

The effects of psychoactive substance abuse on young people



The Effects of Psychoactive Substance Abuse on Young People In many societies, drug and alcohol consumption among adults, especially males, is socially acceptable. Over the past four decades, however, and more notably since the "hippie" period when post-war babies began growing into adulthood and drug laws were relaxed (WHO 2006), psychoactive substance abuse has become increasingly prevalent in the youth, with dire mental, physical and social consequences. Psychoactive substance abuse is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), as both the use of illicit substances and the misuse of legal substances leading to a dependence that has negative consequences on the individual and or society. For the purpose of this essay, substance abuse will be limited to illicit drugs typically consumed by young people, especially cocaine, cannabis and alcohol.

Drug and alcohol abuse have adverse effects on the mental health of young people, impacting on their ability to learn and to progress normally in the education system. Cannabis, for example, impairs cognitive development, in particular associative processes and recall, and affects the intoxicated student's ability to concentrate (WHO 2006), while cocaine consumption results in a range of cerebral complications, ranging from hallucination to paranoia (Wikipedia 2006). Many studies reveal a correlation between drug/alcohol abuse and poor grades, as well as with other behavior that inhibit learning, making substance abuse one of the top problems in youth education today.

Psychoactive substance abuse also has a negative impact on the body. Both cannabis and alcohol impair psychomotor performance and visual perception, resulting in many fatal motor vehicle accidents, as well as complications such as seizures, and lung, kidney and brain damage (WHO <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-psychoactive-substance-abuse-on-young-people/>

2006). In addition to claiming the lives of many of our youths, cocaine, cannabis and alcohol consumption are also complicit in increased sexual activity, with dire consequences such as teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS transmission among young people whose already-shaky moral and legal judgments are impaired and inhibitions removed by psychoactive substances. (Wikipedia 2006)

Finally, substance abuse has negative consequences on young people's abilities to interact normally with peers and family, and inhibits their capacity for normal social progression necessary to complete their movement toward maturity and integration into society as normal adults. Abusive drug and alcohol consumption in youth leads to a host of anti-social behavior, not limited to stealing, lying, isolation/withdrawal and depression (The Mirror 2004, p. 52). Among the more visible social effects are the number of young people who end up on the streets living in precarious conditions, and those who get involved in crime to fund their habit. Among the less visible effects however, is the disintegration of family life and social values.

In view of the significant mental, physical and social impact of substance abuse on the young, adults have to play a more vital role in the lives of the younger generation, not only providing positive role models and healthy values, but in monitoring the behavior of this volatile group to ensure prevention and early detection of leanings towards drugs. In addition parents, educators and community leaders have a responsibility to create, provide and encourage not only a stable emotional environment for the young, but also healthy hobbies and occupation that will curtail the latter's attraction to drugs and alcohol. Only with this concerted and concentrated effort, will we begin to eliminate this scourge that threatens the well-being of <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-psychoactive-substance-abuse-on-young-people/>

the future generation.

Works Cited

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