

## Marijuana and E-Cigarette Adding New Challenges to Global Addiction Among Teenagers

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### ABSTRACT

The study is focused on marijuana and e-cigarettes as the challenges in global addiction. Marijuana and e-cigarettes are one of the most frequently consumed substances in today's generation. Addiction is nothing but dependency on something which cannot be controlled. As the generations are evolving we are exploring all aspects of the world and addiction is one of them. In the new generation addiction has become a huge part of our daily lives, addiction has many types, anyone can be addicted to anything. The present research is planned to study the new challenges adding to global addiction. To focus more on today's generation, the researcher has planned to take the age group ranging from 10-12 to 18-20 years. The data of the research is focused more on teenagers and the objectives of the research are proven as the data has been gathered to get the result. The result shows that most of the teenagers think that marijuana and e-cigarettes are comparatively less risky than other substances and products, then next objective states that teenagers use marijuana and e-cigarettes because they face some psychological, physical and social issues and another objective states that media has a huge influence on teenagers regarding their perception towards marijuana and e-cigarettes.

**Keywords:** *Marijuana, E-cigarette, Challenges, Addiction, Teenagers, Global*

According to the American Psychological Association, teenagers also known as adolescents are individuals between the age group that ranges from 10-12 to 18-20 years. This phase of teenage is considered essential in the overall development, because it is a very vulnerable period in which a teenager goes through mental, emotional, physical and social developmental changes. In this phase the teenagers develop their personality, try to find their identity and attempt to fit in. They seek freedom, want to explore the world all by themselves and make their own decisions. As the adolescents are still in the developing stage, it is difficult for them to make right decisions without proper supervision and can get influenced easily by their peers and external environment. There are various external factors which can easily influence the teenagers and one of the most dangerous factors is addiction. Addiction can affect the teenager's mental and physical development and can also lead to various disorders. Every country is trying to tackle addiction by establishing some laws regarding it. As we know world is developing in both positive and negative aspects and emerging new trends, similarly even addiction is evolving

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with new trends like vape and marijuana. The research is to study the new challenges in addiction in teenagers globally so that it might be possible to further investigate the views of the teenagers about addiction and its effects.

### ***Marijuana***

According to WHO (World Health Organization) and NIH (National Institute On Drug abuse), cannabis that is also known as marijuana is derived from the plant *cannabis sativa* which consists of a major drug called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Marijuana is referred in many different ways like weed, herb, pot, ganja, grass, bud, etc. It is actually a greenish-gray mixture of the dried flowers of the plant that is *cannabis sativa*. It is consumed in many different ways by individuals like putting marijuana in hand-rolled cigarettes called joints, in bongs (water pipes), in pipes or in blunts. In many countries marijuana is illegal and legalized in some countries. Marijuana can also be added in edible items like cookies, brownies and candies.

NHI (July 2020) also proposes that marijuana does have some side-effects after the consumption. Some individuals have pleasant experiences after consuming marijuana like feeling euphoric, pleasant, light headedness but some might feel the total opposite like panic, fear, anxiety or distrust. The amount of time the effects remain totally depend on how the marijuana is consumed, if the marijuana is eaten through some edible item then the effects may last for many hours but if it is smoked then the effects will last only for 1 to 3 hours. Marijuana consumption is observed as being frequently used by teenagers. At least 1 in 8 teenager consumes marijuana within the past year of the survey. As this stage that is teenage/adolescence is a very vulnerable stage where the teenager is still trying to fit in the standards of the society it is normal for him/her to face such challenges and get affected by it as the feeling of euphoria which can or cannot be felt by some, making marijuana quite addictive. Marijuana does have long term effects which are hazardous to one's health. It can cause respiratory issues, lung and breathing problems, suicidal thoughts, heart related issues, increases heart rate, vomiting, self-harm, lower intelligence, cannabis use disorder, etc.

### ***E-cigarette***

National Cancer Institute defines e-cigarettes as a device which runs on battery, act like a cigarette containing nicotine like solution with variety of flavors which are harmful for our health. Functioning of e-cigarettes is pretty easy because when it is inhaled in, the liquid which contains nicotine, flavoring and other components that contribute to the aerosol's creation is heated up, e-cigarettes create an aerosol. This aerosol is breathed in by users. When a user exhales into the air, this aerosol might also be inhaled by onlookers. E-cigarettes have various slang terms like vape, vape pens, e-cigs, mods, e-hookahs, tank systems or electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS). E-cigarette seem easy to carry around compared to cigarettes which has attracted many individuals. Even e-cigarette which sounded to be less harmful than cigarette is actually as harmful as other drugs.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (November 2022) proposes that e-cigarette aerosol contain comparatively less toxic chemicals than normal cigarettes but is harmful because it contains nicotine, heavy metals like lead, volatile organic compounds and cancer causing agents. When we talk about the users of the e-cigarettes, it was recorded that in 2022, 2.55 million middle and high school students in the United States used e-cigarettes with 3.3% (380,000) of middle school students and 14.1% (2.14 million) of high school students using them in preceding 30 days (Park Lee, Ren, et al. 2022). The advertisement done for e-cigarette focused on a targeted audience that are the adolescents, these

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advertisements are generally seen on social media platforms used generally by teenagers. From the packaging to the product, the marketing done according to the preferences/tastes of teenagers these days. These e-cigarettes come in different flavours to attract these adolescents to buy them. In one study, it was discovered that 78% of middle and high school pupils had seen at least one advertisement for vaping between 2014-2016 (Slekman J. 2019).

