



Exploiting Our Youth: Addiction as a 'Consumption Disorder'

Silvia Gras* and Mark Planes

Division of Addiction Research and Treatment, University of Girona, Spain

Abstract

Addiction has long been classified as a disease or disorder rooted in psychological, biological, and environmental factors. However, a growing body of research and social discourse suggests that addiction can also be viewed as a consumption disorder—one that thrives on modern society's overwhelming emphasis on consumption, both material and psychological. This paper explores the notion of addiction as a consumption disorder, focusing on the ways in which youth are particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon. Through the lens of the consumption-driven culture, the paper examines the causes of addiction, the impact of media and technology, and the societal pressures that contribute to addictive behaviors. It also discusses potential interventions aimed at mitigating the effects of addiction and fostering healthier behaviors among youth. Ultimately, it argues that addressing addiction as a consumption disorder requires a shift in societal values and the promotion of sustainable, mindful consumption.

Keywords: Addiction; Consumption disorder; Youth; Media; Technology, Psychological impact

Introduction

Addiction has traditionally been understood through medical and psychological frameworks, focusing on substance use disorders (SUD) such as alcoholism or drug dependency. However, in recent years, there has been a shift in how addiction is conceptualized, with increasing attention given to the role of behavioral addictions—such as gambling, internet usage, and shopping. One emerging perspective suggests that addiction is not simply a disease, but rather a disorder of consumption, deeply embedded in modern life's emphasis on acquiring and consuming both goods and experiences [1].

This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of youth, who are often caught in the crossroads of growing up in a hyper-consumerist society, while navigating the complexities of identity and belonging. The rise of digital media and technology has only exacerbated the situation, creating new forms of addiction that can be just as detrimental as substance use. This paper examines the concept of addiction as a consumption disorder, focusing on the unique vulnerabilities of youth and the societal factors that contribute to addiction. It argues that understanding addiction through this lens can lead to more effective interventions that target both individual behaviors and broader societal trends [2,3].

Defining addiction as a 'consumption disorder'

Addiction is often defined as a chronic, relapsing condition marked by compulsive behavior, despite negative consequences. Traditionally, addiction has been linked to substances, but it is increasingly understood as a broader condition encompassing a range of behaviors that involve the consumption of goods, services, or experiences. These behaviors are compulsive, habitual, and linked to an underlying desire to fulfil a psychological need, often to the detriment of the individual's health, relationships, and societal functioning [4].

A consumption disorder, in this sense, is a condition in which an individual's drive to consume whether it is substances, products, or experiences becomes a compulsive act that interferes with daily life. Modern consumer culture, which emphasizes accumulation and immediate gratification, plays a central role in this phenomenon. Consumption becomes not just a means of obtaining goods but a way of coping with stress, seeking identity, or filling an emotional void [4].

For youth, the pressures of consumption are amplified by social media, advertising, and peer influence, creating an environment where consumption is not only normalized but also glamorized [5]. As a result, young people are especially susceptible to developing addiction-like behaviors, which may manifest in different forms: substance use, excessive gaming, compulsive shopping, or the overconsumption of social media.

The role of media and technology in fuelling consumption

One of the key drivers of addiction as a consumption disorder is the proliferation of media and technology, particularly social media platforms. Social media, in particular, is designed to keep users engaged, offering immediate rewards in the form of likes, shares, and validation. This instant gratification becomes addictive, particularly for young people who are still developing their sense of identity and self-worth [6].

Studies have shown that excessive use of social media platforms is linked to various psychological issues, including anxiety, depression, and body image problems. The constant bombardment of idealized lifestyles and consumer products creates a desire to consume more—whether it's goods, experiences, or attention—leading to compulsive behavior. The idea of "lifestyle consumption," which includes the pursuit of status through material possessions and experiences, is often perpetuated by influencers and brands who capitalize on youth's vulnerability [7].

Moreover, the gamification of platforms and apps further encourages excessive use. Youth become trapped in cycles of reward-seeking behavior, often unaware of the addictive nature of these activities. These patterns of consumption mirror those seen in substance

*Corresponding author: Silvia Gras, Division of Addiction Research and Treatment, University of Girona, Spain, E-mail: gras009@gmail.com

Received: 02-Oct-2024, Manuscript No: jart-24-152096, Editor assigned: 04-Oct-2024, Pre QC No: jart-24-152096 (PQ), Reviewed: 18-Oct-2024, QC No: jart-24-152096, Revised: 25-Oct-2024, Manuscript No jart-24-152096 (R), Published: 30-Oct-2024, DOI: 10.4172/2155-6105.100711

Citation: Silvia G (2024) Exploiting Our Youth: Addiction as a 'Consumption Disorder'. J Addict Res Ther 15: 711.

Copyright: © 2024 Silvia G. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

use disorders, where the individual's focus shifts from managing their behavior to simply fulfilling the craving for the next "hit."

Vulnerability of youth: psychological and societal factors

Youth are particularly vulnerable to addiction as a consumption disorder due to their developmental stage. Adolescence is a time of identity exploration, emotional instability, and heightened peer influence, making young people more susceptible to external pressures. In an age where material success and social status are often linked to consumption, young individuals may seek to fulfill unmet emotional or psychological needs by acquiring goods, engaging in risky behaviors, or seeking validation through social media platforms [8].

Psychologically, the adolescent brain is still maturing, with areas of the brain related to impulse control and decision-making not fully developed. This neurobiological fact contributes to an increased likelihood of risk-taking behaviors, including addictive consumption patterns. In addition, the desire for social acceptance and belonging, coupled with the desire to emulate figures on social media, can drive youth to compulsively consume [9].

