

ARTICLE

EXPLORING ADDICTION AS A MORAL AND BIOLOGICAL DISEASE: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Addiction has been and is one of the very important social and psychological human problems in various societies. In parallel with the increase of human knowledge, addiction has been expanded and gotten more complex. The aim of this study was to evaluate addiction as a moral and biological disease. **Method:** The present study is a primary review which has been done with the participation of two researchers. In this research, first, databases including: iranmedex, sid, pubmed, proquest-elsevier and articles published in prestigious journals on addiction as well as Persian and English books related to the topic of addiction were studied using keywords such as addiction, addiction and moral illness and addiction and biological disease. **Results:** Based on the findings, addiction is a moral disease, but biological problems and manifestations can be its consequences. This is discussed about mainstream addiction, although it cannot be denied that there may be some physical ailments such as uncontrollable pain in advanced stages of cancer underlie addiction. **Conclusion:** Although addiction is a multi-faceted disease, and a variety of factors like social, family, psychological, biological and pharmacological parameters are involved in its development, central role of morality in its formation and emergence cannot be ignored.

INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction is a biological, psychological and social diseases and imposes profound damage to society and especially undermines social safety [1]. Our country, Iran, is next to the world's largest opium producer and has about 900 km common border with Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the most recent statistics in Iran, there is a population over one million and two hundred thousand habitual addicts and about eight hundred thousand non-habitual addicts [2]. Research shows that, in recent decades, the rate of drug abuse, in various countries, particularly among adolescents and youth, has increased. One area of concern related to the problem of drug addiction in our country is the burden of its abundance to the extent that the head of the prevention and treatment of drug abuse in Ministry of Health announced: According to a study, the number of addicts in the country has reached to 3 million and 700 thousand people. Another concern is the changing qualitative patterns of addiction so that it is said that the mean age of addiction in Iran has reached 14 years. In this respect, the next generation of country is in danger [3]. The impact of addiction is important because its dire consequences not only suffer the addicts, but family, friends and colleagues are also vulnerable to its devastating consequences. High prevalence of drug addiction is important from the viewpoint of health. [4]. One of the basic questions in this respect is whether addiction is a biological disease or an ethical disease? That "whether addiction is a crime or a disease?" has been one of the most challenging debates in recent decades and casts an undeniable impact on macro and micro policy and how to deal with this problem. From the perspective of causation (etiology), two practical approaches toward addiction have been established: because of some biological evidence and brain changes, some researchers believe that addiction is a biological disease. On the contrary, some experts look at this issue from a moral and legal perspective and ascribe a criminal nature addiction. [5]. Due to the aforementioned issues, and given that addiction is one of the significant social and psychological problems of human in different communities and in parallel with the increase in human knowledge, addiction has been expanded and gotten more complex. Addiction and drug abuse, as a social problem, is a phenomenon that comes with inability to organize and maintain the existing order of society and leads to structural changes in economic, social, political and cultural systems in a society. In our today society, drug abuse has occurred under the guise of a social problem or issue. This social ailment has harmed large numbers of people and is increasingly interacting with other social problems and taking on the appearance of a foundation-breaking threat. Prior to being considered a social phenomenon, addiction is psychological phenomenon that emerges in different forms; As a human being can be addicted to gambling or to even initially normal behaviors (such as shopping), addiction has taken on the shape of abnormalities. Drug addiction is one of those forms and imposes high moral and material costs on society. Hence, the aim of the present study was to evaluate addiction as a moral and biological disease.

METHODS

Among many essays, articles related to addictive drugs, moral diseases and addiction and biological disease were studied in terms of the following variables:

Field of study

By research filed it means the overall field of science and study of the subject and certain categories in which research has been done.

KEY WORDS

Addiction, moral disease, biological disease

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Study method

The research method is the methodology used in the research.

