

Educational Institutions and Their Role in Raising Awareness of the Dangers of Drugs and Preventing Them: An Analytical Sociological Perspective

Leila IDIOU

University of Abbas Laghrour Khenchela, Algeria

Email: idiou.leila@univ-khenchela.dz

Rafik FARHATI

National Institute for Higher Training
of Youth and Sports Executives, Constantine, Algeria

Email: farhati_rafik@yahoo.fr

Abstract:

This research paper aims to uncover the role of educational institutions in disseminating awareness about the dangers of drugs and limiting their use and spread. This is done through a detailed examination of the nature of this role and its mechanisms of implementation, in addition to the means of prevention and combatting drug use within the school environment. It seeks to understand the role of educational institutions, which is no less important than socialisation institutions in education and contributes to disseminating awareness. Therefore, it is essential to highlight the role of educational institutions in preventive and educational capacities to address the phenomenon of drug use in the school environment and the methods of preventing it.

Keywords: Educational institutions, drugs, substance abuse, awareness, dangers of drugs, prevention.

Les établissements d'enseignement et leur rôle dans la sensibilisation aux dangers des drogues et leur prévention : une perspective sociologique analytique

Résumé :

Cet article de recherche vise à mettre en lumière le rôle des établissements d'enseignement dans la sensibilisation aux dangers des drogues et dans la limitation de leur consommation et de leur propagation. Pour ce faire, il examine en détail la nature de ce rôle et ses mécanismes de mise en œuvre, ainsi que les moyens de prévention et de lutte contre la consommation de drogues dans le milieu scolaire. Il cherche à comprendre le rôle des établissements d'enseignement, qui n'est pas moins important que celui des institutions de socialisation dans l'éducation et qui contribue à la sensibilisation. Il est donc essentiel de souligner le rôle des établissements d'enseignement en matière de prévention et d'éducation pour lutter contre le phénomène de la consommation de drogues dans le milieu scolaire et les méthodes permettant de la prévenir.

Mots clés : *Établissements d'enseignement, drogues, toxicomanie, sensibilisation, dangers des drogues, prévention.*

Introduction

The issue of drug abuse is considered one of the most serious social problems affecting both the structure of society and its individuals. It carries significant social, economic, psychological, and health-related consequences for the individual and the community. The severity of this problem is evident through various indicators, including, as noted by Al-Sa'ati, the substantial financial expenditures incurred in treating addicts, the crimes committed by habitual and dependent drug users in pursuit of narcotics, and offences carried out under the influence of drugs. Furthermore, it is regarded as a pathological social phenomenon driven by numerous factors, some related to the individual, others to the family, and others to the society's overall social structure and conditions (Al-Muhannadi, 2013, p. 9).

Addiction is a grave social problem with multidimensional aspects that have garnered the attention of societies worldwide. Numerous institutions and organisations have allocated significant human and material resources to combat it. Moreover, scientific conferences and symposia have been convened to examine the root causes of this problem and discuss its manifestations and various dimensions.

Regardless of the dangers, harms, and causes of the spread of drugs, whether acting independently or collectively, they all disrupt the social order, increase the likelihood of other social problems emerging, contribute to the disintegration and dissolution of families, and weaken their educational and supervisory role. This, in turn, highlights instances of failure, frustration, and deviant behaviours marked by deprivation (Mchnan, 2021, p. 97).

1. Theoretical Framework of the Study

1.1. Research Problem and Main Question

The phenomenon of drug abuse among youth, particularly those in education, is considered one of the most dangerous threats that has infiltrated various educational and vocational institutions as well as other youth gathering spaces. This necessitates careful educational follow-up, thorough research, and analysis to uncover its causes and associated risks. Furthermore, it is essential to propose appropriate academic, social, and moral solutions and treatments suited to young people's age, academic level, and cognitive development in their respective contexts (Boukabous, 2007, p. 75).

