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Life is too short

***Introduction***

 In the United States, a number of issues were in the limelight for long, but one issue that is directly affecting the youth is **“Drinking age”**. There are a number of concerns raised by people. Some believe that 18 years should be the legal age for drinking. On the other hand, there are few who believe that 21 should be the drinking age. In 1984, the national drinking age was declared to be 21 years, by the **National Minimum Drinking Age Act**. Taking a look at history, it could be seen that at the end of the 1930s, the legal drinking age was declared to be 21. Till 1937, this age was the steady benchmark and in the same year, voting age dropped to 18 years. This was the time when a buzz began, to reduce the legal drinking age. Considering the historic facts, it could be seen that almost half of the states in the United States, dropped the legal drinking age to 18, 19 and 20 (Traci L.,et,al,2009). After considering 18, 19 and 20 as the drinking age for many years, it was found that this decision of lowering the drinking age was not set over the medical reasons; rather it was done for the sake of saving highway funds.

***Discussion***

 Evidence shows that whenever a decision is taken, it affects people. From medical researches, it has been seen that those youngsters who start drinking alcohol at a very young age face many psychological issues. The drinking age was and is still, a controversial issue as there are mainly two groups who support two contrasting viewpoints i.e. drinking age should be 21 and others who emphasize on the lowering of drinking age than 21. Drinking age should be kept 21 as lowering it would have a direct negative impact on the youth. It is medically proven that taking alcohol inhibits mental development. According to Marisa, alcohol usage during adolescence i.e. age that overlaps with the functional, structural and critical development of the brain limits and effect mental growth of teenagers. A direct relationship between brain development and personality development could be witnessed (DeJong,et,al,2014). Development of the brain is linked with decision making that is one of the most obvious reasons for keeping the drinking age 21 rather than lowering it to 18, 19 and 20.

 Idea of lowering the drinking age should not be appreciated as it would affect the development of the brain in long terms. Lowering the drinking age than 21 would affect one's whole life along with disturbing his/her surrounding environment. According to the reports, the third leading cause of deaths in the United States is the excessive and underage intake of alcohol. To control the increasing number of deaths of youngsters, USA must keep 21 as the drinking age.

 According to the research of Stefan Boss, change in the drinking age (lowering it) would influence youth's behavior as adulthood is the period when the brain undergoes various changes and defines the behavior of an individual, so keeping the drinking age 21 would help in the maturation of the brain. Alcohol has the evident and potential effects on adolescent brain development, as adolescence is the main period when the brain goes through maximum changes. Evidence shows that drinking mostly harms teens, rather than adults, as teenager’s brains continue to develop and lowering the drinking age below 21 means that authorities would allow drinking to teenagers (Plunk,et,al,2016). Drinking alcohol during teen years would lead to lifelong damages to brain that would hinder its proper functioning. According to the researches done in the medical fields, it has been seen that alcohol consumption at teen years has long term effects on coordination, memory, motor skills (ability to move).

 Experts after research claim that if drinking age would be lowered brain development would be disturbed that would affect decision making. Poor decision making is one of the most threatening elements that may affect all areas of life. Underage (less than 21) youngsters would have an unhealthy effect on their academic life if they start taking alcohol before the declared drinking age. Their inability to make a good decision would lead them towards bad career choices that would have lasting effects on their lives. Ratio of crime cases would also increase when youngsters despite resolving their issues, make an aggressive decision and became violent affecting other’s lives as well. There has been noticed a decline in the academic performance of teenagers in the USA. According to National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) done in 2017, around 14.4 million teenagers were diagnosed with alcohol usage disorder (AUD). Ratio of AUD was 1.1 million in the past few years when the academic performance of youngsters was satisfactory. This means that the use of alcohol in teen years affects the brain functioning that greatly influences the performance stats of students as well.

 Many pieces of research support the point that drinking age must be kept 21 as lowering the drinking age would have obvious effects on the mental development of adolescents. There are numbers of long term effects of underage drinking (less than 21 years) including difficulties in learning new information and poor judgment. Teenagers are mostly blamed for reacting in no time to various situations. According to science, reacting in no time leads to poor decision making and acting irrationally. This over-reacting is because of the damage to the pre-frontal cortex that in most cases is affected by underage alcohol consumption.

Various objections are raised by the opponent group who want the drinking age to be lowered than 21. The most highlighted and discussed objection that opponents usually put against the current drinking age is that ratio of accidents in the USA is much more than other countries where the drinking age is lower than 21. Evidence shows that in the United States ratio of accidents is 31% while on the other hand, there is a long list of countries with drinking age lower than 21, where ratio of accidents is much lower than USA. According to researches, countries having a lower ratio of accidents with lower drinking age lower than 21 includes France (29% accidents), Great Britain (16% accidents), China (4% accidents), Germany (9% accidents) and Israel (3% accidents).

Another major reason for supporting the idea of keeping the drinking age 21 is that lowering drinking age to 18 in the United States would result in the greater availability of alcohol not only to 18-20 years old youngsters but also to those who are less than 18. According to the studies, lowering the drinking age would increase ratio of crashes by 15-17-year-old youngsters. All these shreds of evidence simply point towards long term effects of the drinking at teenage (Jayne,et,al,2016). Researchers who support the idea of keeping the drinking age 21 claims that the low ratio of accidents does not solely rely on having a drinking age lower than 21. There could be seen other factors that help these countries in controlling the accident ratio i.e. strict traffic rules etc.

***Conclusion***

Taking a look at the above evidences, it could be concluded that keeping 21 as drinking age would prove an effective step for keeping youth away from the psychological issues. For better mental development it is necessary not to lower the drinking age to 18 or 20. Researchers claim that drinking is not a healthy habit so avoiding it as long as possible would keep the youngsters on the right track by helping them to avoid making bad decisions. Teenage badly affects the functioning of brain so keeping the drinking age 21 would keep alcohol away from the access of youngsters who are under 18. So as a whole, it could be said that lowering age is not a good idea as lowering legal drinking age would also risk lives of under 18 youngsters.

Work Cited

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