

DRUG EVIL IN VIETNAM: SITUATION AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Drug has been a problem of international concern. Since the first International conference on opium combat held in Shanghai, China in 1909, the international community has experienced more than 100 years of drug prevention efforts. How is the situation of drug evil and drug addict situation in Vietnam? What are the regulations of Government of Vietnam in drug prevention activities? The author analyzes the causes of drug addiction, the consequences of drug evils in Vietnam. Based on that, propose solutions to improve the efficiency of drug suppression.

Keywords: Drug, drug evil, drug addiction, drug prevention

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1. INTRODUCTION

Drug is one of the huge disasters that the human kind has been encountered; it has been a serious problem, haunting the community and society. In 1988, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued the definition: "Psychoactive is used to describe any chemical substance that affects mood, perception or consciousness as a result of changes in the functioning of the nervous system (brain and spinal cord)." Psychoactive drugs are divided into 3 groups. The first group, depressants: they slow down the central nervous system; for example: tranquilizers, alcohol, petrol, heroin and other opiates, cannabis (in low doses). The second, stimulants: they excite the nervous system; for example: nicotine, amphetamines, cocaine, caffeine. The third, hallucinogens: they distort how things are perceived; for example: LSD, mescaline, 'magic mushrooms', cannabis (in high doses) ("Alcohol and Other Drugs - Overview," 2015). In Vietnam, the Law on Drug prevention and combat stipulates that narcotic and psychotropic substances as prescribed in the lists issued by the Government (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2000).

Currently, there are various classifications of drug in the world, but the most common is the classification according to the origin, and classification according to the impact of narcotics on the user's body. Plant-based drugs are the substances extracted from various components of some plants such as poppies, cannabis, coca etc.; semi-synthetic drugs are those which were synthesized partially from some naturally-derived drugs, such as morphine, heroin, etc.; synthetic drugs are group of substances that are not found in nature; they are synthesized from chemicals. Inhibitors of drug are substances that, when they are taken into the body, they will slow down the transmission speed of nerve impulses to the user's brain, making the user feel conscious, however the limbs lose the sensation of moving due to blood is rushed to the peripheral area. For examples: opium, heroin, marijuana, sleeping pills (secobarbital, immenoctal), neuroleptics (benzodiazepine, seduxen, mekohexen). Stimulants such as amphetamine type stimulants (ATS) and cocaine. When being used, these substances speed up the transmission of nerve impulses. The users will feel excited, confident, and argumentative, however, the feelings left are physically tired and mentally weak. The hallucinogens make users feel inaccurately, distortedly the messages of images, colors, sounds, etc. when they are sent to brain.

With the concern of increasing scale and trend of production, trading and consumption of narcotics and psychotropic substances which seriously threaten human health and happiness, the adverse effects on the economy, culture, politics of society, the United Nations (UN) has issued three international conventions on drug prevention, which are: Single Convention on

Narcotics in 1961 (amended by 1972); Convention on psychotropic substances in 1971; Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances, 1988 (“Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances,” 1988; “Convention on Psychotropic Substances,” 1971; *Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961 (As amended by the 1972 Protocol amending the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961)*, 1961)

Encountering the complicated threats of drug evil, in the United States, in 1998, the United Nations organized a special session of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Drug (UNGASS). At this session, the countries have adopted the Political Declaration affirming their awareness and commitment to strengthen drug prevention and combat activities worldwide. Since then, the political statement at UNGASS 1998, along with three international conventions on drug control has become the cornerstone for the orientation of the goal, content and solution for global drug control.

According to the World Drug Report 2018 of United Nations Drug Combat Program, it was estimated that there are 275 million drug users globally, which is roughly 5.6 per cent of the global population aged 15–64 years, used drugs at least once during 2016. Of which 27 million have serious problems due to drug use. There were 200,000 people die annually from the use of heroin, cocaine and other kind of drugs. deaths directly caused by the use of drugs increased by 60 per cent from 2000 to 2015. People over the age of 50 accounted for 27 per cent of these deaths in 2000, but this had risen to 39 per cent in 2015. About three quarters of deaths from drug use disorders among those aged 50 and older are among the ageing cohort of opioid users. Among those who inject drug, about 20% are infected with HIV, 46.7% get hepatitis C and 14.6% get hepatitis B, creating a burden of disease for the world; about one in 100 adult deaths is due to illegal drug use (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

In Vietnam, drug addiction, drug-related crimes and other illegal acts of drug are identified as drug-related evils. This evil is a great danger for the whole society, causing harm to the health, degrading the race and human dignity, destroying family happiness, seriously affecting the social order and safety and national security.