### ***Challenges***

Challenges are difficulties faced by individuals. In terms of teenagers, they face most challenges because they are still trying to figure themselves, the working of the world, others, their environment. They are just trying to fit while undergoing biological development which is one of the most difficult challenge. Teenagers can face a lot issues concerning body image, self -esteem, stress, bullying, cyber addiction, drinking, smoking, teen pregnancy and substance abuse. One of the most dangerous challenge is addiction which can lead teenager to develop disorders and developmental problems. Addiction can be seen in teenagers due to stress, anxiety, peer pressure, conformity or low self- esteem issues. If not properly supervised in this stage the teenager might go on the wrong way in life.

### ***Addiction***

Addiction is a need to do something that is difficult to control. It involves, alcohol abuse, smoking, substance abuse, social media addiction, self- harm, etc. there are various factors which can lead to addiction like environmental, genetical and developmental factors. It is very difficult to get rid of addiction due to long term usage which affects our functions like learning, judgement, decision-making, memory and behavior. Teens are suspected to get addicted easily compared to adults due to reasons like peer pressure, low self-esteem or bad parenting.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Maria and Bonnie (2015) have done a qualitative analysis on the adolescent's perceptions of risk and benefits of conventional cigarettes, e-cigarettes and marijuana. The keywords for the research were substance abuse, risk perceptions, tobacco, qualitative research, e-cigarettes. According to them perception of risks and benefits played huge role for health-related behavior that is to take decisions whether to use products like e-cigarettes. The information for the research was gathered from students using small group discussion. The research was conducted on 24 adolescents (9 females and 15 males) from Northern California participated in 6 small-group discussions. During the discussion when asked about cigarettes, the adolescents described cigarettes in a negative way and when asked whether they think e-cigarettes, marijuana are good or bad, they replied saying that there is nothing good but it can be used for relaxation, they were able to tell the benefits of marijuana and e-cigarettes easily compared to normal cigarettes.

According to the adolescents, marijuana and e-cigarettes had benefits as they can be used to get high, relieve stress or decrease pain. One student said that it's laughable when one smokes cigarette because everyone knows it's bad and it does not even get you high and many said that e-cigarettes are much better because there is no nicotine in them, they don't affect that much, they look nice, it's water vapor so it's good for you, the participants did not what to say about the risks of marijuana and e-cigarettes. Some students did know that e-cigarettes are as bad as normal cigarettes. Adolescents think in such a way because mostly such information is passed on social media which is a huge and common platform for teenagers where they spend most of their times where these products are sold through advertisements. Some adolescents also recalled some advertisements saying negative things

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about cigarettes but were not able to find any advertisements saying negative things about marijuana and e-cigarettes but heard that e-cigarettes were made to help individuals quit smoking. The researchers concluded that adolescents do know the risks of cigarettes but have been misled due to less information that e-cigarettes and marijuana are safer than cigarettes and have formed a positive perspective towards e-cigarettes and marijuana.

Joan, Joy, et.,al (2009) they conducted this research to understand how adolescents use marihuana for therapeutic reasons due to health issues and their beliefs about the risks and benefits of the therapeutic use of marijuana. This study was conducted on 63 adolescents who were regular users of marijuana and they analysed interviews with 20 youth who self-identified as using marijuana to relieve or manage health problems. The result was that teens used marijuana to get away with some feeling and health problems like anxiety, depression, stress, sleeping difficulties or any physical pain saying that no alternative was found. The teenagers did not really care about the risks that were involved using the marijuana and said that used it in moderate quantity. Most adolescents claim that they use marijuana not to feel high but to get relief from physical and psychological pain or use it for social or coping activities. It has been observed that adolescents who use marijuana suffer from low mental health, higher psychopathology, more psychosocial distress and stressful life events.

It is seen that marijuana was used to increase self-confidence, relieve tension and for it's calming effect. In this research it was observed that in total 72.5% of these youth were dependent on marijuana and 76% of the adolescents were reported to be facing some mental health issues. The reason that was given by the adolescents for using marijuana was because of health problems, unsupportive family, traumatic losses and difficulties at school. One of the adolescent said that when his mother was suffering with cancer, she took marijuana and it helped her to sleep properly. Two patterns in the usage of marijuana was seen – intermittent and chronic. Some claimed that marijuana is natural substance and is safer than other substances. Six participants reported that they used marijuana for depression. 12 teens reported that they took marijuana because of stress and anxiety. 9 teens reported to use marijuana for sleep issues. 3 teen reported to be using marijuana for concentration issues. 5 teens reported to be using marijuana for physical pain. The conclusion they got from this was that teenagers think that if they don't have access to medical facilities or the treatment is not working the only alternative left is usage of marijuana.

