

Teens & Addiction

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Teens & Addiction Introduction

Drug use in teenagers from ages 13-19 years old has significantly increased over the last few decades prompting concerns in parents, healthcare professionals, and educators. The war on drugs is a term used to refer to the government-initiated initiative with efforts to stop the illegal distribution of drugs across the country.¹ Drugs such as fentanyl, developed in the 1960s are now being more commonly abused and have led to an increase in drug-induced overdoses. Teens today are using drugs to increase their self-esteem, to fit in, out of curiosity, to release stress, and due to depression and anxiety.²

Problem

The 1960s welcomed the drug epidemic in the United States. Since then there have been many studies beginning with high-school-age adolescents at a time when individuals were advocating for the use of drugs that they were selling to the public as non-addictive psychedelics.³ The problem with teen drug use is that it is affecting their mental and physical health, and interferes with their academics, parental relationships, and other opportunities such as scholarships and jobs. The nature of the problem is teenagers wanting to experiment with drugs to experience a high, but the reasoning for beginning drug use varies. Some causes of drug use are economic barriers, cultural reasons, due to issues in the home, to relieve negative feelings,

¹ Lopez, G. (2016, May 8). *The War on Drugs, explained*. Vox.

<https://www.vox.com/2016/5/8/18089368/war-on-drugs-marijuana-cocaine-heroin-meth>

² Steiner, W. (2023). *Social and ethical issues of drug abuse*. Encyclopædia Britannica.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/drug-use/Social-and-ethical-issues-of-drug-abuse>

³ Wesson D. R. (2011). Psychedelic drugs, hippie counterculture, speed and phenobarbital treatment of sedative-hypnotic dependence: a journey to the Haight Ashbury in the Sixties. *Journal of psychoactive drugs*, 43(2), 153–164.

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due to pressure from others, and oftentimes an escape from reality. Newspapers and the media show teen drug use explicitly with images and its consequences very similar to how experts explain the cause. Research states the war on drugs has mainly impacted minorities especially Mexican immigrants and the black community. It is worth noting that although those in the black community do not have higher rates of using and selling drugs, they have a higher chance of being incarcerated or arrested for drug-related offences ⁴.

Impact

The drug addiction problem is widespread all over the world across all cultures. In the United States alone, 75.6% of individuals over 18 years have admitted to using addictive substances at least once.⁵ Teens are affected by addictions from using and experiencing overdoses especially related to opioids.⁶ This problem is highly extensive because drug addiction can be very extensive and come with several negative consequences. There are clear statistics that have shown the seriousness of the problem. Research indicates that teens and adolescent overdose-related rates have been at an all-time high since 2017⁷. Teen drug addiction may affect teens of all ages and social classes. This problem impacts marginalized communities because oftentimes they experience financial barriers that lead to the need to get involved with drugs for survival. Some of the social values related to this problem are family involvement, peer

⁴ Lopez, G. (2016, May 8). *The War on Drugs, explained*. Vox.

<https://www.vox.com/2016/5/8/18089368/war-on-drugs-marijuana-cocaine-heroin-meth>

⁵ You, Y. H., Lu, S. F., Tsai, C. P., Chen, M. Y., Lin, C. Y., Chong, M. Y., Chou, W. J., Chen, Y. S., & Wang, L. J. (2020). Predictors of five-year relapse rates of youths with substance abuse who underwent a family-oriented therapy program. *Annals of general psychiatry*, 19, 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12991-020-00269-4>

⁶ Hudgins, J.D., Porter, J. J., Monuteaux, M. C., & Bourgeois, F. T. (2019). Prescription opioid use and misuse among adolescents and young adults in the United States: A national survey study. *PLoS Medicine*, 15(11), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002922>

⁷ Id.

pressure, and religious and personal views. Values are part of the influencing factors related to social, religious, and personal views.⁸ This problem affects the public interest because it directly affects parents and our communities. Parents of minors are often worried about what their children are involved in. Teens' engagement in experimentation is normal and cannot be prevented but teens must be educated on the consequences that their experimentation with drugs, especially hard drugs- may bring. The overdose statistics ranged from 1999-2023, with 2023 having the highest rates of overdoses.

