Juvenile Substance Abuse

Name

Course

Tutor

Date

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**Introduction**

As already discussed in the first and second modules, there is a worrying increase in the number of young people indulging in the utilization of harmful substances. One of the drugs that are widely abused by this group of individuals is cocaine. Apart from the health issues that this drug causes among the users, it has also been noted that the drugs contribute substantially to the levels of crime in the communities (Sussman et al, 2008). While the federal and the local authorities have made outstanding efforts in the fight against this vice, it appears that they have lost the battle since reports indicate that the numbers are increasing exponentially. One of the challenges that the law enforcement agencies have faced is the legalization of some of the substances in some states. For instance, when a particular state legalizes the use of cannabis, it is only logical that a huge number of youths will jump to it and increase its consumption. In that regard, this paper seeks to provide an insight into the perpetrators of the vice concerning gender, race, age, and socio-economic status.

**The principal perpetrators of the drug abuse concerning age, race, gender and the socioeconomic status**

In 2016, the National Institute on Drug Abuse carried out a survey that sought to demonstrate the groups of people who are most affected by the vice of drug addiction. In the report, the organization showed that there is a broad range of factors that contribute to the propensity to indulge in the acts. Among the issues that it reported to be contributing to the conduct include race, age, gender and the social, economic diversities in the communities (Susukida et al, 2017).

*Race and drug abuse in America*

Firstly, it is necessary to note that racial diversities in America are some of the factors that make America such a beautiful country. In this country, there are almost all communities in the world who got into the country under different circumstances. While there are positives that can be derived from this occurrence, it is also necessary to point out that the issue of race appears significantly when discussing the problem of drug abuse. A report from The National Survey on Drug use and health indicated that African Americans form the greatest bulk of the perpetrators of drug use in America (Jackson et al, 2010). The report confirms this by stating that while the average number of individuals using drugs in America is at 10%, the number is slightly higher among the African Americans at 12%. Consequently, any effort being put in place towards the eradication of this vice from the communities must have ethnic influences at the center of its approach.

*Age and drug abuse*

The National Survey on Drug use and health proceeds to discuss the age groups from which drug abuse is rampant. As early as the age of twelve, there are suggestions some children would have started engaging themselves in the consumption of the substances. However, the group that is hugely affected by this is those persons in the high schools. It is in the high schools that most of the American children reach the adolescent stage (Abuse, 2010). At this time, most of them are trying to explore the world and are seeking to enjoy themselves thoroughly. While some of them abandon this behavior later on, some of them get so deep that they never get an opportunity to look back. Subsequently, the focus of the war against drug abuse should be to the high school children.

*Social class and drug abuse*

Opinion is divided as to whether there is a relationship between social, economic status and the utilization of narcotics in the communities. However, irrefutable evidence indicates that the individuals from low-income families are more likely to indulge in drug abuse than those from wealthy households. The primary reason for this trend is that most children from low-income families encounter a plethora of problems, some of which force them to resort to drugs for consolation (Blazer & Wu, 2009). That, however, does not rule out the fact that there are a few children from affluent families who also use the same substances.

**The criminal and legal issues involved in juvenile substance abuse**

As discussed earlier in the paper, various legal approaches have been adopted by both the states and the federal government in a bid to combat substance abuse among youths. There has been a significant improvement in the whole issue since some studies show that the number of users or addicts is reducing. Some institutions have been formed to offer guidance and counseling among the affected persons. Additionally, communities, families, and education organizations have realized the dangers that are involved in this practice. Therefore, they have taken the necessary approaches to make sure that they combat this ill to its logical conclusion.

**The causes of this criminal behavior**

There is a broad range of issues that have been cited to be contributing immensely to this problem. However, from the discussion above, it is evident that the poverty levels among some families have been critical in the deterioration of this situation. Children from low-income families have been found to be at the highest risk in fuelling the problem. Ordinarily, these kids have been found to be dropping out of schools and joining some gangs in their neighborhood and that influences them to engage in criminal activities such as the misuse of the drugs.

**The theories of drug abuse**

The two most prominent theories that have been relied upon in explaining drug use in the communities are sociological theories and the psychological theories. The sociological theories allude to the fact that the society in which a person life has a way of influencing individuals to drug abuse. For instance, if a child is born in an environment where substance abuse is worshiped and exalted, it is difficult for the child to run away from that trend (Meyer, 2012). On the psychological theory, it is stated that the mental processes that are going on inside of a child are likely to contribute to their usage of the drugs. For instance, stress is one of the psychological factors that play a role in driving an individual to engage in the criminal activity.

**A comparison and contrast between the criminal and civil legal systems involved**

Some circumstances will force the relevant authorities to pursue the criminal and civil legal processes among the children who are found to participate in drug abuse in either way. Criminally, the people who are found to be culpable of peddling the drugs to the youths are taken through the federal criminal legal systems. However, since the individuals who are underage are limited in their access to the criminal legal system, they are always taken through the various civil procedures that would lead to the enforcement of the appropriate actions. These may be in the forms of rehabilitation or community service in the case where the case does not involve criminal activities.

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