# **Learning Journal - Unit 8**

Computer Science, University of the People

PSYC 1504-01 Introduction to Psychology - AY2024-T4

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Substance abuse disorders a.k.a. SUDs are quite common in modern societies and have been recognized by the medical community as a chronic disease. However, despite this almost global and unanimous recognition the condition and subject are still considered quite taboo. This creates multiple stigmas and misconceptions surrounding the condition.

The stigma of addiction

One of the issues surrounding addictions stigma is that it is considered a moral failing more than a medical condition. Many people look at people suffering from substance abuse disorders as people with low willpower or low moral integrity. This situation is deeply ingrained in our culture, despite there being scientific evidence to the contrary. Science has shown that substance abuse directly affects the brain’s functions and behaviors. The common notion that addiction is purely a person’s choice rather than a real disease stops many people from understanding the chronic nature of the condition and the need to have medical intervention to help deal with it.

Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Stigmatization

A person’s Socio-cultural background can play an important role in shaping the person’s outlook of addiction. For example, many cultures place a lot of weight on the fallacy that addiction is a matter of self-control and self-responsibility. This also creates an atmosphere of judgement against the sufferers and views them as weak individuals with little self-esteem. For example, in my society addicts are often looked upon with suspicion and disdain. They are usually looked upon as being the creators of their own problems, which only forces them into deeper isolation.

These stigmas are a main cause of individuals suffering from addiction to not looking for help or even admitting that they have a problem. This creates an endless loop of lack of support pushing them back to addiction, creating even more judgement and so on.

Helping or Hindering Treatment

Places that look at addiction as what it is, a disease usually has more abundant tools and structures to help support individuals suffering from addiction to find the tools and help they need to break the cycle of addiction. This might include things like public health campaigns, support groups, and easy access to treatment. On the other hand, places that look at addiction in a more stigmatized point-of-view these tools and support lines are usually lacking or plain missing. This creates issues for addicts that are actively looking for help and forces them back to the addiction.

Personal Experience and Reflection

I’m sorry to say that here too I have felt the sting of addiction in a close family member. I was witness to my family’s reaction to the discovery of the addiction and how it made them react to the person. Despite us being a family that would judge others quickly this issue seemed to have a deep impact on them. I was also witness to how this made the individual feel and that it did indeed not help but only pushed them deeper into addiction. I’m sad to say that till this day the individual has not really taken any steps into resolving the issue and has since been labeled as the black sheep of the family only helping to deepen the issue, this despite my attempts to try and help.

Conclusion

In conclusion, addiction still is and will likely be for a long time a taboo subject in many cultures. This is mainly due to misconceptions and stigmas that surround it. To help and fight these issues again education is key, if we educate the public that addiction is not something to be ashamed of but a disease like any other that can and should be treated, the people suffering from its effects can find the help the so desperately need. We need to start the change of social beliefs and norms to help remove the stigma and misconceptions one step at a time.

## References

* Spielman, R., Dumper, K., Jenkins, W., Lacombe, A., Lovett, M. & Perlmutter, M. (2017). Psychology. OpenStax College, Rice University. Download for free at <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology>