

SOCIAL CHANGE

ASSIGNMENT

In several South African communities, ever growing numbers of people are using the drug Nyaope, which is severely destructive of their health and well-being.

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Contents

1.INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND EPIDEMIOLOGY OF DRUG USE	3
3. SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.....	5
4. ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE RELEVANT TO NYAOPE USE	5
4.1 Identity.....	5
4.2 Level	5
4.3 Rate	6
4.4 Magnitude.....	6
4.5 Duration.....	6
4.6 Planned or unplanned.....	6
5. CAUSES OF SOCIAL CHANGES	6
5.1 Technology	7
5.2 Ideology and Politics	8
5.3 Competition.....	9
5.6 Structural strain.....	9
7. STIMULANTS AND BARRIERS TO CHANGE	10
7.1 Social stimulants.....	10
7.1.1 Desire for prestige.....	10
7.1.2 Contact.....	10
7.1.3 Friendship obligations.....	11
7.1.4 Problem of fit.....	11
7.2 Psychological stimulants	11
7.2.1 Motivations to change an perceived needs.....	11
7.2.2 Personal influence.....	11
7.3 Cultural stimulants	12
7.3.1 Cultural integration	12
7.4 Economic stimulants	13
7.4.1 Cost	13
7.5 Social Barriers.....	13
7.5.1 Authority.....	13
7.6 Psychological barriers.....	13
7.6.1 Habit.....	13
7.6.2 Ignorance.....	14

7.7 Economic barriers.....	14
7.7.1 Cost	14
8. CONCLUSION	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	16

1.INTRODUCTION

Social change differs fundamentally from individual change in that its causes and consequences are always social. Change is a continuous process present in all societies and therefore universal. Prediction in social change is uncertain because there is no inherent law of social change and the process does not remain uniform (Kishor, 2015:8-14).

Drug use echoes the social changes taking place in society and may change along with the changes that are taking place in society. People adapt in order to cope with the changes in society. However, when they cannot cope they withdraw or escape and in this case, escape through the use of the drug known Nyaope (Krejci, 2016:1).

Nyaope is a drug that first materialized in 2000 in the Pretoria townships. Due to the fact that it is made up of a brew of substances – including illegal substances such as cannabis and heroin and also includes elements of rat poison and ARV's – it had not been classified legally as an illegal substance, and therefore created a loophole in the Drugs and Trafficking Act, essentially allowing users and dealers free access and use (Adrian, 2014).

It is presented as a white power which is smoked with cannabis and is highly addictive and destructive to the health and well-being of the users. The loop hole in the Drugs and Trafficking Act made the exploitation of its use and trade easy.

It has since been classified and it is now illegal to possess any form of Nyaope or trade in it (Adrian, 2014). The trail of destruction has however not been eradicated and neither has the trend towards the increased use of Nyaope as a drug of choice changed.

In the following assignment, I will be analysing the trend in the increased use of Nyaope and its destructive effects through the social change theory.

2.DEFINITION OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND EPIDEMIOLOGY OF DRUG USE

When sociologists refer to a variation in behaviour patterns or even cultural values and norms which are affected over time, they talk about social change – such as the increase in Nyaope use over the past few years. These changes yield social

consequences – such as the destruction that is accompanied by the use of Nyaope (Cliffsnotes, 2016).

Sociologists recognise the importance of social movements in bringing about social change. One such movement was the investigation into the increased use of Nyaope and the social consequences this entailed. The social changes that were effected from the investigation can be seen in the changes made to the Drugs and Trafficking act which now renders the use of or trade in Nyaope illegal. In an attempt to understand the essence of social change, sociologists look for patterns and causes of change as well as looking at reasons for resistance to change – and propose these as theories to explain social change (Cliffsnotes, 2016). The pattern of increased Nyaope use has brought with it an increase in violent crime (Department of community safety, 2014:4). However, the roots of this behaviour are much deeper and require further investigation.

Epidemiology studies the distribution of health problems in populations as well as describes the stages of the health problem (Sloboda, 2002:2). The epidemiology of drug use has customarily focused on classifying risk factors of the individual (predisposition to addiction), the family (dysfunctional abusive homes), the neighbourhood (Pretoria townships – the origin of Nyaope use) and society (high unemployment/poverty) as realms of influence (Compton *et al.*, 2005:1494-1502). The Department of Community Safety (2016:8-11) attributes the increase in Nyaope use to amongst others:

- Peer pressure
- Curiosity factor
- Environmental factors
- Easy access of drugs
- Socio economic factors such as the employment of the parents.

Many of these factors give rise to environments where the use of and trade in Nyaope are facilitated and promoted.

3. SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Society has an effect on the people living within that society as well as on their behaviour. Human behaviour (using Nyaope) and its association to society (destruction and health dangers) as a whole, looks for links between the behaviour of the individual within the society and the structures of the society in which they live (Rebach & Bruhn, 1991:5).

The use of drugs affects more than just the person using them. According to the Department of community safety (2016:4) 60% of crimes in South Africa have substance abuse as a denominator and Nyaope users form a significant portion of these drug users. The use of the drug has also lead to perpetrators being more violent with the victims.

Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) in conjunction with social scientists, have over the last decade acknowledged the link between Nyaope use and crime, school drop-out as well as rapes and broken family relations. These underlying social ills influence the spread and use of Nyaope (Department of community safety, 2014:4).

South African is faced with many social challenges, one being the proliferation of Nyaope as a drug of choice among thousands of youth within it's borders.

4. ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE RELEVANT TO NYAOPE USE

In order for police, sociologists and health care workers to make informed decisions regarding the health problem on drug use (Nyaope), sufficient information regarding the trends over time, intensity and duration of the drug problem need to be fully understood. Only then can appropriate designs for intervention take place (Rossi, 2002:33).

4.1 Identity

Understanding what is changing is vital if we are to understand the how and why it is changing (Vago, 2003:5). In this case the identified change is the increase in the number of persons using Nyaope.

4.2 Level

According to the South African news agency (2013) the typical age of the Nyaope users is between 13 to 19 years, and the Department of community safety (2014:7)

report the typical onset age as 15 to 29 years. Therefore the change is happening at a group level – early adolescents to late twenties.

4.3 Rate

According to the Department of community safety (2014:4), the use of drugs between 2003 and 2011 has gone up by 192% and between 2012/2013 by 13.5%. Nyaope has been identified as a major contributor. Therefore the rate of change is fast.

4.4 Magnitude

Changes which are of a revolutionary magnitude involve the comprehensive substitution of behaviour (Vago, 2003:6). The Department of community safety (2014:4) states that Nyaope is fast becoming the drug of choice. Therefore the magnitude of the increased use of Nyaope is revolutionary as the choice of drug is changing fundamentally.

4.5 Duration

Drugs, like fashion and music are an ever changing culture. (Lohmann, 2016). Over the decades, the use of cannabis and cocaine enjoyed popularity as the drug of choice. Now the use of Nyaope is considered the drug of choice. The use of Nyaope has been recorded since 2000 and is still on the increase (Department of community and safety, 2014:4). The duration can therefore be explained as temporal.

4.6 Planned or unplanned

Government intended positive social changes with the change in political ideology in 1994. Government intended to afford housing to everyone as well as proper access to basic rights such as running water and employment. However, this did not materialise due to various factors such as population numbers, fiscal constraints and integration into the global economic market. The increased use of Nyaope is therefore an unplanned consequence of governments efforts to effect positive social change.

5. CAUSES OF SOCIAL CHANGES

In sociological literature, various factors are considered important in that they generate changes in society. These are :

- Technology
- Ideology
- Competition
- Conflict
- Politics
- Economic factors
- Structural strain (Vago, 2003:11).

5.1 Technology

Technology can best be described as the application of scientific knowledge to best serve human requirements, evolving at a very fast pace. There are two main sources for technology and that is:

- a) discovery
- b) invention (Mondal, 2016:19-20).

One of the most widely used technological inventions is the Cell phone. Cell phones have become a technological tool with which information is shared widely and fast, particularly with teenagers who use the cell phone as a status symbol and new age addiction (Mountjoy, 2014:1). Drug dealers in particular use cell phones as a means to communicate their whereabouts and next drug drop off (Smith, 2014:1). This makes for a perfect platform for drug dealers to let their “clients” know where to meet them in order to get their next fix in the townships. Young teenagers in the townships may use cell phones to communicate with each other and the dealers to acquire their next fix of Nyaope.

Prior to the cell phone, information regarding the drug dealer and the drop off venue would not have spread at the speed with which it does with the cell phone. Technology has effectively changed the pace in which drugs can be distributed and marketed as well as the magnitude of users it can reach with a single text.

The rapid advancements of technology are also attributed to the rapid rate of globalisation. Globalisation is one of the key factors for the easy movement of illicit drugs across borders and to vast numbers of people (Shiner, 2009:159). This is evident with the ease of access that the Nyaope users have to get ingredients such as heroin for the brew.

Technology is also one of the reasons that social relations have become rather superficial and selfish (Mondal, 2016:21). This is partly attributed to the fact that man is judged by what he has rather than what he is. This affects changes in cultures and norms as seen by the changes in the family structure and function as a result of technology (Mondal, 2016:23). Teenagers are left to their own devices in the townships while the parents are out working. With no one to supervise them, the teenagers are free to engage with whom they please and in what they please – and in this case it is the use of drugs – Nyaope.

5.2 Ideology and Politics

An ideology denotes a multifaceted belief system which explains political and social measures and relationships. It fundamentally underlies political discourse and actions (Vago, 2003:15). Townships are products of economic and socio-political ideologies. With the shift from an apartheid regime to a democratic regime, housing became a fundamental right for all. The townships became the hub for the housing projects and were subject to in-migration where many people flocked to the townships (Mondal, 2016:11). This meant that many people were living in very close proximity in demarcated areas. This gave rise to a decrease in the standard of living as well as an increase in juvenile delinquency (Mondal, 2016:12). According to Shiner (2014:3), recreational drug use is typical in the context of a hedonistic lifestyle such as found in the heavily concentrated lifestyles of adolescents in early stages of transition into adulthood. This made it easy for the adolescents and late adolescents to socialise in vast numbers and to start a culture of Nyaope use.

South Africa's transformation also saw changes taking place in the rapid acceleration to integrate South Africa into the global economy which has resulted in an increase in unemployment and deepening inequalities (Chopra & Sanders, 2004:153).

The inequalities as a result of the change in political ideology saw the rise of communities adopting unhealthy lifestyles which included the use of drugs (Chopra & Sanders, 2004:160). Given the unemployment factor, the cheaper the drug, the more the drug user will buy. Nyaope, as a brew of heroin and various other substances was by far cheaper than pure heroin or cannabis and therefore became a drug of choice.

5.3 Competition

According to Vago (2003:19), competition arises as a result of scarce goods and services which are universally desired. In a township, where poverty and unemployment are major financial factors, the competition between drug suppliers for drug sale is high (Department of community safety, 2014:10). Nyaope, a brew of heroin and cannabis diluted with cheaper additives becomes more financially viable as there is more to sell because of the additives which are relatively cheap. The cheaper the fix, the more will be sold (Department of community safety, 2014:10). This is where the competition for profit is identified in a capitalist society (Vago, 2003:9). The brew affords the drug dealer a larger yield, which is cheaper and that increases their profit margin but simultaneously causes serious damage to the well-being and health of the users as a result of the poisonous additives.

5.6 Structural strain

A single event may cause social change (change in political ideology) but the norm is that it is associated with more than one cause – political ideology coupled with demographics. Social change produces a chain reaction because society is inter-related and interdependent (Kishor, 2015:13). The efforts of government to provide housing to all its people, lead to an influx of people in confined areas which created structural strain.

When individuals experience strain such as the inability to achieve culturally valued goods, sociologists speak of structural strain (Crossman, 2017). When analysing the effects of the political and social changes that have taken place in South Africa since the abolishment of apartheid, it is clear that the level of increased unemployment and poverty experienced by the youth in the townships is compounded by the massive influx of people to the townships. This has caused strain in that they are unable to achieve culturally valued goods such as work, recreation or good marks at school - often dropping out (Department of community safety, 2014:10). It was expected with the transition from an apartheid ideology to a democratic society that the change would be for the better. This has resulted in the youth in these townships resorting to criminal activities such as using drugs (Nyaope) as a means of coping (Department of community safety, 2014:10).

7. STIMULANTS AND BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Society, mostly dictates whether change will be accepted or rejected based on its structure of interdependent systems. Where the system is highly integrated change is difficult and costly. The less integrated the system is, where work and play and family for example do not depend on each other, the easier and more frequently change will occur (Vago, 2003:238).

7.1 Social stimulants

Whether fast or slow, societies are constantly changing and are exposed to a number of factors which influence the rate at which change is facilitated and accepted (Vago, 2003:234).