Although existing laws and regulations serve a deterrent function against drug use, the awareness-raising role played by educational institutions is potentially more effective in combating this phenomenon. From this perspective, the present study seeks to shed light on the educational role of schools in raising awareness about the dangers of drug addiction by addressing the following central research question: **What Role Do Educational Institutions Play in Raising Awareness of the Dangers of Drugs and Preventing Them?**

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

- Identify the nature of drug addiction, its types, and the most significant associated risks.
- Examine the role played by educational institutions in raising awareness of the dangers of drugs and reducing their spread.
- Explore preventive methods through awareness of the individual and societal consequences of drug use.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the escalating and seemingly uncontrollable use of drugs, which poses a real threat to society by targeting one of its most vital components: youth. This trend is now encroaching upon other vulnerable groups, particularly children, thereby jeopardising societal stability and contributing to the spread of corruption and crime.

In this context, educational tools are among the most crucial mechanisms relied upon by socialisation institutions to mitigate the severity of social scourges. Educational institutions launch and support various awareness and sensitisation campaigns aimed at highlighting the dangers of negative social phenomena, foremost among them being drug addiction.

1.4. Study Concepts

1.4.1 Educational Institutions

The term “educational institution” is a compound expression comprising two words: “institution” and “educational.” This composite term does not have a fixed linguistic definition outside of the combined meaning of the two words.

Linguistically, the word "institution" derives from the verb *to establish*, which means to create, build, or lay a foundation, such as establishing a family, a people, or a factory. Thus, an educational institution is a learning entity that fulfils the functions assigned to it by society through the interaction of various material, human, pedagogical, and social components (Qasmi Sonia, 2021, p. 332).

1.4.2 Drugs

Linguistically: According to *Lisan al-Arab*, the word *khadr* refers to “a curtain used to shield a girl within a part of the house,” and it came to represent anything secluded within a space such as a room (Ibn Manzur, n.d., p. 230).

The term *mukhaddir* (drug) originates from *khadr*, which means concealment or veiling. For example, it is said, “Her family veiled the girl,” meaning they protected her from shame. A *mukhaddir* is, therefore, a substance that suppresses the nervous system, preventing it from performing its usual functions. Similarly, “the eye was numbed” indicates heaviness or sluggishness; *khadir* denotes lethargy or inactivity (Tijani Zalikha, 2023, p. 11).

Terminologically: There is no universally agreed definition among specialists for the term “narcotic substances.” Various definitions exist, including the following:

“They are any substances that lead to a loss of sensation of one's surroundings, or induce drowsiness or sleep due to their content of depressant, sedative, or stimulant compounds. When taken without medical supervision, these substances can cause physical, psychological, and social harm” (Ben Noui Aisha, 2020, p. 144).

The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs defined narcotic substances as:

“Any raw or prepared substance containing stimulant or sedative elements which, when used for purposes other than legitimate medical or industrial applications, may lead to habituation or addiction, causing physical, psychological, and social harm to both the individual and society” (Hafidha Ben Mohamed & Reda Daghbar, 2023, p. 19).

Medically, narcotics refer to natural or synthetic substances capable of altering mental activity, with both psy-

chological and physiological effects. They fall into two categories:

- **Permissible drugs** are generally pharmaceuticals available in pharmacies for therapeutic purposes.
- **Prohibited drugs**, which may be of natural origin, such as cannabis or Indian hemp, or synthetic, such as processed hashish. These are typically used for recreational purposes to induce changes in mental function (Ben Noui Aisha, 2020, p. 145).

Psychologically, a drug is defined as any natural or chemical substance that, when consumed or used by an individual, causes a change in personality, mental state, bodily functions, or behaviour (Hafidha Ben Mohamed, 2023, p. 16).

Socially, a narcotic drug is any substance that, when habitually used, affects an individual both socially and psychologically. It causes the user to experience a state filled with pain, anxiety, and tension when deprived of it or upon discontinuation, leading to social and health issues that may result in harm to the user and those around them.

