

“No to Drugs”

Combating Drug Abuse in Our Muslim Communities Today

Rayhan Ahsan

Michigan Islamic Academy

Drugs, it's a word that everyone in society shies away from. However, no matter how many times we try to ignore the problem and keeps coming back to us in the most haunting of ways. It's a topic considered to be taboo especially in our own muslim communities. People thought that if they tried to ignore the problem, it wouldn't affect them. However the reality is it has done the exact opposite. From marijuana to e cigarettes, drugs continue to plague into our communities, and if it is not dealt with, the consequences could be severe.

The first thing needed to be done is to understand the problem and what is the cause of it. Drug abuse is the overuse of illegal and addictive drugs. This is a serious problem because the use of these illicit drugs has many harmful effects that could jeopardize the life of the individual or the lives of other people around them. After meeting a few local professionals dealing with this issue, the two main drugs that are abused are marijuana and nicotine. Marijuana is a drug from the Cannabis sativa plant and it is used to make people feel high along with other side effects including drowsiness and slower reaction time (M2). Nicotine, is a drug most commonly found in cigarettes that gives people an addiction (E1). There are many reasons why people use these drugs. According to an article by the Recovery connection, people use drugs for many reasons such as: "peer pressure, experimentation, self medication, satisfaction, and emptiness." (R1). Also the article mentions that because their availability has increased it makes it easier for teens to try them out. One of the other reasons for its increase is due to the media and celebrities. In many forms of media the "cool" character is often showcased with a cigar in his mouth or constantly doing a drug. People see this and think that if they want to be cool around their friends then they should smoke or do drugs. A lot of Muslim kids have a trouble fitting in a society where muslims are targeted for acts of terrorism. Young people want

to fit in and they will do whatever they need to do to be accepted by the peers. Also, many teens face problems in their families and since they don't have anyone to turn to, they start using drugs to feel better and escape their problems. After the problem has been identified, people should learn the effect it will have in order to agree that this is a problem. However, since Marijuana has only recently become more prevalent, it is hard to identify the long term effects of it though we do have information about its side effect. As stated by WebMD, physical effects of Marijuana include; "dizziness, slower reaction time, shallow breath, red eyes and dilated pupils, and along with other things that are not mentioned. (M2). However the main things that makes marijuana very dangerous are the mental effects it has which include "paranoia, forgetfulness, anxiety, and even depression." (M2). It has also been proven that Marijuana is especially harmful on teens as it affects their brain and especially the part that controls their emotions(M3).

Nicotine, the second most prevalent drug is a little different. It is has been used a lot for many centuries, thus there is a lot of evidence and proof on its effect. According to an article by Passages, effects of nicotine include increase in heart and blood pressure, affect the brain by altering dopamine levels, and make users feel pulses throughout their body. It can also lead to stained fingers and fingernails, yellowish skin, signs of premature aging and yellow-hued teeth which eventually leads to gum disease. Also according to official Tobacco prevention organization, nicotine is found in other things such as paint, cleaning supplies, lead and other harmful things.

After we have assessed the cause we have to move on to see the current effect it has on our communities. To help support this essay, I conducted a survey with 60+ high school students asking various question which were:

1) Do you know anyone personally that has used drugs or is under the influence of one?

28 responded yes, 37 said no. Of those who said Yes 14 were boys and 14 were girls.

2) Have you ever been offered to smoke or do a drug?

18 responded yes, 47 said no, Of those who said yes: 14 were guys and 4 were girls

3) Are you planning to smoke a cigarettes when you grow up?

Only one male student said yes

4) Are you a victim of secondhand smoke?

20 people said yes , 45 said no, Of those who said yes: 7 were boys while 13 were girls

5) Do you think there should be restrictions on vaping?

45 said yes , 20 said no, Of those who said no: 11 were guys while 9 were girls

6) Do you think drug abuse is a problem in our Muslim Community?

40 people said Yes , 25 said no, Of those who said no: 8 were guys, while 17 were girls

7) Do you think the media or celebrities have an effect on young people using drugs?

52 People said yes , 13 said no, of those who said no 5 were boys , while 8 were girls

As the evidence suggests, a significant amount of muslim teens have had in interaction with drugs one way or another. However, these stats are just only from a very small percentage of people and it is not enough to conclude anything. Fortunately , I had the opportunity to meet a member of an Islamic Organization known as The Family and Youth Institute who directed me

to their website. On it there were statistics taken from college students across the United States.

Some of their more surprising statistics include:

- 19% Of Muslim Women and 28% of Muslim Men have used Illicit Drugs.
- 17% Of Muslim Women and 28% of Muslim Men have used Marijuana.
- 26% Of Muslim Women and 44% Of Muslim Men have used Tobacco.
- 48% Of Muslim Women and 45% Of Muslim Men have used Alcohol.
- Among American Muslim College Students, 51% admitted to using Tobacco.
- Only 29% of Muslim Students believed cigarettes are haram.

In the survey, I also asked each student what they thought was the most common and used drugs. A vast majority of them responded, with three different answers, which were: Marijuana, Tobacco, and Heroin.