Research and Funding

The White House announced additional funding of over 12 million dollars in grants in the year 2022 for youth substance use prevention to assist in beating the overdose epidemic and implementing Drug-Free Communities (DFC).⁹ The U.S. Government Accountability Office has identified over 12 federal grant programs available to assist with targeting adolescent and young adult drug use made up of over 266 million dollars available in awards. Funding has come from government grants and grants are given by organizations such as the National Institute of Drug Abuse [NIDA] and the Office of National Drug Policy [ONDCP].¹⁰ There have been many areas

⁸ Steiner, W. (2023). *Social and ethical issues of drug abuse*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/drug-use/Social-and-ethical-issues-of-drug-abuse>

⁹ The United States Government. (2022). *White House announces new funding for youth substance use prevention groups across the country as part of president Biden's strategy to beat the overdose epidemic*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/briefing-room/2022/08/18/white-house-announces-new-funding-for-youth-substance-use-prevention-groups-across-the-country-as-part-of-president-bidens-strategy-to-beat-the-overdose-epidemic/>

¹⁰ The United States Government. (2022). *White House announces new funding for youth substance use prevention groups across the country as part of president Biden's strategy to beat the overdose epidemic*. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/briefing-room/2022/08/18/white-house-announces-new-funding-for-youth-substance-use-prevention-groups-across-the-country-as-part-of-president-bidens-strategy-to-beat-the-overdose-epidemic/>

of research done in this area. Findings vary but seem as expected. According to the findings of a recent sleep study, insomnia is one of the prevalent findings among adolescents with drug use.¹¹ Other findings that have granted global attention are the use of prescription drugs due to the high misuse. Usually, these drugs are obtained by teens from relatives or friends. Unfortunately, it does not stop with prescription drug use. Many teens end up using cocaine, heroin, inhalants, and hallucinogens. According to the research about 40-60% of individuals who complete drug treatment end up relapsing, with similar rates as adults.¹²

Counterarguments

Drug manufacturing companies, treatment facilities, hospitals, insurance, doctors, and drug dealers benefit from this problem. The stakeholders that benefit are rehabilitation centers, physicians, and clinicians. The opposing side argument is that is it normal for teens to want to experiment with drugs. Oftentimes teens' level of curiosity is so high due to the way parents cover up the truth wanting to experiment and how extensive the drug problem is today. When adolescents become involved in addiction they tend to become ethnocentric and egocentric about

¹¹ Phiri, D., Amelia, V. L., Muslih, M., Dlamini, L. P., Chung, M.-H., & Chang, P.-C. (2023). Prevalence of sleep disturbance among adolescents with substance use: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric and Mental Health, 17*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-023-00644-5>

¹² You, Y. H., Lu, S. F., Tsai, C. P., Chen, M. Y., Lin, C. Y., Chong, M. Y., Chou, W. J., Chen, Y. S., & Wang, L. J. (2020). Predictors of five-year relapse rates of youths with substance abuse who underwent a family-oriented therapy program. *Annals of general psychiatry, 19*, 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12991-020-00269-4>

their drug usage.¹³ This intensifies the problems at home and around those individuals that they know do not approve of their actions.

Proposed Solution

One proposed solution to the problem is beginning with adolescent drug prevention. An adolescent does not have to bring up the topic of drugs or hear it from a friend before it is introduced to them. These topics should be introduced in the schools or the community in a group setting. In these groups, individuals will get to create friendships which is something that teens crave. Sometimes out of difficulty finding friendships and due to the need to fit in, drug use begins. Include evidence from one of my articles. The solution is proposing a change to the problem by helping reduce the statistics of adolescent drug use which leads to a reduction in relapse and overdose rates. This proposed solution also supports parents, families, communities, and teens by helping prevent the curiosity to take action and by teaching about drug use from different lenses with professional assistance. For the proposed solution to happen a bill that mandates schools to set up community committees that focus on introducing this topic in every city.

Gaps/Missing Information and Future Research

There is a need for further research in the area where the relationship between the teen and parent is explored. In summation, experimentation is a normal part of adolescence. Not only do adolescents wish to experiment with drugs but they wish to experiment with sex, partying, and doing things that their friends are doing. Research concludes that teens ages 13-18 are likely

¹³ Steiner, W. (2023). *Social and ethical issues of drug abuse*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/drug-use/Social-and-ethical-issues-of-drug-abuse>

to develop addiction, and although it is normal parents must try to prevent this because it has many negative consequences.¹⁴

¹⁴ You, Y. H., Lu, S. F., Tsai, C. P., Chen, M. Y., Lin, C. Y., Chong, M. Y., Chou, W. J., Chen, Y. S., & Wang, L. J. (2020). Predictors of five-year relapse rates of youths with substance abuse who underwent a family-oriented therapy program. *Annals of general psychiatry, 19*, 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12991-020-00269-4>

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