Nicotine Addiction

Name

Institution

Nicotine Addiction

According to the physiological approach, substance abuse and addiction have been considered one of the most critical medical problems. On the other hand, addiction is simply the over-dependence on a particular type of drug that often results in intolerance and various withdrawal symptoms in case an addict has been deprived of the substance (Dube et al., 2010). According to the nicotine regulation model, most people often continue using nicotine to maintain a significant level of this substance in their body system and to prevent certain withdrawal symptoms. Studies have pointed out that the pharmacologic reasons for nicotine use include the following: to improve individual’s mood through relieving the withdrawal symptoms in addition to the augmentation of a person’s mental functioning. The essay will focus on behaviorism operant conditioning as developed by Skinner. According to the behavioralist approach to substance abuse, nicotine addiction is often learned. Therefore, nicotine abuse is simply a form of behavior that has become highly addictive to certain individuals (Warner & Pollack, 2014). According to the operant conditioning, a person learns a particular type of behavior such as nicotine smoking because it is often reinforced in some ways.

Reinforcements, in this case, might entail a person being accepted in a particular group or for relive tension. The reinforcement often outweighs the negative factors of nicotine use, and this is the primary reason why these types of reinforcement are immediate.

Operant conditioning as a learning principle occurs as a result of the cause and effect relationships that often exist between nicotine use and the potential costs. In the situation when a particular behavior is rewarded, the level of use increases while on the other hand, when the behavior is punished, it drastically decreases. For most people, smoking tends to become addictive when the “rewards” are (highly enjoyable). On the other hand, there are such individuals who dislike smoking nicotine, hence they have minimal risk to develop addiction problem to this substance. Consequently, it tends to protect such people from developing an addiction problem simply because such substances are not pleasurable implying that they are less rewarding (Dube et al., 2010).

Smoking has been proven to be a learned behavior, and it emerges because of the initial pleasure than one derives from it as highly rewarding. Reinforcement strategies might comprise being acknowledged within a formed society in order to experience a feel of relief. Therefore, to have an impact, the reinforcements ought to overshadow the real pessimistic smoking effects because their reinforcements are instantaneous. Nicotine, just like the rest of the addictive substances, is immediately rewarding, hence people tend to learn such behavior much quickly (Hahn, 2010). This substance can be used to explain why nicotine tends to replace healthy sources of rewards. As addiction progress, the amount of healthy pleasures declines significantly. In such case, friendship is strained, hobbies are lost, and the loved members become bitter forcing the addicts to depend strongly on their addiction.

Research has further pointed that punishment is one of the tools that can be used to understanding the nicotine addiction problem. In a situation where there exists an early punishment, for instance medical problem, then it is more probable that addiction problem would not have developed. However, the problem is that punishment for smoking takes place much later, when the problem of addiction has been strongly developed (Hetrick, 2014). At such a situation, chemical and psychological changes might occur in an individual’s brain, hence making it tough to discontinue nicotine addiction. Consequently, detrimental cognitive and emotional patterns tend to be solidly established, hence making it very complicated to break the addiction to smoking. It follows the fact that during the later stages of smoking punishment alone might not be efficient to develop a lasting change. It might be important to increase sources of rewards, especially those related to the healthy behavioral preferences while at the same time eliminate the rewards that would support addictive behaviors (Dube et al., 2010).

For years, operant conditioning was adopted and applied to treatment of the health problem caused by nicotine addiction. It helped many people to stop smoking. Based on the operant conditioning theory, nicotine abuse is one of the learned behaviors that an individual acquires as he grows up, primarily through the influence of other people. Based on the argument of the behaviorists, nicotine abuse was learned and has become a habit to an individual; therefore, it can be changed easily through learning any other healthy behavior. It is possible to stop people from acquiring certain behaviors, but this should be done in the first place before the situation transforms to addiction (Warner & Pollack, 2014). Operant condition states that reinforcement can be helpful to aid individuals to stop using nicotine. One of the successful applications of the operant conditioning that has been able to help people quit smoking is their personal rewarding. It might be argued that based on this some programs have been established that consistently create awareness on the harmful consequences of tobacco use, and the potential positive effect obtained when the people quit smoking.

The operant conditioning has been employed in treating addiction and has led to diverse, effective treatments. One of the initial ideas is rewarding the nicotine addicts for making any significant healthier, recovery-oriented choices. It is, however, essential to ensure that the award ought to have a particular value, hence it should be substantial. According to e-cigarette use by teen’s triples (2015), despite the probability of improvement, it is highly unlikely that the nicotine addict individual would easily give up smoking for a piece of a bar of chocolate, but it is highly possible to quit smoking for a car. It might further be worth noting that what seems rewarding to a particular individual might be worthless to another person. Research on addiction has come to a conclusion that when a person has been rewarded with inexpensive but a highly desired product, then it will lead to the fact that the the number of the abstinent days will increase. Such an approach is very efficient for the individuals with inadequate financial resources. However, the same low-priced products might not have a significant impact on a person with greater financial means.

The operant conditioning approach is useful in understanding the nicotine addiction problem, and explains reasons why individuals are engaged into using nicotine. Further such an approach provides a valid and reliable clarification on why the individual continues to abuse nicotine.

According to Hetrick (2014), at the time an individual becomes highly addicted to nicotine, he is supposed to maintain the behavior of smoking with an aim to continue receiving the rewarding obtained from satisfaction and enjoyment, and avoid possible withdrawal. Operant conditioning provides an explanation on why the individuals often engage in certain health risk behaviors like the heavy use of nicotine. Further, it has contributed to suggest possible treatment to the addiction problem for addicts to conquer nicotine abuse habits. Since the individual’s behavior is learned, then it follows that it can easily be unlearned. For years, the media campaigns have tried much to fight nicotine addiction without success because these people have not been provided with any form of reinforcement. The majority of the individuals have successfully adopted operant conditioning tools to help stop nicotine abuse and reduce addiction problem where they offer some reinforcements to themselves

One of the biggest problems with behaviorist approach is that it is reductionist one where it only focuses on the observable individual’s behavior while ignoring the rest of the most vital factors like the cognitive processes. As a result of this, the behaviorist approach often offer a higher level of passive observation of human beings. In addition to this, operant conditioning also ignores physiological explanations, and this is evident from the several types of research have been established among the nicotine addicts. On the other hand, if there are no particular unpleasant impacts of nicotine addiction, then there might be tough for the person to quit smoking. We can enhance the efforts towards recovery through giving a chance for the natural consequences to take place. There is the need to reward all healthy choices made by an individual to ensure that these behaviors become appealing compared to nicotine abuse behavior. The best solution in this case can be put in such a way: to allow a person to return back to the family and continue enjoying the comforts of home.

References

Dube, S. R., McClave, A., James, C., Caraballo, R., Kaufmann, R., & Pechacek, T. (2010). Vital signs: current cigarette smoking among adults aged ≥18 years with mental illness - United States, 2009-2011 *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, *59*(35), 1135-1140.

E-cigarette use by teens triples: officials warn of nicotine addiction. Cover story (2015). *Alcoholism& Drug Abuse Weekly*. 27 (17).

Hahn, L. (2010). New Smoking danger. *Good Housekeeping.* 251(1). 83

Hetrick, K. (2014). Does Smoking Drive Us to Drink? *The Futurist*, *48*(2), 8.

Warner, K., & Pollack, H. (2014).The Nicotine Fix. Atlantic, 314 (5), 48.