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With the modern way of life and trends swapping at an all-time high, we find ourselves at the bottom of a whirlpool, where brand new ways of living are thrown at us from all sides, pressuring us to catch up, regardless of whether it is good or bad. Unfortunately, this has been the youngsters' drug and substance abuse trend. Due to the sheer popularity of several drugs and substance misuse, many young adults get sucked into this whirlpool of addiction, eventually leaving them with nothing but a devastating life to suffer.

Many stages go into molding an addict out of a perfectly healthy human being. The oldest and the most used-up reason is drugs for physical and mental relief. Drugs could be categorized into several categories varying from hallucinogens to painkillers. Its responsible usage under strict medical supervision in a critical situation is justified. But when this gets out of control, it worsens the person's physical condition even more.

The case gets even more challenging for a person undergoing a problematic mental situation, as it provides a false sense of security and comfort. A person could experience a certain degree of mental trauma to the point where they feel threatened inside their head. This is when drugs become a "life saver" but are often blind to the actuality of what happens within their body. Taking the drug would temporarily shut down the working of several neurons in the brain, which halts various neural connections and, thereby, the thinking process. But when the effect wears off, the intrusive thoughts accompanied by severe withdrawal syndromes would push the person to abuse drugs even more.

The drug abuse situation in India is getting disturbingly out of hand. A prime reason behind this might be the ignorance of this grave problem by political powers and leaders of the country, who are so afraid that the situation could tarnish the cultural glory and dignity of the country.

Cannabis, opium, alcohol, and heroin are some of the powerful drugs misused in India, per a national household survey conducted by interviewing more than 40,000 men and women

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about their relationship with drugs. Propoxyphene, Buprenorphine, and Heroin are the most commonly injected drugs. In the survey, Using estimates prevalent to the population counts, it estimated that in India, whose population is around a billion, 62.5 million people use alcohol, 8.75 million use cannabis, 2 million use opiates, and 0.6 million use sedatives or hypnotics.

In India, the drug abuse storyline is often considered exclusive to the urban population and has always been prone to ignoring the widespread usage of drugs in rural areas. "Drug abuse being an exclusively urban phenomenon is a myth," said Gary Lewis, the South Asia regional representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (NCBI, 2004). Even in media, the urban side is portrayed to be more influenced by a 'drugged' lifestyle, and it fails to capture the reality of the situation in rural areas.

The level of drug and substance abuse remains higher in youngsters compared to older individuals, based on the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) 2018 survey on drug use among the general population. Most studies indicate that early (12–14 years old) to late (15–17 years old) adolescence is a crucial risk phase for the onset of substance use and that substance use may peak among young individuals aged 18–25. This raises concerns about the age at which children should be sensitized to the same. Due to the easy availability of media to children from a very young age, ignoring such possibilities in children is not a wise move.

The younger generation is unaware of how necessary everything is in the long term. They are too high on life to bother about the problems it could cause. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1985) and the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (1988) become applicable to persons who become dealers or regularly use drugs if they are arrested. They are assessed fees following the regulations outlined in the law.

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All these are old news or facts we have learned by rote. But with the emergence of Gen-Z, the story behind drug use takes an interesting turn. Substance abuse comes under a different label of 'setting the vibe or mood. Young adults and teenagers are increasingly being lulled into this horrible habit without their knowledge. Nowadays, drug abuse and addiction are known more as a lifestyle or way of living rather than it being treated as a disease that needs medical attention.

With the rise of psychedelic drugs and vaping being advertised as 'healthy alternatives' for hard drugs, we often forget that it's through these baby steps that we ultimately lean more towards abuse. The use of marijuana and other substances like CBD for medicinal purposes as psychedelic drugs is controversial and still debated among various medical professionals. These drugs are arguably known for helping people cope with various psychological disorders like insomnia, BPD, anxiety disorders, etc. People use these arguments to help them protest to legalize the usage of these drugs.

A closer look at the current conditions of other countries that have legalized these drugs would help us get a clearer perspective of what actually ends up happening. In those countries, the easy availability of drugs acts as a catalyst to ignite curious youngsters to sneak a try to get the experience. Almost immediately, they are under 50% influence, where a lack of solid willpower could easily rope in a person to addiction with just a consecutive second and third trial. Slowly this turns into a social or group activity and builds a community around this. This hippie culture gets popularised, and more young adults are drawn to join these groups, and the cycle continues.

