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Azmat, Hayat

University of Malakand KPK Pakistan

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Culture, Economics and Drugs Addiction

By

Azmat Hayat

Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics

University of Malakand Pakistan

www.uom.edu.pk

azmat583@yahoo.com / azmat@uom.edu.pk

Cell No: 00923028044312

Abstract

Drug use is one of the pressing issues facing humanity since time immemorial. Ground reality exhibits that there are linear association of drug use with violence, corruption, incest and numerous other immoral activities. Towards drugs addiction the policy approach of economists are based on confusion. As usual on one hand economists encourage the prohibition of drug use, while on the other hand another influential group of economists apply the philosophy of market economy. They advocate that all inebriating materials should be legalized. In the economic case towards drug use, one cannot draw a clear line whether prohibition or legalization will be the best policy approach. Christianity which is considered as one of the universal religion encourages the use of drugs through the rite of Eucharist, Sacred Meal, and Holy Communion. In contrast Islam prohibits every type of inebriating materials including alcohol as extremely harmful, which is confirmed by the finding of recent scientific research. In Islamic societies on one hand there is a strict prohibition on the production of drugs, while on the other hand through moral education they discourage the use of drugs.

Introduction:

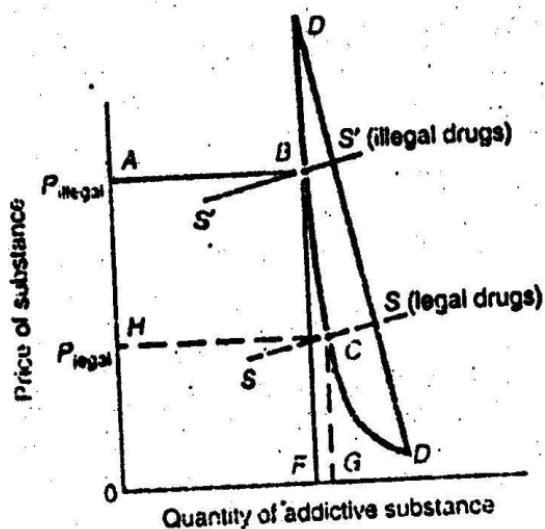
Addictive substance is one of critical problem facing humanity since time immemorial. An addictive substance can be defined as the one for which the desire to use depends considerably on previous consumptions. A widely used addictive substance includes heroin, cocaine, alcohol, and crack. To discourage the use of addictive substance as well as reduce their flows into their countries, many governments allocate and spent billions of dollars every year. Addictive substance has several adverse impacts. Addictive substances not only harm the users but also inflict costs and harms to others. In majority of the cases alcohol is the most widely used addictive substance affecting the users as well as the society. Increasing reports of road deaths as well as casualties linked to drunk driving have been registered and recorded throughout the globe. According to the World Health Organization report, due to drunk driving across the globe every year approximately 1.3 million are killed on roads. Drunk driving is also responsible for the injury of around 50 million people around the globe. Many people become disable for the rest of their life. In the least developed countries ninety per cent of the casualties occur due to drunk driving. The situation is expected to exacerbate further specifically in the least developing countries as majority of them record significant increases in car use.

Different countries and cultures have different customs as well as rules and regulations regarding addictive substance. The present study made an effort to highlight the solution provided by the contemporary Neoclassical Economic but also discussed and evaluated the philosophy behind the use of addictive substance in Christianity and in Islam. The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the economic case against drug use. Section 3 shows the

culture of addictive substance in Christianity. Section 4 discusses the philosophy behind the prohibition of addictive substance in Islam. Section 5 concludes and recommends policy solutions.

The Contemporary Economic Case against Drug Use:

The philosophy of contemporary capitalist economic system emerged in Britain during the eighteenth century. Adam Smith, David Ricardo and other liberal writers were considered as the founder of this capitalist economic system. These scholars propagated the philosophy of individualism and rational self interest based upon the doctrine of Laissez-faire, which translates as “leave us alone”. According to this doctrine even a parrot can become an economist if he learns the law of demand and supply. In other words this doctrine emphasized that government intervention in economic matters should be left to the interchange of supply and demand in the marketplace. In the philosophy of free-market economy, neither the consumers nor the producers are responsible for the production, utilization, and division and pricing. Many governments advocated this philosophy in the middle of nineteenth century up to the end of the nineteenth century. The economy of the United States as well as many Western European countries with draw from full laissez-faire at the closing decade of the nineteenth century. These countries then implemented a new economic system called “Welfare State” specifically after the decades following WWII. The philosophy of free market ideologies came again in 1980 due to the strong influence and support of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US president Ronald Reagan. This philosophy received further momentum due to the collapse of communism in former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989/90.



Like any other issue economists approach towards addictive substance is also based on two hands. On one hand as a policy approach, one group of economists advocates the philosophy of drug prohibition. They opined that addictive substance is highly price sensitive. Prohibition of addictive substance will either bring an upward shift of the supply curve or a downward shift of the demand curve. Many economists of this school of thoughts argued that legalization of drugs would decrease prices of addictive substances which will bring a drastic increase in the number of occasional users. This group of economists argued that prohibiting addictive substance will be the best policy approach for eradicating this important problem facing the humanity. On the other hand, another influential group of economists not only propagates but forcefully implements the philosophy of free market system. According to this approach, every type of addictive substance should be made legal for adults and regulated for purity and potency. Proponents of this approach say that the current war on drugs has been unsuccessful and the associated costs-including enlarged police forces, the

constructions of more prisons, an overburdened court system and untold human cost have increased markedly. In other words the overall costs of addictive substance to users to other people, and to the ravaged inner cities in which the trade takes place would be lower if government regulation were relaxed and the resources currently devoted to supply restrictions were instead put into treatment and counseling. To paraphrase the opinion of free markets ideologists, the legalization of every type of addictive substance will be a far more superior policy approach than the prohibition. Legalization of addictive substance might increase the number of addictive users, but this policy approach will also reduce the damaging impact on society through a decrease in robbery, theft, prostitution as well as on a number of other channels. Free market ideologist argued the negative externality created by prohibiting addictive substance to the entire society is much greater than its positive impact.

After having analyzed the different views of various economists regarding addictive substance, it is hard to draw a conclusion as to whether legalization is advantageous or disadvantageous.

Drug use in Christianity:

According to an estimate every 6th person around the globe is Christian. Drinking wine is a form of worship in Christianity, which is regularly held at the rite of Passover. Apart from Passover, this rite has other names, namely Eucharist, Sacred Meal, and Holy Communion. The rite of Passover ranks amongst the most important rituals of Christianity and it is celebrated in commemoration of the sacrifice of Jesus. One day before the alleged arrest of Jesus, follows:

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”.
(Mat. 26:26)

Luke adds Jesus thereafter said;

“Do this in remembrance of me”.

The rite of Passover is held in fulfillment of this order. The well known Christian Scholar Justin Martyr¹ explains the procedure of Passover, namely that there is a gathering every Sunday at Church. At the beginning some prayers and hymn are sung. Then the participants embrace each other and convey their good wishes. Bread and wine is then brought. The head of the gathering takes the bread and wine and makes prayers of the blessing to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All participants answer Amen. The Deacons of the Church then distribute the bread and wine among the participants.

In Christianity alcohol is one of the greatest blessing God ever bestowed on mankind, which can be proved from the following verses of bible,

“And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart” (Psalm 104:15).

“And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham *is* the father of Canaan. These *are* the three sons of Noah: and of

¹ Quoted by Burkitt, pp. 165-167

them was the whole earth overspread. And Noah began *to be* an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.”(GEN 9:18)

Evidence of Lot’s daughter drinking wine can be confirmed from the following verse of Bible,

“And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters. And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father *is* old, and *there is* not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night: and the firstborn went in, and lay with her father; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. And it came to pass on the morrow, that the firstborn said unto the younger, Behold, I lay yesternight with my father: let us make him drink wine this night also; and go thou in, *and* lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the younger arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same *is* the father of the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Ben-ammi: the same *is* the father of the children of Ammon unto this day.” (Gen 19:30)

There is no reference in Mark and Matthew to an order by Jesus directing that this act be made a perpetual rite. Paul was a first to render it a ritual (I Cor 11:24), and Luke followed suit because he was a student of Paul. Christian theologians have conceded this. Hence FC Burkitt says:

“The account of Last Supper in Mark does not indicate that this act must be celebrated in future; but St. Paul when referring to the act attribute it Jesus and adds the following sentence, ‘Do this in remembrance of me.’”

Drug use in Islam:

In contrast to the prevailing western thinker’s and scientists, drug is strictly prohibited in Islam. Islam provides logical and cogent reasons for prohibiting drugs. Contemporary western thinker’s and scientists regarded human as having no special status apart from the rest of other creatures. Among them, prominent were Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Satre, B.F. Skinner and Konrad Lorenz. All of them opined that “existence and human life are both unintentional and that humanity is the probable product of the development of evolution. They also stressed that matter is the essential element of the universe; and therefore human mind-sets and way of behaving are the consequences of human biological activities.” One common thing among all these thinker’s and scientists was the rejection of the concept that the Universe was created with a purpose and hence the exclusion of religion from all spheres and activities of life. But the ghostly aspirations of dreams always convinced the humanity that there was more to man that met the bodily eye. Dream is a type of situation where any human being could experience anything unimaginable beyond his control.

In Quran (Muslim Holiest Book) dreams is mentioned in the following words.

"It is God that takes the souls at death, and those that die not during their sleep. He keeps that (soul) for which He hath ordained death and dismisseth the rest till an appointed term. Verily in this are signs for those who reflect." [Quran 39:42]

In dreams people are given an indication of the future events and happenings which are either blessings or curses. In the philosophy of Islam death of the bodily life is not the end of human existence. It is believed that bodily life in this world is unconscious to the divine and spiritual world, while at the time of death is the reawakening to the divine and spiritual world. As a proof and justification for the above argument Islamic philosophers give the example of nightly sleep. Sleep on one hand perform the function of rest to our human physical life, but on the other hand gave an example and taste of death. In Islamic philosophy Day of Resurrection/Judgment of human deeds and action is nothing more than the reawakening from sleep. In computer similarity human Soul/Mind is assumed as software while human body as hardware. Therefore for either rewarding or punishing human deeds or actions, this Software/Soul/Mind is then transformed to some other means on the Day of Resurrection/ Day of Result Declaration.

In Quran Soul/Spirit is mentioned in the following words,

“They put you questions about Ar-Ruh (*the Spirit*). Tell them: "The Spirit is at my Lord's command and I am not given any knowledge of it but a little." [Quran 17:85]

“Soon shall We show them Our signs in the universe and in their own souls, until it becomes clear to them that this Qur’an is indeed the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a witness over everything”? [Quran 41;53]

Soul is something which cannot be quantified nor distributed nor approximated. No one knows the exact place of soul in human body. Only soul has the capacity of knowing the true purpose of life on this earth. The soul is a supernatural thing which cannot be explained through any material arguments and reasoning.

“No one knows the forces of your Lord except Himself, and this (*Qur'an*) is nothing but a reminder to mankind. [Quran 74:31]

According to the philosophy of Islam life on this earth is the test of our freedom and abilities. God tests our virtue and faith, by many things, in other words every sensible human being is endowed with the habits of animals, Devils and Angels. The activities and habits of animals are to eating, drinking and doing incest...and increasing their offspring. The task and objectives of devils were to create and further violence and corruption among the people, while the activities of Angels were to seek the obedience and beauty of God. According to the philosophy of Islam, human being is successful only if he behaves like Angels, while the attitudes and behavior of devils and animals are considered as sin. A question arises if humans have the characteristics of Animals, Devils and Angels, then why they get success and salvation by behaving only like angels and not like animals and devils? According to the philosophy of Islam, human being is the noblest and best among all creatures. Human being is endowed with the wisdom to differentiate between sin and virtue. In other words this world is a place for test

and this test requires some people to be fortunate and some to be unfortunate. Some are created with wealth and power, while some are created as weak and poor. The fortunate and unfortunate are both tested for tolerance and thankfulness to God (Allah) and how they use this freedom for him and society. In short, every human being is tested according to their own circumstance. On the Day of Judgment God will ask how you utilize your freedom. Did you behaved like Animals, Devils or Angels? Quran (Muslim Holiest Book) mention this reality in the following words,

“Glorious is the One in whose hand is the Kingdom (of the whole universe), and He is powerful over everything, the One who created death and life, so that He may test you as to which of you is better in his deeds. And He is the All-Mighty, the Most-Forgiving”. [Quran 67:3]

Among the testing materials addictive substance is one of them, in which prominent and widely used are alcoholic drinks, heroin and cocaine. Like Christian, Jews also regards alcoholic drinks as Sacred and Holly. Alcoholic drinks serve as an essential part in religious festivals among the Jews. In Judaism it is believed that alcoholic drinks gladden the heart of men, therefore alcoholic substance is treated as one of the essential component in festival meal. In the Jewish religious festivals as well as on the eve of Sabbath, holiness and sacredness of the day is mentioned before the use of alcoholic substances. To make the festival holy in Judaism, special blessings for wine are recited before the meal on the eve of Sabbath or on a holiday. The importance of wine among the Jews as an essential food item can be verified and confirmed from the fact that in the case of

fire on the day of Sabbath, the presence of three necessities must be made obligatory, which includes a basket of loaves, a cake made from preserved figs and a jar of wine. (EBi. C. 15690) See also P.II, pp. 438, 440.