From a societal perspective, the environment in which youth grow up also exacerbates their vulnerability to addiction. The hyper-consumerist culture in which we live values acquisition over well-being, creating a societal norm where consumption is seen as synonymous with success and happiness. Advertisements and media often promote the idea that youth can achieve fulfillment, status, and success through consumption. In this environment, addiction can be seen not just as a personal failing, but as a symptom of a culture that elevates consumption to a central tenet of existence [10].

The impact of addiction as a consumption disorder

The consequences of addiction as a consumption disorder are far-reaching, particularly for youth. Physical health may deteriorate due to the overconsumption of substances or even behaviors like excessive gaming, which often leads to sedentary lifestyles and poor mental health. Emotional and psychological well-being is also affected, as the need for constant consumption becomes an attempt to fill a deeper void that cannot be satisfied.

Social relationships can suffer, as compulsive behaviors often lead to isolation, strained family dynamics, and difficulty in forming meaningful connections [11]. In many cases, addiction to consumption can undermine academic and career goals, as the individual's attention is diverted away from productive pursuits in favor of indulgence in compulsive behaviors.

On a broader societal level, addiction as a consumption disorder leads to an economic burden, with young people increasingly caught in cycles of debt or poor financial decision-making as they attempt to keep up with societal expectations of consumption [12]. This strain on the individual and society underlines the urgency of addressing addiction in this context.

Interventions and solutions

Addressing addiction as a consumption disorder requires a multifaceted approach. First and foremost, education plays a crucial role in helping youth understand the dangers of excessive consumption, both material and behavioral. Promoting media literacy can help youth recognize the ways in which advertisements, social media, and other forms of media influence their desires and behaviors. Encouraging critical thinking around consumerism and the psychological tactics

used by marketers can empower youth to make healthier decisions.

On a societal level, policy changes are necessary to mitigate the harmful effects of consumer culture. This includes stricter regulations on advertising, particularly those targeted at vulnerable populations such as youth. Public health campaigns focused on the negative impacts of excessive consumption, whether of substances or behaviors, could also be beneficial [13].

Finally, providing young people with alternative coping mechanisms is crucial. This includes fostering social support systems, promoting physical activity, and encouraging creative outlets that do not revolve around consumption. By addressing the underlying emotional or psychological factors that drive addictive behaviors, interventions can help break the cycle of addiction and reduce the stigma associated with seeking help [14].

Conclusion

Addiction, when viewed as a consumption disorder, presents a compelling framework for understanding the way in which modern society has shaped addictive behaviors, particularly among youth. In an age where consumerism reigns supreme, the lines between addiction to substances and addiction to behaviors or experiences are increasingly blurred. To address this growing issue, it is essential that we consider the broader societal forces at play and shift our focus from merely treating addiction to preventing it through education, media literacy, and societal change. Only through a collective effort can we help youth navigate the pressures of consumption and lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.

Acknowledgement

None

Conflict of Interest

None

References

1. Lequeré C, Raupach MR, Canadell JG, Marland G, Bopp L, et al. (2009) Trends in the sources and sinks of carbon dioxide. *Nat Geosci* 2: 831-836.
2. Pan Y, Birdsey RA, Fang J, Houghton R, Kauppi PE, et al. (2011) A large and persistent carbon sink in the world's forests. *Science* 333: 988-993.
3. Lal R (2004) Soil carbon sequestration impacts on global climate change and food security. *Science* 304: 1623-1627.
4. Tilman D (1998) The greening of the green revolution. *Nature* 396: 211-212.
5. Fargione JE, Hill JD, Tilman D, Polasky S, Hawthorne P (2008) Land clearing and the biofuel carbon debt. *Science* 319: 1235-1238.
6. Searchinger T, Heimlich R, Houghton RA, Dong F, Elobeid A, et al. (2008) Use of U.S. croplands for biofuels increases greenhouse gases through emissions from land-use change. *Science* 319: 1238-1240.
7. Melillo JM, Reilly JM, Kicklighter DW, Gurgel AC, Cronin TW, et al. (2009) Indirect emissions from biofuels: How important. *Science* 326: 1397-1399.
8. Fargione JE, Plevin RJ, Hill JD (2010) The ecological impact of biofuels. *Ann Rev Ecol Evol Syst* 41: 351-377.
9. Donner SD, Kucharik CJ (2008) Corn-based ethanol production compromises goal of reducing nitrogen export by the Mississippi River. *Proc Natl Acad Sci* 105: 4513-4518.
10. Hill J, Polasky S, Nelson E, Tilman D, Huo H, et al. (2009) Climate change and health costs of air emissions from biofuels and gasoline. *Proc Nat Acad Sci* 106: 2077-2082.
11. Alloui MN, Szczurek W, Świątkiewicz S (2013) The usefulness of prebiotics and probiotics in modern poultry nutrition: a review. *Ann Anim Sci* 13: 17-32.

12. Aluwong T, Kawu M, Raji M, Dzenda T, Gowwang F, et al. (2013) Effect of yeast probiotic on growth, antioxidant enzyme activities and malondialdehyde concentration of broiler chickens. *Antioxidants* 2: 326-339.
13. Awad WA, Ghareeb K, Raheem AS, Böhm J (2009) Effects of dietary inclusion of probiotic and synbiotic on growth performance, organ weights, and intestinal histomorphology of broiler chickens. *Poultry Sci* 88: 49-56.
14. Barham D, Trinder P (1972) An improved colour reagent for the determination of blood glucose by the oxidase system. *Analyst* 97: 142-145.