7.1.1 Desire for prestige

It is known that in every society there are behaviours and activities which are imitated because they deliberate prestige and status (Vago, 2003:234). The social learning theory as postulated by Bandura (cited by the Department of community safety, 2014:6) states that people learn behaviours by watching (amongst others) their peers. Many of the youth in the townships have indicated that they started using Nyaope after they watched their peers using it, looking cool and appealing with no consequences (Department of community safety, 2014:6). The prestige of looking cool is desirable and therefore a stimulant for the perpetuation of the increase in Nyaope use.

7.1.2 Contact

Literature suggests that change can occur when contact between different societies occurs (Vago, 2003:235). With the drug dealers getting the township Nyaope users to sell drugs in other places, the use of Nyaope has filtered into the more affluent societies (Department of community safety, 2014:11). This is attributed to parents who are working demanding careers and who compensate their lack of time with their children by giving them copious amounts of money. In certain instances these children use the money for drugs such as Nyaope. The contact between the township Nyaope user filters through to the more affluent city children and is therefore a stimulant for the perpetuation of Nyaope use.

7.1.3 Friendship obligations

Adolescents are at a very impressionable and vulnerable stage of development. The need to fit in with friends is very important to them. Research indicates that most of the Nyaope users started using due to peer pressure. (Department of community safety, 2014:9). This also applies to the relationships that the dealers form with the users in that they get the users to push the drug for them. The user feels obligated to push the drug for the dealer and this perpetuates and increases the use of Nyaope.

7.1.4 Problem of fit

According to Vago (2003:237), accepting a change (moving from drugs such as heroin to Nyaope) is best enabled when it can be combined into the existing alignment of the culture. Nyaope found the perfect fit with the cash strapped youth of the overpopulated townships. Drugs are a means of escape for the frustrated youth. Nyaope is cheap and readily available. The transition from pure heroin to a brew of heroin and additives is easy.

7.2 Psychological stimulants

Psychological factors play an important role when considering or rejecting new opportunities (Vago, 2003:239).

7.2.1 Motivations to change an perceived needs

Motivation can be described as goal-directed behaviour assimilated through experience by learning – a way of gratifying needs and desires. Needs are subject to what people of a culture feel they need at a point in time (Vago, 2003:239-241). In the townships where the majority of Nyaope users are found, there is a perceived need to escape the bleak reality of daily life which is stained with economic hardship and poverty. Watching peers use Nyaope and how it makes them look “cool ” stimulates the use of Nyaope. It becomes a perceived need because of how it makes them feel and how they perceive those that use it as cool. The motivation is therefore strong to use Nyaope to also be perceived as cool.

7.2.2 Personal influence

According to Vago (2003:243) personal influence pertains to how interpersonal communication influences a person’s attitude and behaviour. Herbert C. Kelman (cited in Vago, 2003:243) postulates that the process through which an individual

responds to personal influence comprises of compliance, identification and internalisation. Youth in the townships start using Nyaope as a result of influence from their peers in the hope that they will achieve favourable reactions from the other people – such as acceptance into the “Nyaope using” group. This is deemed a gratification social effect and not because Nyaope has actual benefits but for the “escape” it temporarily allows.

Users identify with each other and imitate behaviour from the people they learn to use the drug from. This ensures that the relationship is maintained with the other users (Vago, 2003:243). Drugs destroy family relationships as well as social relationships and identifying with a fellow user is important and necessary as contact is often lost with primary families through the use of drugs.

Once the Nyaope user has become indoctrinated into the culture of drug use and accepted the use as part of their value system, it is deemed to be internalised.

7.3 Cultural stimulants

Beliefs, attitudes and rules pertaining to how to behave which are shared by members of a society is known as culture (Vago, 2003:244). These beliefs and attitudes determine what changes will be accepted or rejected by members of a society.

7.3.1 Cultural integration

According to Vago (2003:246) societies that are not well integrated suffer high levels of conflict, confusion and social unrest – all of which provide a platform for acceptance of change.

The abolishment of apartheid and the massive influx to the townships in the hope of getting a RDP house left many disillusioned. This led to unrest over service delivery and unemployment (Burger, 2009). The unrest and the instability, coupled with unemployment and financial discord created a perfect platform for the youth to adopt the use of Nyaope as the new drug of choice. It was not only cheap but easily available too. The majority users come from the townships and therefore form their own culture of Nyaope use.