Place of study

The place of study is the location of data collection and includes geographic extent and the location of data collection. The present study is a primary review which has been done with the participation of two researchers. In this research, first, databases including: iranmedex, sid, pubmed, proquest-elsevier and articles published in prestigious journals on addiction as well as Persian and English books related to the topic of addiction were studied using keywords such as addiction, addiction and moral illness and addiction and biological disease. Searched keywords are on the basis of international EndNote Library of Science Medicine (NLM). After removing the old and repetitive content, the summary of articles were examined and those articles that were less related to the subject were excluded.

RESULTS

Addiction as a biological disease

In recent years, an attitude has developed in various communities that considers addict as a disease. And its trend seems to be a growing one. "Based on the example of UNDP proposed legislation in the field of drug trafficking and its related crimes, addiction is not a crime and the addict is punishable solely because of addiction." The followers of this view consider addicts as patients in the first place that should be treated. Research that has been done in this regard on the brains of addicts shows chemical and even physical changes in the brain tissue and this issue is raised as evidence that reveals addiction as a biological disease. Nowadays, the experts know addiction as a chronic and recurrent disease that emerges in the form of intermittent attacks of need for drug consumption. In terms of ethics, we can deal with this subject through two approaches, namely "addiction: biological disease or crime": Outcome-oriented approach and principled-oriented approach. If we want to discuss in terms of an outcome-oriented or teleological perspective, we can say that each of the two views can cause negative consequences: If you consider addiction as a biological disease: First indecency of addiction is deemphasized. Having a social evil, in itself, is a very important preventive factor against the development and exacerbating this problem. It seems that if we want to remove the stigma associated with this issue, this actually results in a surreptitious encouragement to lead a healthy portion of society towards addiction. Secondly, the addict's will power and decision-making will weaken because he considers his illness as a chronic brain disease and also justifying his addiction becomes possible for him. In contrast, if addiction is solely considered as a moral disease or a crime this may have consequences [6]: First, harsh methods such as imprisonment, rejection, isolation and social elimination of drug addict or mandatory camps with harsh approaches impose economic, psychological, cultural and social consequences on the addict and his family and intensify hidden, and namely, underground activities (such as trafficking and sexual misdemeanors, etc.), because the ostracized person grabs each way for his survival. Secondly, predisposing factors such as unemployment, like the addict himself, can be trimmed and we're away from realism. Likewise, elucidations used to plan and manage removing or reduction of the effects of this problem disappears or fades away. For example, the number of infectious diseases such as hepatitis and AIDS has become less accurate. But if addiction is investigated from the perspective of fundamentalism (regardless of outcome), we've looked deeper into the problem: Accordingly, we are required to look for reasonable and solid evidence so that we can better analyze the nature of the problem. As we have seen, evidence of the role of dopamine or changes in other neural systems with the help of imaging methods and other preclinical diagnostic methods concerning addiction have been obtained that it is beneficial to consider addiction as a biological disease. On the other hand, we see that social and cultural problems cause addiction. So we can assume that moral factors are effective in the development, emergence and incidence of addiction, because social and cultural phenomena are not irrelevant to ethics [7]. In the treatment process, it is recommended that the patient accept responsibility for his work! Accepting responsibility makes sense only when it has moral and legal foundations. It means that the patient does not tolerate a kind of compulsion (inside or outside). It is also a reason to approve that the moral aspect of the issue is of high magnitude. On the other hand, drug addiction is not only drug abuse but addictive behaviors, before resorting to drugs addiction and behaviors following addiction are significant from the perspective of behavioral and ethical dimensions. In addition, some of new forms of addiction are of virtual nature and there are no actual addictive materials. In explaining the biological basis of addiction and addictive behaviors, different opinions and views have been presented such as the impact of genetics in the emergence of addiction, biochemical changes such as changes in mediated neurotransmission (neurotransmitters). In recent years, extensive electro-physiology and neuropsychology studies have confirmed this theory that are involved in creating rewarding behavior of multiple neurotransmitter systems, among which one can enumerate dopaminergic systems, Gabaergic, glutamatergic, serotonergic, adrenergic and endogenous opioid peptides. Among several neurotransmitter systems involved in reward and reinforcement, it seems that Mesolimbic dopamine system plays an important role. Based on these studies, A10 dopaminergic neurons that have originated from the abdominal tegmental area and their nerve fibers are sent to the nucleus accumbens, can be affected by bonuses including natural rewards (food, beverages, response to sexual issues) as well as electrical stimulation and some

