

Discuss drug use and abuse in from each of the following theoretical perspectives...



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Topic: Discuss drug use and abuse from each of the following theoretical perspectives: Functionalism, conflict theory and symbolic interactionism.

Name of student Course Lecturer Date of presentation Drug abuse is as a self-destructive habit that is medically regarded as a form of 'slow suicide' using harmful substances (McKim, 1997, p 37). Drug abuse is a formidable social, medical and economic challenge that has persisted for long time since human civilization. Though improvement of medical technology has resulted to discovery of better methods of treating drug addicts from drug dependency, researchers affirm the need of understanding the problem from different dimensions including psychological, sociological, biological, and environmental among other approaches. Multidisciplinary approach enhances better understanding of the problem, leading to an improved and holistic approach of treating and addressing the challenge of drug abuse in society. Drug use and abuse has been investigated from various theoretical perspectives. Among the theories are conflict, functionalism and symbolic interactionism. This paper expounds on drug use and abuse in perspectives of the above three theories. Conflict theory considers drug use as a response to political, social and power inequality. An ordinary society consists of members belonging to distinct classes, based on their economic, political and social status. In the modern highly competitive and capitalistic society, the struggle between people of different classes has resulted to uneven distribution of economic resources. Consequently, the gap between the rich and the poor continues becoming wider resulting to massive inequalities. McKim, (1997, p52) argues that economic endowment is directly proportional to the political and social influence in society. In this case, the rich are more

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influential and powerful compared to the poor individuals. The rich have greater influence in defining drug use and apprehension of drug offenders than the poor. Though both the rich and poor have the same rates of using drugs, the number of poor culprits is usually higher than the rich are because poor people lack power to influence the criminal justice system and avoid arrest. Moreover, economic deprivation results to social isolation resulting to greater frustrations among the poor members of the society. This makes this segment to be more prone to police arrests than the privileged class. In addition, the poor get harsher penalties for similar drug offenses than the rich because of their diminished influence in the society. The perspective of functionalist theory holds that drug use is a consequence of individual reaction to social forces. Sociologist Robert Merton argued that societies have established norms that define what pertains to successful life (McKim, 1997, p87). However, some people are prevented from achieving the set goals or they fail to attain them for varied reasons. Such people may resort to retreatism in order to cope with the failure to reach the societal goals. In this case, 'retreatism' is a response of a person who has lost hope in trying to attain societal goals because he or she believes that the ways to reach the goals are unfair (McKim, 1997, p93). In this respect, functionalist theory holds that such persons resort to addictive drug habits because of hopelessness. Symbolic interactionism holds that drug abuse occurs because of interaction with the wider community. People regarded as drug users are prone to becoming serial drug addicts because the society has made them believe and internalize that they are actual drug users. In this case, the theory supposes that people learn motivations and of drug use when they

interact with other people in the society. In this case, the problem of drug abuse could be addressed if the society adapts drug free lifestyle.

References McKim, J. Drugs and Behavior. 6th Ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997. Class notes