7.4 Economic stimulants

Evidence suggests that economic gain is a strong stimulant for change (Vago, 2003:247).

7.4.1 Cost

Generally, the poor resist change due to the fact that they cannot afford it (Vago, 2003:248). However, with the cost of Nyaope being much cheaper than the traditional fix of Heroin or Cannabis, cost became a stimulant for change towards the use of Nyaope. The dealers also push the product harder by getting the users to sell in diverse areas because the yield is so profitable as a result of the cheap additives to the drug. The more additives, the larger the yield, the greater the profit.

7.5 Social Barriers

7.5.1 Authority

With legislation changes which have criminalised the use of or trade in Nyaope, police have also increased their sting operations to eradicate the use of Nyaope. The police have a larger visible force investigating the use of Nyaope as well as brought in the use of canines to sniff for the drugs such as heroin and cannabis which make up the brew Nyaope (Department of community safety, 2014:15). The increased presence of police brings with it the increased possibility of being caught and incarcerated. This acts as a barrier to partaking in the use of Nyaope or trading in it.

7.6 Psychological barriers

7.6.1 Habit

Vago (2003:259) states that once a behaviour or action becomes a habit, it is often deemed satisfying to the individual. That makes it very difficult to break the habit.

Nyaope users get hooked after just a single use. Their cycle is perpetuated by the fact that withdrawal symptoms are so severe that they need to keep feeding the habit in order to avoid the negative withdrawal symptoms. Breaking the habit becomes very difficult and therefore affecting a change to stop using Nyaope very difficult.

7.6.2 Ignorance

Ignorance, a product of cognitive impairment, coupled with fear is a factor associated with resistance to change (Vago, 2003:260).

Many if not all of the Nyaope users are school drop outs with bleak prospects because of their addiction. To them, the world starts and ends with the next fix. They are therefore not well educated in the dangers of Nyaope due to its dangerous mixture of ingredients such as rat poison. Using drugs is an accepted behaviour in the township and with Nyaope being cheap and easily obtainable, it becomes the drug of choice irrespective of the very real dangers to health and well-being that it poses. Their ignorance to the very real dangers of using the poisonous brew makes the efforts to get them to change their habit futile.

7.7 Economic barriers

7.7.1 Cost

Nyaope as a cheap alternative to pure heroin and cannabis poses both a financial gain for the dealer as well as an affordable option for the user. The dealer will not easily distance himself from his source of income, especially in the dwindling economic climate as found in South Africa. For the user, the idea of having to pay more for a fix is unthinkable. His journey to obtain money for a fix is one of crime and exposure to arrest with each venture. The less he needs to expose himself to being caught to get his fix, and the more he can buy of his fix with a single criminal deed, the less inclined he will be to stop using Nyaope. The economic advantages make it difficult to change the use of Nyaope.

8. CONCLUSION

Social change is a constant in all societies. A comprehensive understanding of the components of social change is vital if we are to explain and manage change (Vago, 2003:39).

There are many factors which promote and inhibit change as well as those that seek to maintain status quo (Vago, 2003:272).

Nyaope use has a fast rate of change and is most prevalent in the early to late adolescent population group of the townships. Technology, with particular reference to the cell phone has led to the fast pace for the movement of the drug from the dealer to the user through a single phone call or message.

Nyaope originated in the Pretoria townships as a result of a change in political ideology and the accompanying social strain. It brought with it an increase in violence in the crimes committed by the Nyaope users. The dangerous mixture of substances included in a Nyaope fix, of which some are rat poison, ARV's, heroin and cannabis result in extremely negative effects on the health and well-being of the user.

Drugs represent a form of escape from the harsh reality of the poverty stricken townships riddled with unemployment. Due to the fact that Nyaope is very cheap and very easy to obtain, it makes sense that the youth will opt for the drug rather than the more expensive and harder to obtain drugs such as heroin.

Economics is a great motivator, driver and status quo container in the perpetuation and choice of Nyaope as a drug. Economically, the user finds the drug feasible and will therefore use it rather than pay for a more expensive drug. The dealers, because of the increase in yield with the added ingredients, are able to make a bigger profit on each fix sold. This made the change to Nyaope as a preferred drug easy and also keeps the change static and difficult to change.

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