Legally, it refers to any substance whose consumption exhausts the human body and severely affects the mind to the extent that it nearly obliterates rationality. Such substances are typically addictive and are prohibited by statutory laws (Hafidha Ben Mohamed & Reda Dagbhar, 2023, p. 13).

Based on the foregoing, narcotics can be defined as any natural, synthetic, or chemical substance that affects the central nervous system, inducing states of calmness and sleep or activity and hallucinations. These substances leave side effects immediately after their effect wears off and are considered deviant behaviours that violate legal, social, and religious norms.

1.4.3. Substance Use (Drug Abuse):

Substance use is "the consumption of what is impermissible and prohibited." It refers to taking and daring to engage with a substance derived from the verb "to take or consume." According to the Egyptian National Centre for Social and Criminological Research, it is:

"Using any narcotic drug in any of the known forms within a society to achieve a specific psychological or mental effect" (Hafidha Ben Mohamed & Reda Dagbar, 2023, p. 20).

1.4.4. Awareness:

Awareness refers to the genuine perception of the nature of things. It denotes an individual's understanding and general readiness to respond to a specific subject and the associated positive or negative standards based on their attraction or aversion to it (Doaa Fikry, n.d., p. 103).

1.4.5. Risks of Drugs:

This term refers to the psychological, health, educational, and social effects resulting from drug abuse. These risks include the emergence of psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies, as well as the development of certain physical illnesses.

1.4.6. Drug Prevention:

Prevention entails all precautions to anticipate a potential problem or avoid specific complications arising from an existing issue. Consequently, various methods or strategies must be devised from different perspectives to prevent drug use.

2. Fundamentals of Drug Addiction

2.1 Classification of Drugs

Drugs encompass a variety of types (Ben Al-Noui, A., 2020, p. 144), which can be summarised as follows:

2.1.1. *Classification of Drugs According to Their Nature:*

- **Natural Drugs:** These are plant-based and refer to substances directly extracted from naturally occurring plants that contain narcotic compounds, whether wild or cultivated. Examples include cannabis (hashish), opium, coca, and khat.
- **Semi-synthetic Drugs:** These are derived from natural substances or plants but are more concentrated and harmful to humans. Examples include morphine (derived from opium) and heroin (derived from morphine).
- **Synthetic Drugs:** These are entirely chemically produced in laboratories using synthetic compounds without any involvement of natural drug sources. Examples include amphetamines, Captagon, and barbiturates.

2.1.2. *Classification of Drugs According to Colour:*

- **Black Drugs:** These are substances characterised by their dark, blackish appearance, such as hashish (cannabis plant) and opium (poppy plant).
- **White Drugs:** These are distinguished by their white colour, appearing in powdered or liquid forms consumed through injection or orally. Examples include heroin, cocaine, codeine, sleeping pills, tranquillisers, and stimulants (Baya Al-Barnawi, 2020, p. 24).

2.2. Causes Leading to Drug Use and Addiction

2.2.1. Causes Related to the Individual:

Several significant personal factors may lead an individual to use drugs. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Weak Religious Commitment:**

There is no doubt that the lack of religious adherence among some youths, especially those in adolescence who do not fully comply with the principles of Islam, such as following its commandments and avoiding its prohibitions, contributes to drug use. They may neglect the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (peace be upon him). As a result, Allah causes them to forget themselves, leading them away from the path of righteousness to that of corruption and misguidance. Allah Almighty says: *“And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.”*

- **Associating with Bad Company:**

Almost all psychological and sociological studies conducted on the causes of drug use, especially for first-time users, confirm that curiosity and peer pressure are among the primary motivations to experiment, often as a means of emotional solidarity with friends.

- **Travelling Abroad:**

There is no doubt that travelling abroad where all temptations are present, entertainment venues are accessible, and drug-using environments may be unmonitored, which can lead to an increased likelihood of drug use.

