The internet's role in promoting and spreading drugs in society

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Abstract:

Drug use is a multiple-sided problem that is considered one of the pathological social phenomena in the modern world especially the urban areas, looking at it unconventionally depends on the holistic view of it from different sides.

As the importance of studying this problem rises, we find that the internet is a double-edged sword, as it is an effective factor in reducing or spreading this phenomenon, which affects children and youth in the first place. Drug production, dealing, and methods of usage become promoted through the various internet platforms, and it all increase by the development of the internet means and technology.

Key words: The Internet , Drug promotion , Drug spread, Society , Role.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Considered one of the problems that affect society and members, drug abuse has negative social, economic, and psychological impacts on both individuals and communities. This social pathological phenomenon is caused by many factors which are related to individual, family, and even social structure as a whole.

The Internet poses dilemmas that would not have crossed the human mind, as it turned into a market for drugs and psychoactive substances, it also made terms inspired by the virtual world like "cyber drugs".

The Committee of American States Against Drug Abuse indicates that organized-criminal networks promote drugs and illegal substances online. In addition to the report issued by the International Police Organization (Interpol) indicates that 890 million people who use drugs in Asia, Europe, and North America access it via the internet. Since the beginning of this millennium; The United Nations has been urging the global community to collaborate, in order to fight the misuse of the internet in the field of drug dealing.

In recent times, the Algerian and Arab societies are witnessing the dangerous phenomenon of drug promotion which threatens young people and children, it is sold in various forms online and in easily accessible places to this category and it damages their health, family, and society. In this work, we will try to solve the problem of the topic by answering the question: what role does the internet play in promoting and propagating drugs in society?

2. Defining concepts :

2.1 The internet :

Linguistically, the internet is the interconnection between networks. I diomatically, The Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines it as: a global network of computers that allows instant access to websites that practically provide data about anything and everything (Gordan Marshall, 2009, p. 368). The nomenclatures: world wide web, spider-network or cluster-network is given to one of the most important technical protocols on the Internet, this technique allowed users to navigate millions of websites that have various

and pleasant information provided in various media including texts, sounds, colors, pictures, graphics, font ... (Ali Muhammad, 2005, p. 146).

After world war ll which turned into a cold war around 1950, internet development had began and it continued till our present time. Though, It must be said that there is a common confusion between the two concepts of the internet and the worldwide web as they are considered one term; even though, the internet is a set of computer networks connected via copper wires, optical fiber cables, wireless connections and so on. The worldwide web on the other hand is a collection of documents and resources related via hyperlinks and IP addresses, in other words, it is one of the services that the internet offers same as e-mail and document transfer (Kayas, 2018, p. 206).

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-The Idiomatic aspect : Idiomatically, drugs refer to every substance that leads to consciousness lost for both humans and animals which may result in coma or death, it is everything that drains and affects the body and mind (Jalal El-Din & Ramadan, 2001, p. 259).

-The Scientific aspect : Narcotic drugs are substances strongly affecting the human nervous system, according to the used amount of drugs it causes insensitivity to pain, stupor, sleep disorders, and even coma.

-Legal aspect : The legal definition of drugs indicates that it is a group of substances that causes addiction and intoxication of the human nervous system, it is forbidden to cultivate, manufacture or trade them; except for purposes established by law and by authorized people (Husain, pp. 57-58). Moreover, it was determined as a set of legally banned psychiatric materials, which are exclusively included in the international agreement "The only agreement on narcotic essences in 1961" and these are: hemp, opium, Cocaine tree, and their derivatives (Yusuf, 1996, pp. 20-21).

2.2Ttypes of drugs :

Anti-drug abuse law, classified drugs into five main types:

-Depressants: such as alcohol, may be used to clear the mind, reduce anxiety, and it may cause drowsiness.

-Sedatives and minor tranquilizers: they include benzodiazepine drugs such as valium, which has the same general effects as depressants. It is often prescribed to calm and help you sleep at night but it can somehow lead to addiction.

-Opiates: also known as narcotic analgesics, are strong sedatives that create a feeling of euphoria (happiness) and cause drowsiness. They include morphine, heroin, and methadone.

-Stimulants: are drugs that make you feel more active, attentive, energetic, and self-confident. They include cocaine and amphetamines.

-Hallucinogens: are drugs that generate strange and intense delusions called hallucinations, they have both physical and psychological risks such as heart and lung failure, sleeplessness, violent behavior, depression, anxiety, and so on (Abuse, 2004). These drugs include (acid) L, C, D, and psilocybe cubensis (magic mushrooms).

Many drugs do not belong to only one type, depressants and sedatives are sometimes called inhibitors, stimulants are sometimes called steroids for instance cannabis might have dispirited effects in addition to generating a feeling of euphoria, also happiness pills have both stimulant and hallucinogenic effects at the same time (Misuse of Drugs Act).