drugs. In such a situation, inhibiting inter-neurons tonic of (neurons Interface) GABA ergic interneurons in the ventral tegmental area is removed from the dopaminergic neurons which results in increasing their neural firing and the subsequent increase extracellular dopamine levels in the nucleus accumbens. Many researchers introduce mesolimbic dopamine system as a substrate of neurochemical rewards due to its unique involvement in regulating reward-related behavior. Based on the theory of cerebral-behavioral systems, Gray (1994) assumed that psychiatric disorders arise from dysfunction of some (more active or less active) systems or from their interactions. Since the introduction of Gray's model, the researchers hypothesized that abnormal sensitivity of these systems indicates the predisposition and tendency to multiple forms of psychopathology. Gray, believes that the release of dopamine in the nucleus Akvmyns is associated with high emotional which has been observed in alcohol and drugs users [12-7, 5].

Addiction as a crime

The existence of a direct relation between drug abuse and committing crime has rendered addiction as a crime from this perspective. Due to severe mental and physical drug dependency on the one hand and discomfort and complications due to the cessation of drugs that are sometimes very severe, painful and dangerous and the fear of its recurrent reappearance on the other hand, the addict is impatient to get drugs, to the extent that he refrains from no evil things to do and so committing various crimes and even dangerous crimes is predictable. Even each of the drugs can exacerbate certain categories of crimes. In general crimes such as murder, robbery, sexual promiscuity, etc., can be associated with the use of different drugs.

DISCUSSION

The present study was carried out with the aim of evaluating addiction as a moral and biological disease. In the emergence of any crime, with careful analysis, we can reach the conclusion that social media has provided a platform perfectly suited to the criminal and has been an important factor for the incidence of criminal behavior. If corruption and promiscuity are dominant in society, liable people are trapped in the vortex of its destruction and if social systems are based on the norms and value patterns and purposeful and specific programs are planned, the possibility of social deviance in society and in many people will be weak. According to a researcher, the environment plays an effective and crucial role in shaping human character and human behavior, as a sign of his character, origins largely from the education acquired from the environment. So, contaminated environments will ruin people and healthy and lively environment set the stage for growth, prosperity, vitality and joy in individuals. Despite efforts made in recent years to remove stigma from addiction, it seems that the criminal nature of addiction, especially among the masses of the people, still remains .However, even if addiction is not considered as a crime, the role of ethics in this issue cannot be ignored (13).Of course, the main burden of moral responsibility may not be on the addict, for example, a child who redepoying parents, goes towards addiction. Accordingly, addiction can be considered as a moral-biological disease. It means that it can be dealt with through two approaches. Sometimes, in some people, ethical issues play a major role in its development and sometimes environmental issues take on an important role. The World Health Organization defines health which has four dimensions such as: physical, mental, social, spiritual. It seems that these four dimensions in relation to the treatment of addiction can be raised. So a mere concentration on biological field takes only one dimension of addition into account that is the physical aspect and consequently is an incomplete perspective. Accordingly, if we consider addiction only as a brain disease, we are on the wrong way. Although addiction can be considered as a multi-faceted disease that various factors such as social, family, psychological, biological and pharmacological parameters are involved in its genesis, the central role of ethics in its formation and development cannot be and should not be ignored.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, addiction is a moral disease, but health problems and manifestations can be among its consequences. This issue is the case with mainstream addiction, although it cannot be denied that there may be some physical ailments such as uncontrollable pain in advanced stages of cancer, and not the ethical problems, that lead to addiction. This means that in a minority of patients the underlying cause of addiction is biological problems rather than not moral issues.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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