- **Feelings of Emptiness:**

Undoubtedly, the presence of boredom or idle time, combined with the lack of appropriate venues to channel the energy of young people (such as clubs, parks, and other recreational spaces), contributes to drug use and potentially to criminal behaviour.

- **Low Educational Attainment:**

There is no doubt that individuals with limited education may lack awareness of the severe harms associated with drug use, which can, in extreme cases, lead to certain death.

2.2.2. *Family-Related Causes*

The family is considered the foundational unit of society, from which the individual is introduced to the surrounding world through the upbringing, customs, and traditions acquired within the household. The family is primarily responsible for guiding children to distinguish between beneficial and harmful behaviours and good and bad conduct through kindness and supervision. It is a foundation for acquiring life experience, enabling individuals to rely on themselves under conscious and well-informed parental guidance.

Numerous sociological studies have shown that drug abuse is a fundamental factor contributing to instability within the family environment. This instability often manifests in reduced marital harmony, escalating conflicts that may lead to separation or divorce. Such circumstances usually leave the individual feeling neglected or uncared for by their parents (Al-Muhannadi, 2013, pp. 69–70).

2.2.3. *Society-Related Causes*

While the family represents the primary social environment in which a person grows up, various other social groups and affiliations comprise the secondary social environment. These groups may either reinforce or undermine the family's influence. In some cases, these groups compensate for emotional deprivation, lack of acceptance, or feelings of insecurity (Al-Muhannadi, 2013, p. 72).

According to Al-Mutairi and Badr Al-Ghudhoori (n.d., p. 11), the following societal factors contribute to drug abuse:

- The availability of addictive substances through smugglers and dealers.
- The existence of entertainment venues that encourage delinquency in specific communities.
- The presence of foreign labour.
- Economic liberalisation and openness.
- The limited role played by various media platforms.
- The absence of proper educational and moral guidance in schools.

3. The Harms and Effects of Drugs on the Individual and Society

The impact of drugs and drug addiction has been demonstrated in numerous health, psychological, and sociological studies. Experts across various disciplines have confirmed the grave dangers and destructive effects that drugs have on both individuals and society. Drug use and addiction lead to a range of psychological, neurological, cognitive, and physical damages, the most severe of which are the psychological and mental disorders that result from addiction.

Among the most notable effects are sensory disturbances, such as impairments in vision and hearing, distorted perceptions of time and space, and poor judgment in estimating distances and durations. Certain drugs may also cause memory loss and induce severe behavioural, cognitive, and emotional changes. These may include behavioural disinhibition, personality degradation, clinical depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, sleep disorders, psychosis, delusions of grandeur, emotional instability, hallucinations, and suffocation phobia (Amara, 2020, p. 386).

Moreover, drug abuse and addiction can lead to weakened immunity, inflammation of the urinary tracts and tubules, liver swelling and enlargement, and chronic and potentially fatal inflammations of the spleen and pancreas. Other common symptoms include persistent lethargy, memory loss, appetite suppression, and mood swings.

In addition to the psychological and physical health effects on the addict, drug abuse also has profound social and moral repercussions. These are manifested in various behaviours, such as repeated truancy from school, association with deviant peer groups and drug dealers, frequenting suspicious places, committing acts of vandalism, an increase in traffic accidents and suicide rates among users, as well as a rise in crime and homicide rates.

Furthermore, the consequences extend to the economic sphere, where bribery and financial corruption become rampant. Public funds are squandered and stolen by drug cartels that prioritise rapid profit over the nation's wealth and well-being. These criminal networks often infiltrate and manipulate various authorities, including political, security, military, customs, judicial, and economic institutions. This results in widespread tax evasion and the proliferation of diseases, ultimately burdening the national economy. Consequently, the state faces a profoundly difficult economic and public health situation (Ben Mohamed & Dagbhar, 2023, pp. 171-173).

