful relationships with peers and community members (Wong, 2016). Recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings will create value and dignity in each individual where spirituality fosters a sense of social responsibility and civic involvement among the youth thus inspiring them to contribute positively to the world around them (Pargament, 2022).

Further, spirituality plays an important role in fostering social relationships and building supportive relationships among youth. Involvement in a religious or spiritual community provides youth with opportunities for friendship, guidance, and peer support so as to create a sense of belonging and acceptance (Gilligan et al., 2018). Shared spiritual practices and values facilitate meaningful relationships and authentic relationships, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness among youth (Gilligan et al., 2018). In addition, spirituality promotes interfaith dialogue, cultural exchange, and mutual respect, fostering inclusiveness and

diversity in the youth community (Hebert et al., 2017). By transcending religious boundaries and embracing principles of universality such as love, compassion, and understanding, spirituality crosses divides and fosters unity among youth from different backgrounds and traditions (Hebert et al., 2017).

Finally, in a world of uncertainty and change, spiritual cultivation offers hope for the youth to find meaning and purpose in life. By caring for the soul and nurturing a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them, youth can begin a transformational journey of self-discovery, personal growth, and social engagement.

Conclusion

Drug and substance abuse is a phenomenon that occurs all over the world and is common among youth. Drug and substance abuse is a symptom that needs to be addressed because it harms the country that always relies on the quality of human resources to progress. Drug and substance abuse factors have specific characteristics that are sometimes easy to identify. Drug and substance abuse has been seen to have negative effects on the physical, psychological and emotional whether in the short or long term. Therefore, understanding and recognizing the factors that contribute to drug and substance abuse and its effects is a necessity in dealing with and preventing drug and substance abuse. . Reducing the phenomenon of drug and substance abuse is also an effort to ensure the mental well-being and life of the youth and their future. By understanding the factors and effects of drug abuse it is very important for counselors to help provide appropriate intervention and prevention to youth who are involved in drug and substance abuse in helping the recovery process from being involved or relapse in the world of drug and substance abuse. Counselors should try to find the best and most effective methods in dealing with this phenomenon.

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