In front of these common challenges, recognizing the harmful effects of drug on social life, the Government of Vietnam has also strengthened the leadership and direction of drug prevention and combat, promulgate many documents on drug prevention and combat, many national programs and objectives on drug prevention and combat. The Law on Drug Prevention and Combat was promulgated in 2000 by the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, regulating the prevention, inhibition and fight against drug evils; combat of legal drug-

related activities; responsibilities of individuals, families, agencies and organizations in drug prevention and combat. The Criminal Code of Vietnam in 1999 and 2015 also stipulates acts of illegal production; storage; transportations; dealing, appropriation of drug substances, storage, transportation, dealing or appropriation of pre-substances used for illegal production of drug substances; production, storage, transportation or healing of vehicles and tools used in the illegal production or use of drug substances; organizing illegal drug substances using, sheltering illegal drug substances using, forcing other people to illegally use drug substances; enticing others to illegally use drug substances; violations of regulations on management and use of drug substances, pre-substances, narcotics and psychotropic drugs, are drug-related crimes .The nature and level of the action is subject to appropriate penalties (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2015).

Along with creating important legal corridors as a basis for drug prevention and combat activities, the Government of Vietnam has also approved and directed drastically the implementation of the National Program on Drug Prevention and Combat 2012-2015 period, the National Strategy on drug prevention and combat in Vietnam to 2020 and orientation to 2030, in order to raise awareness, responsibility, operation and leadership management, implementation organization and effective implementation of drug prevention and combat works; promote the obtained achievements and results, simultaneously overcome shortcomings in the past; restrain the increase, prevent and then push back the harmful effects of drug evils on social life; taking June annually as the month of drug prevention and combat. Every year, the Vietnamese National steering board of drug prevention and combat always makes plan on drug prevention and combat, open peak fights on drug crimes, well organize the activities on the occasion of drug prevention and combat action month, the day which the entire population participates in drug prevention and combat and is implemented from departments in the provinces and cities to the facilities and the whole nation, determined to repel drug evils out of social life.

2. THE ACTUAL SITUATION OF DRUG EVILS IN VIETNAM

However, regardless of the efforts of Vietnam in particular and the world in general, drug evils have not been resolved, even more complicated. Since the Cold War, under the influence of globalization, drugs have quickly become an urgent global problem and non-traditional threat of security. The development of science and technology has been exploited by criminal organizations to produce new synthetic drug, the Internet, the global information highway are used for the promotion and dealing of drugs. The process of simplifying procedures for goods and people exchanges between countries is taken advantage of in transnational drug dealing and transportation. Drug crime organizations has been no longer stopped at regional but also

inter-regional, even intercontinental scale. Drug use and addiction is becoming more and more complicated despite drug combat efforts. While heroin use increased in Asia and Africa, synthetic drug use increased in Europe (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

According to the World Drug Report 2012 of United Nations Drug Combat Program, it was estimated that in 2010 there are 230 million drug users globally, of which 27 million have serious problems due to drug use; 200,000 people die annually from the use of heroin, cocaine and other kind of drugs. Among those who inject drug, about 20% are infected with HIV, 46.7% get hepatitis C and 14.6% get hepatitis B, creating a burden of disease for the world; about one in 100 adult deaths is due to illegal drug use (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019).

According to the statistics of authorities in Vietnam, for 2012 to 2018 period, the situation of drug addiction is still complicated, increasing in number, nature, level and more sophisticated, difficult to combat, the number of drug addicts increased sharply and steadily, in 2018 there were 225,334 drug users with management records, an increase of 2752 compared to 222,582 people of 2017, of which, the number of newly detected drug addicts annually was from 5,000 people to 21,000 people every year.

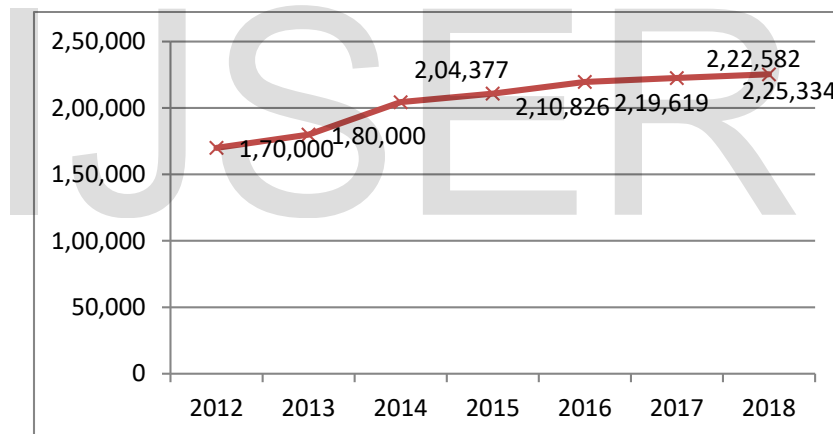


Figure 1: Number of drug users in Vietnam from 2012 to 2018. Source: Synthesized from annual report of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs.

In addition, the situation of Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) using continues to increase in localities. It is estimated that ATS use rate accounts for about 60-70% of addicts.

Typical studies of authorities with 500 drug addicts presents a diversity of compositions and all ages in which the majority are teenagers with ages of 16 to 35 accounting for 75%, those are under 16 years of age accounted for 1 %; those are over 35 years old accounted for 24% . In which the proportion of young people addicted to drug and violate the law accounted for about 50%.

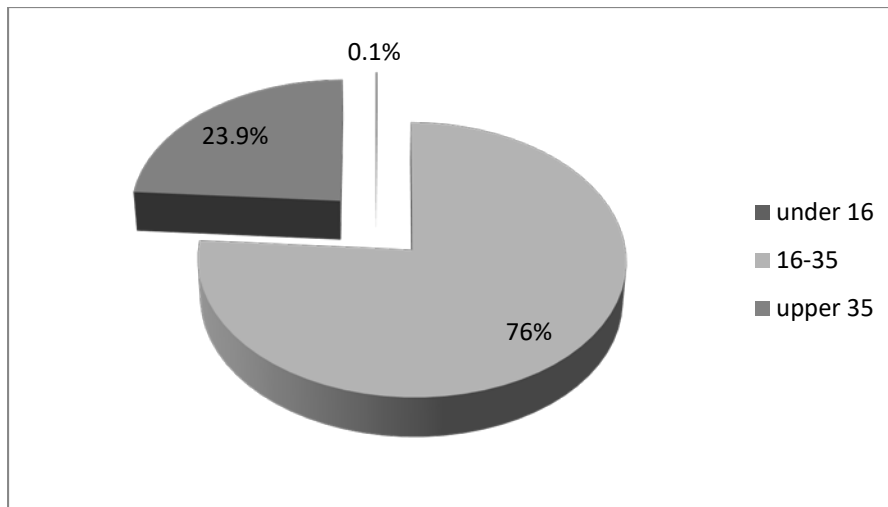


Figure 2: Age segment of drug user in Vietnam. *Source: Synthesized from annual report of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs.*

Meanwhile, the effectiveness of detoxification is very low, especially the work of taking drug addicts to compulsory detoxification has encountered many difficulties. In addition, the number of addicts increases leading to the arising and development of places, sites, drug retail groups in localities as well as the status of drug use and organizing drug use in business locations such as bars, discotheques, motels, and hotels, especially in big cities.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF DRUG EVILS

It can be affirmed that drug evils have a significant impact on many aspects of society, affecting the Government budget, causing a huge economic loss for drug addicts themselves and their families. Every year, the Government of Vietnam has to spend a huge budget to invest in drug prevention and drug combat activities such as: preventing, fighting, prosecuting and judging drug-related crimes; rehab recovery, etc. According to the evaluation of authorities, it is estimated that 200,000 drug addicts in Vietnam alone spend about 7,340 billion VND on their drug use, and 200,000 people are no longer able to work and contribute to society.

Drug abuse is one of the causes of instability in security and order, causing criminal and drug crimes. In order to earn money for drug use, thousands of addicts have committed theft, robbery, murder, prostitution; drug dealing and storing...; due to stimulation, or hallucinations after using drug, many people have committed crimes about disrupting public order, intentionally injuring, murdering, destroying property, committing suicide, rape, illegal racing, violation of traffic rules, causing serious consequences, social security disorder and increasing social evils.

Especially drug addiction also affects health causing disorders of each part to depression, affecting the digestive system, respiratory system, nervous system, affecting the race, HIV infection, reducing ability giving birth or giving birth to sick children, physically and intellectually retarded.

4. CAUSES OF DRUG EVILS

Drug abuse is still developing complicatedly, due to many different reasons, however, it can be generalized as some of the main causes as follows:

Firstly, for the market economy and the integration trend, in addition to the great achievements, then its opposite sides and the global economic recession also with the economic impacts of Vietnam, the gap between the rich and the poor in society is increasingly differentiated, leading to a difference in income of living standards, affecting a part of population, especially young people with practical lifestyles who like to play, like to enjoy but not work, or a part of population who are lack of jobs or unemployed, acquisitive, these are the factors that make social evils develop, especially drug evils.

Secondly, the awareness of the law on drug prevention and combat of many people is still limited, lack of vigilance, especially lack of understanding of the consequences and harmful effects of drug, therefore, these people are easily to be enticed, seduced for drugs trials by the drug addicts, then involved in drug addiction, or taking part in illegal storing, transporting and dealing of drugs, committing acts of violating law provisions on drug.

Thirdly, Family is a cell of society, a small environment for the development of young people. However, the educational interest of some families for children is loose, neglected, or unserious, sometimes the family even try to screen the fact that their adolescents are involved in addiction, social evils, and drug evils. In particular, the families who have conflicts such as parents are separated or divorced, many young people are lack of attention, care and education of family, relatives, they feel bored, quit the school then involved in wandering and stealing, pickpockets, ... these are one of the reasons leading to the development of drug evils.

Fourthly, the management and assistance of drug addicts, post-detoxification people have revealed many gaps and shortcomings such as: political organizations including schools do not control and timely detect people with signals of addiction then take them to detoxification timely. The post-detoxification people returning to their localities are still isolated, discriminated which make them feel guilty, then the sensation of boredom, lack of faith, lack of jobs will force them to get into drug use and participate in social evils activities.

Fifthly, the dissemination and propaganda of the Law on drug prevention and combat of political organizations has been strengthened, however, there is lack of coordination, without

specific assignment, leading to the irregular propaganda situation. Although the authorities have organized a number of measures of drug prevention and combat, the efficiency is not high.

Sixthly, due to the global nature of drug, Vietnam has been strongly affected by regional and international drug situation. The development of science and technology has been exploited by criminal organizations to produce new synthetic drug, the Internet, the global information highway are used for the promotion and sale of drug type. The process of simplifying procedures for goods and people exchanges between countries is taken advantage of in transnational drug trafficking and transport. Drug crime organizations no longer stop at regional scale but also inter-regional, even inter-continental, but international cooperation in drug prevention in Vietnam still has certain limitations. This is also one of the causes of developing drug evils.

5. SOLUTIONS

In the coming years, the situation of drug evils in Vietnam and all over the world continues to be complicated. Drug crimes continue to expand the scope and scale of activities to transport drug from abroad into Vietnam in large quantity. Therefore, effective drug prevention and combat requires the synchronous and international co-operated solutions in this activity, thereby, the following contents should be carried out:

- Well implement the coordination with departments, unions, families to mobilize, help the addicts in detoxification, support drug detoxification activities at detoxification facilities and in the community; Focus on well solving the problems of detoxification, organizing vocational training, supporting capital in economic development, creating stable jobs, eliminating hunger and reducing poverty..., finding jobs and helping those who have detoxified, who violated drug laws to reintegrate into the community, preventing from relapse or arising social evils.

In the areas where narcotics-containing plants must be abolished, state agencies within the scope of their tasks and powers, shall have to organize the implementation of the State's undertakings and policies on agriculture and forestry production and development to replace the narcotics-containing plants; planning suitable agricultural, forestry, industrial, service and market structures for people to effectively change production.

- Continue to effectively implement the Project on drug detoxification renovation approved by the Prime Minister in Decision No. 2596/QĐ-TTg dated December 27, 2013 and the Investment Program for developing social service system to support drug addicts in 2016 - 2020 period. Strengthening socialization, mobilizing resources for treatment and drug detoxification activities. Strengthening the management of drug users, addicts, rehabilitator and ensuring order and security at drug detoxification facilities.

- Continue to strengthen law dissemination and education for people, so that they can better understand the provisions of the law on drug and harmful effects caused by drug; each family must manage and care for their children to know how to avoid drug dangers, not to be involved into drug addiction; authorities, sectors and unions should organize more healthy activities suitable for young people, through which propaganda for drug prevention and combat is carried out.

- Further strengthening activities of organizing education programs on drug prevention and combat, legal education on drug prevention and combat and healthy lifestyles for pupils, students and trainees; strictly manage p pupils, students and trainees to participate in drug evils; carry out education and propaganda about the harmful effects of drug in various forms, during the propaganda, the specific evidences and cases should be used to increase the convincing efficiency to people. The propaganda objects need to be deeper and broader, focusing more on high-risk places such as: children of the families with special circumstances, unemployed as well as people labor in industrial zones.

- Launching the movement of all people in detecting, denouncing criminals, mobilizing addicted objects and families to declare themselves. Organize detoxification at treatment, education, social labor centers, schools, facilities, at home and community.

- Strictly manage the industries and trades prone to abuse of drug-related crimes to carry out criminal activities, import and export activities, use of pre-substance of drug, narcotics and psychotropic medicines and drug containing narcotics

- Effectively apply advanced scientific achievements and modern technology to drug prevention, combat and control. Priority is given to the field of combating, inspecting drub substances and statistics on drug prevention and combat

- Strictly handle violations or recidivism of law provisions on prevention and combat of social evils and drug evils.

- Effectively implement the International convention of drug control, bilateral and multilateral agreements and agreements on cooperation in drug prevention and com that Vietnam has signed or participate. Enhance the cooperation ability for specialized forces in domestic drug prevention and combat with international organizations, countries regionally and internationally. Prioritize cooperation with countries sharing borders and regions. Training and facilitating qualified staff to work in international drug prevention and combat organizations.

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