4. The Role of Educational Institutions in Raising Awareness of the Dangers of Drugs and Preventing Their Use

Undoubtedly, the school is a social and educational institution that plays a pivotal role in raising and educating students in the desired manner. Its role is fundamentally educa-

tional and Islamic, nurturing the students' religious conscience and encouraging them to develop self-discipline. The school should work to instil Islamic faith in students' hearts and address problems resulting from youth imitating inappropriate behaviours. Here, the role of the guidance counselor is essential in preventing pupils from falling into drug addiction by making productive use of their leisure time to provide adequate information about the harms and effects of drugs on themselves and their surrounding environment. In addition, raising parental awareness about the risks of this serious scourge and building a link between school and home is vital for protecting children from falling into the grip of drugs. This includes encouraging students in their studies and directing them towards activities that keep them engaged and fulfil their needs, deterring them from this dangerous path (Attiyat, 2003, p. 215).

The influence of peers and the broader school community often becomes more powerful and effective than the guidance of parents. Hence, it is crucial to emphasise the role of educational institutions in shaping sound concepts and skills in students, enabling them to shield themselves from the grave dangers that surround them oftentimes unknowingly. These institutions must bear a significant responsibility: to protect our children, immunise them against the dangers of drugs, and raise their awareness of the nature of these threats and their consequences.

If we were to outline the most critical roles entrusted to educational institutions in combating drug abuse, we must highlight the following aspects:

- Educational institutions must instil the concepts of follow-up, guidance, and supervision in parents and teachers alike.

- Educational institutions should embed religious values in their students, as religious conscience is the best deterrent from engaging in immoral behaviour or even considering it.
- Educational institutions should continuously improve and update their knowledge of modern communication technologies to identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- Educational institutions, as well as parents at home, must take all precautionary measures that would form a substantial barrier to protecting children from the risk of falling into drug addiction.
- Educational institutions must promote the use of modern scientific methods and conduct research into mechanisms to combat the issue of drug use and addiction.

In the same context, Mansour bin Abdulrahman emphasised the necessity of activating the role of the family by reinforcing the importance of the teacher, the school textbook, and cooperation between home and school, focusing on rational approaches that are embodied in the following areas:

- The contribution of educational institutions to the process of socialisation.
- Educational institutions should continue the socialisation process to shape the students' personalities and ensure their awareness of their surroundings.
- Preparing the school as a miniature society to acquaint the students with the broader society and introduce them to its social functions, as learning is a human duty before being merely informational.
- Connecting students with society's prevailing culture and introducing them to their nation's heritage while

fostering a spirit of renewal, creativity, and excellence in response to contemporary developments and civilisational changes, provided these do not contradict Islamic principles and foundations.

- Training young people to develop discipline, appropriate behaviour, and the ability to understand frustrating circumstances and respond to them in a balanced manner.
- Linking educational and instructional activities with community efforts to foster a balanced and well-adjusted generation, surrounded by a framework of religious and moral values, in harmony with their social environment and contributing as active and participatory members of society (Mansour Abdulrahman bin Askar, 2008, p. 10).

Furthermore, the authorities must intensify efforts to employ social, educational, and psychological specialists in schools and official youth institutions to carry out their professional educational and awareness-raising roles in combating drugs and highlighting their dangers and harmful consequences.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of drug use and addiction is one of the most serious issues of our time, facing societies of all kinds, especially given the significant rise in addiction rates across both developed and developing countries. It has become clear that no country, regardless of its social, political, or economic system or its size and power, can completely prevent the emergence of drug-related problems. The issue of preventing the spread of drugs has thus become a priority

for all, as an urgent necessity driven by the dangers posed by the consumption of these toxic substances, particularly the risks they represent to students' psychological and physical health.

Under these circumstances, educational institutions, like other bodies, play an essential role in raising awareness about the dangers of drug use and working towards prevention. They aim to safeguard students' well-being and enhance their social, intellectual, and behavioural capacities. As a primary tool for social and educational matters, including drug use within school settings, these institutions must operate within a coordinated and integrated framework. This involves intensified cooperation between families, media outlets, and broader social institutions to resolve this widespread issue effectively.

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