2.3Drug damages:
2.3.1 Health damages:
Heart disorders, high blood pressure may lead to arterial burst and sudden death.
-Inflammation of the brain, erosion of brain-forming nerve cells which leads to intellectual, auditory and visual hallucinations, memory weakness, or loss.
-Digestive system disorders and anorexia., which leads to weight loss accompanied by redness or blackening of the face.
-Chronic vertigo, tinnitus, and red eyes.
-Sexual dysfunction or malfunction.
-The increase of toxins in the body leads to cirrhosis. Opium for example decomposes liver cells, causes fibrosis and it increases sugar levels.
-Fatigue, emaciation, and loss of equilibrium.
-Compromised immune system.

2.3.2 Psychological and mental damages:
Psychoactive drugs are substances that affect mental processes like perception, consciousness, cognition in addition to mood and emotions (Organization, 2021) Additionally, drug addiction can lead to both short- and long-term changes in the brain, which can lead to mental health issues including paranoia, depression, anxiety, aggression, hallucinations, disorientation, stress, suicide attempts, nervous system disorders, and other damages. Compared with the general population, addicts are roughly twice as likely to be diagnosed with mood and anxiety or other mental disorders, in 2015, an

estimated 43.4 million adults experienced some form of mental illness, 8.1 million of them had both drug abuse disorders (SAMHSA & Heath, 2014-2015).

2.3.3 Economic damages:

-The exhaustion of money and waste of family resources.

-A strong economy needs aware youth of what revolves around them, capable of work and production, not addicted weak youth who cause lack of production which leads to harming the economic interests of the nation.

-Drug addiction drains the country economically, as it increases costs that are incurred by the state as it needs to take care of addicts through establishing rehab centers and fighting drug dealers.

-For a family one of whose members uses drugs, much of its income is spent on this last, the thing that causes a decrease in the addressed income to the produced goods and services, spending families' incomes on drugs instead of productive projects in the country can lead to a clear state of recession in the national economy.

-The country loses lands on which drugs are grown, instead of using them for planting crops that benefit citizens and the country alike. In addition to the illegal smuggling of narcotic substances, where a lot of money is spent on it instead of using those funds in benefit import (Yusuf, 1996, p. 138).

2.3.4 Drug damages on society:

The implications of drug abuse extend far beyond the user, it damages their relationships with their family, community, health workers, volunteers, and wider society (Pagliaro, 2004) The widespread drug addiction in any society is considered a bad omen because it causes a lack of production and an increase in crime rates; which make addicts rush to get the required money for buying these substances doing any job, throwing aside all of their previous ethics and values. Hence, both the state and society must carry out awareness campaigns concerning the dangers of drugs on individuals and societies through conducting educational seminars at universities, primary and secondary schools, sports clubs, and places of youth gatherings so that we can protect youth, who is the beating heart of the nation and the source of its pride as countries are built with the arms of young people and on their

shoulders, people rise up and reach their goals. May God protect us from drug addiction and save our beloved Egypt from drug abuse (Al-Asfar, 2004, pp. 109-113).

3.The main social factors contributing to the spread of drug abuse:
3.1 Constant social inequality:

Society suffers from the multiple, persistent and rooted inequalities between rich and poor people. Some social groups can lose hope of enjoying full participation in the life of the larger community, moving towards drug abuse and trafficking.

3.2 Immigration:

When migrating from one region to another, migrants become individuals and groups more likely to face multiple social difficulties associated with their sense of homelessness, it may include challenges to their physical and mental health, well-being, work, educational paths, and family life, when a group of immigrants from areas associated with the production and use of drugs is addicted, they are more likely to engage in drug abuse as a way of overcoming this sense of displacement.

3.3 Political and economic transformation:

Likewise, societies undergoing political and economic transformation may witness an imbalance in the strength of social cohesion. When former political structures and economic activities lose their support and new forms of economic activity and government arise, some social categories may feel isolated and disconnected from the larger community. This sense of unfamiliarity by the new structures of government may lead them to engage in many kinds of harmful behaviors to them and their society.

3.4 The emergence of self-extravagance culture:

Social cohesion may be undermined not only by poverty and social exclusion but also by the emergence of the culture of self-extravagance. For instance, some of the people who enjoy well-being may see that they no longer need to live according to social rules and norms, they may follow behaviors that

cause self-harm, and some others may feel that the use of certain types of drugs such as cocaine powder is a symbol of their success and high status.

3.5 The growth of individualism and consumerism.

3.6 Transformation in traditional values:

Social cohesion strength can also be extremely undermined by the transformation in the traditional values, as a result of the emergence of cultural, political, economic, and spiritual changes, as well as the subsequent emergence of new sets of values.

3.7 Communities in and beyond the conflict phase:

Often, societies show signs of breakdown in social cohesion such as revolutions and wars when they go through or emerge from conflict situations.