Shona, Heide, et.,al (2016) studied views of teenagers on the statement whether e-cigarettes were safer for teenagers or not. 16 focus groups were conducted across the UK. According to teenagers e-cigarettes were less harmful than normal cigarettes, they had less information about the ingredients in e-cigarettes, they saw e-cigarettes as attractive and fun and were interested in trying e-cigarettes after watching videos on YouTube. Many fear that e-cigarettes will be normalised as a modern approach to traditionally old cigarettes. 16 focus groups were conducted, 11 in Scotland and 5 in England. Number of participants that participated were 83 (44 males and 39 females). According to the participants their opinions were highly influenced by media, they agreed and said that e-cigarettes were beneficial for long term smokers and help them quit smoking. In most groups participants expressed little or no concern about risks of e-cigarettes. The conclusion they got from this research was, teenagers view normal cigarettes as traditional form and view e-cigarettes as a modern trend, they also support e-cigarettes because they think it's an alternative that will help adult smokers to stop smoking and the usage of e-cigarettes has been encouraged through social media.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Data was collected from secondary sources which was then collected globally through various websites and research papers available.

### *Sample*

In the present study, the data was collected through reliable sources on the internet. The age range for adolescents is 10-12 to 18-20. The data was collected globally.

### *Objective*

After reviewing the past research following objectives were formed:

- To study the perception of teenagers towards e-cigarettes and marijuana as less risky comparatively to other substances and products.
- To study the reasons for the usage of marijuana and e-cigarettes.
- To study media's role in marijuana and e-cigarettes.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

To justify the above statements appropriate data has been collected from the internet. According to the National Institutes Of Health and study conducted by Joan, Salome, et.,al (2021) vaping of marijuana and consumption of e-cigarettes has seen to be increased among teenagers. Teenagers can get easily influenced because they want to be the center of attention, to fit in, to be like their peers, to be cool by using e-cigarettes, marijuana and other substances and do anything to follow the new trend. In the research given by Maria and Bonnie (2015), it can be seen that many students think the e-cigarettes and marijuana are less risky because they don't contain nicotine and have lots of benefits like it can provide relaxation, relieve stress, lessen pain and have no side effects compared to normal cigarettes which are harmful to the body. Many teenagers use marijuana saying that it's natural and does not have any side effects on body but in reality both marijuana and e-cigarettes are harmful to our body as it can affect the working of our heart and respiratory system and it has also been advised by professionals to stop using e-cigarettes and marijuana.

Joan, Joy, et;al (2009) finding show that teenagers use marijuana mostly to deal with anxiety, stress, physical pain, depression, insomnia, better concentration, low mental health, psychosocial distress, stressful life events and social activities. In a stage like adolescence where the adolescent has to face challenges and come up with solutions for real problems and make their own decisions, it can become very stressful for them and can lead to anxiety, depression, physical pain, self-confidence and aggression. If in this situation there is no one to be there for them, they can get easily influenced to use e-cigarettes and marijuana like substances and products which can give them relaxation and slowly lead to addiction.

As we all know media is huge part in our life. We all are connected to each other through media, media has become an essential source which helps to be connected to the entire world. Among all the age groups, teenagers are the most active users of media and are easily influenced by the media. Maria and Bonnie (2015), it can be seen in their study some students have stated that they have seen advertisements showing negative impact of traditional cigarettes but never really saw any advertisement regarding marijuana and e-cigarettes. Shona, Heide, et.,al (2016), in their study students have stated that they were interested in trying e-cigarettes after watching videos on YouTube. Many teenagers are influenced to use marijuana and e-cigarettes as they see others using it on social media and making it a trend. Brian, Kevin, et.,al (2010) investigated media exposure and marijuana

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and alcohol use among adolescents where they have concluded that marijuana use was related to music exposure and that different media forms have huge influence on risky health related behaviors. According to CASM The Cannabis Advertising and Social Media (2019), has found that adolescents who have liked or follow marijuana marketing on social media were five times more likely to use marijuana over the past five years compared to those who did not.

### *Limitations*

1. This study is limited to age range between 10-12 to 18-20 years.
2. Study was only on adolescents.
3. Study was only on internet based information.
4. Study was limited to vape and marijuana.

## **CONCLUSION**

According to the above findings we can conclude that substances and products like marijuana and e-cigarettes can be considered to be a huge threat to our generation because their effects and risks are totally misunderstood by the teenagers and can actually risk their lives because of the less information regarding such products. Major factors that let teenagers be influenced to consume such products is poor guidance, no proper counselling, wrong representation or less information about marijuana and e-cigarettes by media, peer pressure and no supervision.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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