Quran mention this reality in the following words;

“O you who believe! Wine and gambling and stone altars and divining arrows are only an abomination, a handiwork of Satan/Devil; so shun it, that haply you may thrive”. [Quran 5:90]

Ground reality exhibits that drug addicts are always troublemakers among the society. Recent data revealed that around 25 to 85 percent of all wrongdoers are drunkards (JE. I.P. 333). Universally it is proved and confirmed that there are linear association between excessive drinking and breaking and infringement of the ethical law among the society. Alcoholic substances belong to a group of toxic chemicals, whose nutritional value is of no utility in practical dietetics. In fact it is one of the misleading arguments that use of alcoholic substance has a motivating and stimulating impact. Alcoholic drinks when used in medium quantity have a tranquilizing impact, while its use in excess has a fatal and venomous impact. That's why alcoholic substances as a drink and cocktail are unsafe for bodily processes. Users of addictive substances are not only financially corrupt, but also become one of the greatest sources of creating negative externality among the general public. (Dastur, op. cit., PP. 108-109). In summary Quran express this reality in the following sentence.

“Satan only seeks to breed enmity and spite among you by means of wine and gambling and would keep you from the remembrance of Allah/God and from prayer; will you not then desist”? [Quran 5:91]

From the above discussion it is evident that only Islam became successful in tackling the pressing issue of addictive substances. In Islamic societies, on one hand there is a strict prohibition on the production of addictive substance, while on the other hand through moral education they discourage their uses.

Conclusion:

According to the 2005 World Health Organization report, without social harm caused to society alcohol ranks fourth among 20 leading risk factors for death and disability globally, while the finding of more recent scientific study of “Lancet”, disclosed that alcohol is more harmful than heroin or crack, when the overall damages to the individual and society are incorporated.

About the policy prescription provided by economists, George Bernard Shaw famously said that, “If all economists were laid end to end, they would not reach a conclusion”. Besides numerous examples the economic case of drug addiction is one of them where one cannot draw a clear line whether drug prohibition is good or drug legalization will be a better policy approach. On one hand economist emphasis that anything which is profitable should be produced without any intervention in the market. While on the other hand economists accepts that market fails to allocate the resources efficiently in case of de-merits goods like intoxicants materials. The annual expenditures on alcohol are about \$30

billion, while the annual estimates for illegal drugs are approximately \$20 to \$ 50 billion.

Similarly in Christianity drinking wine is a form of worship, which is regularly held at the rite of Passover/Eucharist/Sacred Meal/Holy Communion. The rite of Passover ranks amongst the most important rituals of Christianity. Bible (Christian's Holy book) is divided into two major parts, The Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament was written mostly by Paul, a Jew who converted to Christianity and later on became the leading explainer of the Christian faith. Moreover the Four Gospels in Bible which describe the life and philosophy of Jesus Christ, there are many other Gospels which are available until today. These Books/Gospels which could have become part of the Bible, and indeed were and are accepted by some Christians, are rejected by the majority of the elders of the Church. These controversial Gospels are known as Apocrypha, a Greek word which means concealed but is now wrongly understood as meaning "unauthentic, false". The publicly and legitimately accepted books are called "Canonical", which is regarded as the true word of God. Observing the ground realities about the harmful effect of inebriating materials and reading the verses in Holy Bible about drug use one start suspecting whether these verses also represents the true word of God or Apocrypha?

In sharp contrast to the conventional economics and Christianity, Islam regards every intoxicant as alcohol and there is strict prohibition on the use of every type of alcoholic material. In Islamic societies, on one hand there is a strict prohibition on the production of addictive substances, while on the other hand through moral education they discourage their uses. Islam considers addictive substances as the mother of all sins. It is a universal fact that hatred and enmity has

linear association with intoxicants and gambling. No one can deny the fact that the use of inebriating materials disrupts the whole social setup. Addictive substances continue to cost countless damage and destruction to humanity around the globe.

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