3.8 Rapid urban growth:

Many traditional forms of social cohesion may face corrosion and decay in societies that witness rural-urban displacement, such erosion and degradation may include the disintegration of family closeness and bonding. Additionally, the transformation of urban areas into cultural spaces that show tolerance towards a great category of social and individual excesses and individuals' behaviors as a result of an increased sense of "nobody" within those areas.

3.9 Loss of respect for law:

When local populations feel that their legal system is unfair, corrupt, or ineffective, they are likely to lose confidence in those laws and their implementing bodies, which increases the prevalence of drug trafficking and abuse (INCB report, 2009, pp. 21-22).

4. The role of internet networks in drug promotion:

The mobile communications revolution has created new opportunities for drug-dealers to avoid risks, as they no longer need personal contact with customers they instead use lower-level couriers to handle money-collecting. Drug dealers became able to inform customers about the delivery places by sending messages through encrypted networks. Even when distributors are caught, they rarely possess a large amount of any drug, which clearly reduces their commercial risks. Besides, distributors can use coding software to

protect their communications and data, which is a problem for law authorities. As a result, a list of potential customer phone numbers saved on a cell phone or SIM card is now a valuable itemthat can be traded between criminal groups (UNODC report, 2017, p. 09).

The hidden network is an encrypted network where users can exchange both legal and illegal goods and services, with their identities blocked. It allows users to purchase drugs after paying for them in a cryptocurrency, such as "Bitcoin", where purchases are delivered to them in a hidden manner, therefore reducing the risk of arrest for distributors and users alike, and eliminating other drug-related problems in neighboring areas where the drug trade is common.At the present stage, the hidden network represents only a small percentage of drug sales. Typically, buyers are recreational drug users, who often buy cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine, hallucinations, and new psychoactive substances, they are less likely to ask for heroin and methamphetamine. Although, drug dealing via the darknet is still a niche market in the global context, but it has strong potential for growth (UNODC report, 2017, pp. 17-18).

5. The most important strategies related to the Internet to limit the spread of drugs:

5.1 Supporting researches, data collection, evidence analysis, and information exchange, strengthening the response measures taken by law enforcement agencies, also enforcing international cooperation in this field so that drug-related criminal activities involving the Internet are prevented.

5.2 Upon their request, providing Member states with further technical assistance and building capacity activities at all levels, with a view to fight and prevent the use of technology including the internet by drug trafficking networks and criminal organizations from facilitating their drug-related activities.

5.3 Enhancing the capacity of national authorities, particularly law enforcement authorities to analyze and maintain electronic evidence of illicit activities including drug trading and money laundering, also monitoring the sale of drugs online.

5.4 Encouraging the use of government guidelines to stop the digital marketing of the under-international control illegal substances.

5.6 Promoting internet-use-related measures for protection purposes, including providing appropriate advice and information, and doing what compliance national legislation. Also formulating and implementing preventive strategies, programs, and measures which aims among many things to protect children and youth from the abuse of those substances, new psychoactive substances and from being illegally involved in trading such substances over the Internet (Report of the United Nations General Assembly, 2016, p. 25).

6. The role of society in drug prevention:

The wealth of society is its constituent individuals, which is why they must be protected from any harm that might affect their health, personality, and existence, just like addiction does. Drug addiction is a devastating phenomenon that affects and destroys people, the reason why a serious anti-drug policy must therefore be pursued on the basis of:

-Seizing all of drugs, their users, and promoters to limit access to this destructive substance. This requires training and state-of-the-art support for security-stuff, to cope with countless methods and tricks of dealers.

-Raising awareness about drugs' dangers and their prohibition by religions, through concerted media and sensibility within schools and universities.

-Treating of addicts, full recovering, and rehabilitation to integrate properly into society, and supporting the anti-addiction centers with money, qualified doctors, and medical equipment.

Solving problems that may push youth toward drugs like unemployment, inability to marry due to the lack of financial capacity, housing, and occupation. Moreover, finding solutions to improve living conditions for these young people, to benefit from them instead of destroying and losing them.

In order to achieve these preventive objectives and make them seriously operational, the whole community must make efforts to protect individuals, in

addition to all state agencies which have to integrate and work together (Al-Asfar, 2004, p. 142).

7.CONCLUSION

From the above, we can say as a conclusion that the Internet encouraged criminal organizations to expand their business because of the safe atmosphere it provides, the potential to hide and cross geographical boundaries. The World Wide Web enabled gangs to strengthen their relations and coordinate beyond authorities control. Furthermore, criminals exploited the modern-technology means to promote drugs, as the internet itself is promoting this poison, the methods of using, manufacturing, and cultivating it, where the huge financial returns that are reaped from the drug trade are used as a temptation to bring youth to the world of crime, which at the end causes serious damage to society.

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