However, even with these statistics we have only scratched the tip of the iceberg. No matter what someone does, it is impossible to get 100% accurate statistics. However, that doesn't mean we can't use them because it does inform people that there is a problem and it is not small.

Now that we have assessed the problem the next step is to find a way to combat it. The first thing to do is see what our religion, Islam has to say about it. In Surah Maidah Verse 90 Allah Swt says: *إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ ۗ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ ۗ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ*
“O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, and Al-Ansâb[], and Al-Azlâm (arrows for seeking luck or decision) are an abomination of Shaitân's (Satan's) handiwork. So avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful. (90)”

When the muslims first came to Madinah the laws about drinking were not revealed so some of the muslims were drinking alcohol. Gradually, Allah revealed restriction;s on it before revealing the above verse to completely make it haram. As we read in, the scholars have interpreted that one of the reasons alcohol was made haram was because it alters the way a person thinks and they have no control over their body which is exactly what drugs do. Also

Umme Salmah the wife of the prophet Muhammad, narrated that the Messenger of Allah prohibited every intoxicant and Mufattir (anything which excites and irritates the mind, body and heart. (Abu Dawood). The effects of Drugs make it match the requirements of a Mufattir which according to this hadith, makes it haram.

Now that we have deciphered the problem, it's time to find a solution. There are three groups to tackle in the solution and they are the individual, the parents, and the community. For individuals there are many things one should do in order to stay away from using drugs. Some of them include: (s1)

- Increasing knowledge about drugs and what are the really costs of using it
- Bring yourself closer to the masjid and learn more about Islam
- Always remember that Allah swt is watching you and he is the one you should turn to in times of worries and not drugs.
- Remember addiction is very easy and stopping is very hard.
- Most teens who use drugs don't usually have enough money to purchase them causing them to steal from their parents or maybe even do something illegal.
- There's nothing wrong with seeking help from your parents.

Solution For Parents Include: (FYI):

- Having open communication with children
- Knowing who you kids friends are and knowing where and who they are meeting.
- Talking with your kids openly about drugs and its effect.
- If a child is suffering from drug abuse, seek professional help.
- Attend seminars and classes on how to be a better parent.

- Take time out to spend time with your family and do something together
- Get off the electronics

Finally steps that need to be taken as a community:

- Have someone in the community who deals with this problem such as a youth counselor or a psychiatrist
- Give khutbahs, sermons, and classes in the masjid or Islamic School about this topic.
- Empower the youth to take a stand and work together on this problem.
- Work to collect funds to help combat this problem
- Host more youth or family related events in the masjid every month.

In conclusion, drug abuse is a big problem affecting muslim communities. People need to get together to work on this problem. Community members need to create a system that helps the children, parents, and the community members who are all subject to this epidemic. If this done, then the muslim ummah will surely become even stronger.

Citations:

- Abuse, N. I. (2016, May). Electronic Cigarettes (e-Cigarettes). Retrieved March 25, 2017, from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/electronic-cigarettes-e-cigarettes>
- American Lung Association. (2016, December 8). Www.lung.org > Stop Smoking > Smoking Facts E-cigarettes and Lung Health. Retrieved March 30, 2017, from <http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/smoking-facts/e-cigarettes-and-lung-health.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>
- D. (2016, Oct. & nov.). Marijuana Facts . Retrieved May 01, 2017, from http://www.drugpolicy.org/sites/default/files/DPA_Marijuana_Facts_Booklet.pdf
- Hollett, J., & Iqbal, Z. (2015). Preventing and Treating Drug Use. *American Muslim Youth Convening Report Series*, 1-28. Retrieved October 23, 2016.
- Hashem, H., Patel, S., Abo-Zena, M., & Ezzeddine, M. (2009-2016). American Muslim Youth: Challenges, Research, and Opportunities. Retrieved March 30, 2017, from <http://www.thefyi.org/youth-research/>
- I. (2001). Islam And Drugs . Retrieved January 21, 2017, from <http://www.inter-islam.org/Prohibitions/drugs.htm>
- Mallibu, P. (2010, April 21). Physical Effects of Nicotine Addiction. Retrieved March 30, 2017, from <https://b.passagesmalibu.com/physical-effects-of-nicotine-addiction/>
- R. (Ed.). (2011, November 28). *10 Reasons People Abuse Drugs*. Retrieved January 21, 2016, from <https://www.recoveryconnection.com/10-reasons-people-abuse-drugs/>
- Robinson, J. (2016, October 18). How Does Marijuana Affect You? Retrieved January 21, 2017, from <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/addiction/marijuana-use-and-its-effects#2>
- S. (2002, December 1). *Tips for Muslim teens on drugs, alcohol and friends*. Retrieved January 20, 2016, from <https://www.soundvision.com/article/tips-for-muslim-teens-on-drugs-alcohol-and-friends>
- US Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). Tobacco Basics. Retrieved April 5, 2017, from <https://therealcost.betobaccofree.hhs.gov/tobacco-basics.html?gclid=CJ7TvPDBttMCFYNGXgodOFwMMg&gclsrc=aw.ds>