The case of using vapes are pretty similar. Vaping devices are advertised more as play toys, unlike cigarettes and tobacco, even though both have the same potential to lead to addiction. Easy availability and usage of Hookahs and vapes lead to an increased affinity towards the light sense of dizziness it provides. This affinity later progresses to an urge to take this hobby to the next level; and before you know it, you are a stage one addict.

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An interesting aspect comes into play when considering a person's economic capabilities to afford the drug. The addicts build an innate courage to pursue any means to get drugs into their systems. Their intense hunger to get their hands on some drugs is how youngsters get involved with the dark web and the great mafia, putting their lives in grave danger. Once entering this dark world, getting help isn't easy, even if you want to.

Lack of money to buy drugs also leads to resorting to various other lethal alternatives. This includes the use of drugs like Ketamine which are literal horse tranquilizers. Ketamine is a prevalent example in the present generation. Just because it is more readily available and relatively cheaper, youngsters started to use it without heeding the fatal side effects that follow. The UK has been the hot spot for ketamine abuse in recent years and has a cult following among young adults. A whole 'KET- culture' including ketamine parties and exclusive Ket-dances have been developed surrounding the usage of this drug. The horrible side effects of this drug include urinating blood and intense headaches. This addiction is a guaranteed one-way ticket towards a brutal slow death caused by addiction,

Media has an unbelievable stronghold in the lives of Gen-Z and dramatically influences the 'drugged' culture via its various platforms like movies, series, YouTube, etc. It's like two sides of a coin; the influence can be positive and negative. A viral example would be the hit TV series EUPHORIA, a hot topic since its release and subject to a fair share of criticism. On initial review, it seems like promoting drug abuse and a life of party culture. But the series helped convey the ugly reality of being an addict by bringing us along with the protagonist's journey as she suffers from severe addiction.

Another unfortunate side of the media is the various social media platforms through which its 'influencers' promote drug abuse by indulging in that lifestyle and glorifying it. Young adults and teenagers who grow up watching these influencers grow a deep desire and curiosity to participate in such pleasures or at least try it for fun. Even the music produced by the new generation is very much reflective of this glorified 'drugged' lifestyle. Media plays the most crucial role in setting trends in today's society. So instead of promoting this cursed lifestyle,

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the media can be put to good use by spreading awareness via many useful and attractive methods.

The devastating aftermath of drug abuse is not restricted solely to the abuser but affects the people around them, their community, and their beloved ones. Families losing members to the destructive clutches of drugs and the following disaster it causes have frighteningly started to become the new norm nowadays. It has reached a point where almost every family has a story to share about a family member they lost to drugs. In a family setting, the presence of an abuser can heavily weigh on the kids and lead them to grow with immense traumatic experiences. If kids are exposed to such drug abuse at a very young age, they will learn to normalize drug use, adding to the long list of abusers we will be raising in this generation.

This extensive list of dangers of drugs would make one ponder, 'is there a way out?' Till now, the efforts to restore the world to get rid of drug abuse have been going strong in several regions by various organizations. Rehabilitation centres, therapies, better awareness, and more education on drug abuse are being provided to the needy with much effort. Since drugs have found unique ways to infiltrate our daily lives, we can take a similar approach to reverse their effects. A simple suggestion would be to carefully research how drugs were introduced to the media and why the media attracted people to it. Making anti-drug abuse programs and other activities equally attractive and intriguing would be a new method worth putting effort into.

An area of importance that we often tend to tread over is relapse and its aftermath. As a country eager to take a positive step toward stopping drug abuse, we should remember that increasing rehabilitation centres aren't enough. Along with it, necessary precautions for relapse prevention are a crucial step toward complete recovery. Encourage more studies on relapse management and help people in recovery to do it correctly.

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Throughout the texts, much emphasis is given to young adults, not because its fine for adults to abuse drugs, but that youngsters are the country's future. They are the ones to decide the nation's pace in the future. As proud citizens, we are responsible for putting in the work and efforts to help rid this curse of drug abuse and addiction. Together with faith and harmony, we can find a way out.

Thank you.

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Submitted by:

NAME : Alka Maria Varkey

COLLEGE REGISTRATION NUMBER: 21114005

COURSE NAME, YEAR : BSc Psychology, 2nd year

DEPARTMENT : Dept. of Psychology

COLLEGE : Rajagiri College of Social Sciences

HOD : Fr. Varghese K, ph. No: 8593030303

Dean of student affairs : Dr. Ann Baby, ph. No: 9895012317