

Good example of drugs use causes increased crime rates research paper

[Health & Medicine](#), [Drug Abuse](#)



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This paper considers the links between drug addiction and crime rates. As described by Gottfredson et al. (2008), they are “ two of the most intractable social problems facing the United States.” Extensive research into the relationship between drugs and crime has produced three explanations. The first is that the use of drugs leads to criminal activity. The second is the reverse of that; i. e. that crimes lead to people using drugs. The third explanation offered is that the relationship between drugs and crime has a series of common causes. The objective of this research paper is to establish that drugs use is responsible for increasing crime rates.

The Research

Gottfredson et al. report (p. 602) that Goldstein (1985) identified three different ways in which using drugs leads to crime. The first - referred to as the “ pharmacological model” - hypothesises that the effects of becoming intoxicated are the causes of an individual behaving in a criminal manner. Those effects include lack of inhibitions, impaired judgment and distorted cognitive perception, as well as other secondary effects such as sleep deprivation, withdrawing from interpersonal contact and accentuated

psychopathological disorders. Then there is the so-called economic motivational cause. Put in simple terms, this model assumes that drug-using individuals turn to crime to raise the money they need to purchase their addictive drugs. The third and more complex hypothesis is called the “systemic model.” In that model, it is suggested that the distribution / use of drugs and violent crime are directly linked through activities such as robberies of those involved in the drugs trade and conflicts between rival groups, as well as personal assaults on those owing money to drug dealers. According to recent reviews of related literature, there are indications of support for all three of those models. Additional research has suggested that providing drug addicts with treatment for their addiction can result in a reduction of crime in the population.

Among several studies of the concept that drugs lead to crime, Gottfredson et al. report (p. 603) that following more than two decades of research by the Drug Abuse Research Center of UCLA, it was concluded that “crime was an inherent part of illegal drug use and the commission of property crimes almost always increased to support dependence level use of heroin, cocaine, crack, amphetamine and even marijuana” (Anglin & Perrochet, 1998).

Gottfredson et al. also note (p. 603) that another review of over three decades of research in Baltimore indicated that on an individualized drug user basis, crime rates during times of addiction were six times greater than in periods of non-addiction (Nurco, 1998). Similar findings were reported by Harrison (1992).

In addition to several other studies reaching a similar conclusion, there is also evidence that drugs such as amphetamines may - through their

pharmacological effects - cause an increase in crimes of violence (Gelles, 1994). According to Gottfredson et al. (p. 603), research into the links between alcohol abuse and crime has indicated that consequent crime in those instances is more likely to be of a violent nature than property crime. Research has also shown that alcohol use often results in an increase of aggressive behaviour, although that particular factor " is likely to be person- and situation-specific" (p. 604). However, more recent research suggests that the increase of aggression following alcohol consumption may apply only to individuals having a fundamental disposition towards aggressive behavior (Giancola, 2002).

Gottfredson et al. (pp. 604-605) note that advances in data modelling help researchers to exclude irrelevant factors, revealing that drug use led to significant increases in criminal activity, and that providing treatment for drug users could help reduce both the use of drugs and the amount of crimes perpetrated for the generation of income. The latter finding has been confirmed by various studies. Summarizing the foregoing, Gottfredson et al. (pp. 607-608), conclude that extensive research indicates that the use of drugs leads to an increase in crime, and that drug treatment reduces crime along with the amount of drugs use. However, the authors note that there has as yet been no study correlating the long-term relationship between all three factors (the use of drugs, the treatment, and crime rates).

Furthermore, there are indications that the propensity to commit crime depends to some extent on the specific types of drug used, and that the most addictive drugs, e. g. cocaine and heroin, lead to increases in crimes of theft or robbery, though not necessarily to increases in crimes of violence.

The exception is alcohol, which tends to lead more to crimes of a violent nature rather than property-related crimes.

Based on the findings of an extensive study undertaken in conjunction with the Baltimore Drug Treatment Court (DTC), Gottfredson et al. (p. 621) confirmed that “ substance use is related to increased levels of crime.” In specific terms, the findings indicated that using alcohol or cocaine or heroin was linked to increases in income-generating crime (IGC). Although there was also an increase in violent crime (VC), the effect was much less significant, leading to the overall conclusion that the predominant effect of drugs use was an increase in non-violent crime, perpetrated for the most part in order to generate funds used for drugs purchase.

Those findings by Gottfredson et al. are broadly confirmed by Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). An article “ Drugs and Crime Facts: Drug use and crime” (n. d.), reports that – as of 2004 – between 17 and 18 percent of prison inmates stated that the reason they had committed the offenses for which they were convicted was to raise money to purchase drugs.

Confirming that drugs use is a major societal issue, the same BJS article reports that in 2002, over two-thirds of all prison inmates were either dependent on drugs / alcohol or were using them. Of those prisoners, those convicted of burglary were top of the league in terms of drugs use or dependence (85 percent). The percentage of inmates reporting regular drugs use in 2002 was higher than in 1996, covering virtually all categories of drugs.

Another article – this one published by the NCADD (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.): “ Drugs and Crime” (n. d.) – states

in the opening paragraph: “ Without question, drug use and criminality are closely linked” and that “ Drug addiction can lead to criminal behavior.” It also provides a disturbing FBI statistic that in 2009 there were nationally nearly 1. 7 million drug abuse violation arrests.

Carter (2012) discusses the link between substance abuse and youth crime rates. The opening words of his article are: “ Consistent and substantial evidence exists that supports the relationship between substance abuse and criminal behaviors in youth.” Then, expanding on that statement, he states that young offenders typically are characterized by greater rates of substance abuse than non-offenders. Further, consequences of that substance abuse are increased recidivism and deeper involvement with the juvenile justice system. Additionally, youth substance abuse triggers antisocial behavior, and in severe cases is linked with increased offending rates and progression to more serious offenses.

Conclusions

The research has provided clear evidence from several sources that there is a link between drugs use (including alcohol) and increased crime rates, including the specific case of young offenders, which is possibly the area of greatest concern. Statistics show that many prison inmates either use drugs or have been convicted of drug-related offenses. The findings also indicate that the majority of that increase in crime is in the area of what some refer to as income-generating crime - usually to raise money to buy more drugs. Overall, the link between drugs use and increased crime rates has been firmly established.

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