

Background

War on drugs is a government-led initiative that's aim is to stop illegal drug use, distribution, possession, and trade by increasing and enforcing penalties and punishments for offenders. The ongoing debate is whether or not these punishments in the form of criminalization of substance abusers should be replaced with more beneficial alternatives such as health care and treatment options.

The war on drugs has been fought for decades, and yet, there still hasn't been a solid solution that prevents the usage and supply of drugs worldwide. The UNODC: United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime has established several impacts and consequences of this. Such as the criminalization and penalization of drug abusers.

The significant debate is currently about whether the outcome of certain substance usage is promoting a healthier and safer society. For members of the United Nations, this debate brings out conflicting priorities such as the need to reduce the damage of drug-based war, provide for better outcomes of drug policies that need to also be better implemented to avoid war on drugs, and maintain the parameters of drug usage conventions. Moreover, the political and economic investments need to be taken into consideration worldwide.

The enforcement of criminalization of substance abusers, distributors and holders have caused a lot of controversies. Enforcing laws regarding criminalization has proven to negatively impact individuals and family's lives, and in certain countries such as the United States, this even discriminates against people of color, for potentially getting harsher and more significant punishments. In the United States alone, "Over 1.6 million people are arrested, prosecuted, incarcerated, placed under criminal justice supervision and/or deported each year on a drug law violation." Overall, the institutionalization and criminalization undermines and weakens public health and well-being, and substance abusers never get the healthcare they require.

Created by **Aanya Kaushal.**

Extreme measures are taken all over the world even today for drug abusers. Death penalties remain the most extreme form of punishment. Although most countries first world nations have abolished capital punishment as a law or a form of practice. Exceptions to this are China, India, Japan, South Korea, and most Islamic states. Of course, as well as the United States, which remains the only Western country that still currently uses the death penalty.

Treatment methods that can help enforce a healthier and safer lifestyle and a way out of substance abuse. For instance, rehabilitation is the process of medical therapy and treatment for the abuse and dependent on substances such as alcohol and other prescription drugs. The goal of treatment programs and health care systems such as rehabilitation is to allow patients to confront their substance addiction problem and end the drug usage completely, to avoid long term consequences in the form of financial, social, and physical, mental, and emotional damages. Rehabilitation although is not the only form of healthcare treatment offered. Governments are responsible to ensure that a variety of treatment options are available and accessible for all people.

Some potential factors and questions we must consider are:

- Should the federal and state government decriminalize the personal use, distribution, and possession of substances?
- To what extent does the measure of healthcare as a solution to substance abuse reach? in other words, how much health care is owed to substance abusers?
- How extreme should penalizations and punishments be taken in severe cases of drug usage?
- What are the long term benefits of replacing criminalization and punishment with the offer of health care and treatment?

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Sources

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