**Final Year Research Project**

**The Link between Drug Use and Criminality in Ireland**

**Submitted in Part Fulfillment with the Final Year Research Project Module**

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**Declaration of Authorship**



I affirm that the contents of this FYRP are my own work. Any written

material written by others and used in this project has been fully cited and the authorship acknowledged.

**Abstract**

**II**

This study aims to draw upon the broad area of illicit drug use and alcohol consumption with regards to any correlations that they may have with crime rates in Ireland. While the effects of drugs, opiates or narcotics have been consistently linked to a rise in crime statistics, alcohol abuse has also contributed to crimes, particularly those associated with violence such as murder and manslaughter. Thus, alcohol consumption and its effects on crime rates is relevant to this study and may be referred to as a drug throughout this project. The background to this research is explored through a review of both international and national literature. Comprised within the literature review is a description of 4 Models that attempt to define the drug/alcohol-crime link. The Models to be discussed are as follows; the Economic-compulsive Model, the Psycho-pharmalogical Model, the Systematic Model and the Common-cause Model. Following this, an introduction to the Irish drug epidemic that occurred in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s is given to set a relevant background context for the studies outlined in the ‘Findings’ section. The type of research compiled in the findings of this report is secondary research. Both qualitative and quantitative studies have contributed to the conclusions drawn in this project to allow for a broader perspective of the drug-crime link. It is also important to note that no references are made to any crimes relating to the following legal frameworks throughout the findings; the Misuse of Drugs Act 1997, the Misuse of Drugs Act 1984 and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1988. This is to eliminate any obvious links between offences related directly to drugs such as drug possession or dealing. The research is more concerned with drug-crime links that are covertly linked. The studies included in the findings are all based in Ireland and include; a study conducted in a prison environment, another conducted through the observations of professional personnel who interface with those who use drugs and/or commit crimes and a third study is quantitative survey study. On interpretation of the studies, it has become apparent that there is a strong correlation between drug use and crime. Also, more thorough links have been formed in relation to the Economic-compulsive Model, the Psycho-pharmalogical Model and the Common-cause Model throughout the ‘Discussion of Findings’ section.

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**Introduction**

1

This research will explore drug and alcohol trends and crime statistics in Ireland in both a historical and contemporary context. Whilst there is an abundance of crime statistics related to the Dublin region alone, statistics on overall crime rates for Ireland’s general population are much more easily accessible and more expansive. Afterall, this study is entitled ‘The Link Between Drug Use and Criminality in Ireland’. Thus, it is important to that the figures used represent the entire population as opposed to one area. The rationale for this area of study came about as a result of the researcher’s interest in drug culture. Having worked in homeless services for the past 18 months in Dublin’s Inner-City, the researcher has seen a strong presence of drugs and alcohol amongst clients. It has also become apparent that many clients that have a dependency on drugs and/or alcohol have been summoned to court on multiple occasions for various charges including assaults and burglary. This peaked interest in the researcher and intrigued them to the point that they wanted to gain a greater understanding of the link between drugs and crime.

**Research Topic**

This research will primarily draw upon historic and contemporary drug and alcohol trends in Ireland and the effects which such trends have had on crime rates. To display timelines and statistics on substances and crimes, bar charts and other materials are supplied in the appendices of this project. It has been widely speculated for decades that social deprivation or disadvantage commonly leads to further social adversities. Hence, the economic and social status of a drug or alcohol user has resulted in further social drawbacks such as homelessness, low educational attainment and crime. However, this project will maintain a focus on the drug-crime link and with minimal references being made to alternative socio-economic factors unless references are made to the Common-cause Model. It has been recognized that the correlation between drugs and crime is not a single-strand theory but rather a range of theories that explore the link in different ways. For example, one theory suggests that crime is committed by drug users to gain an income whilst another theory states that the chemicals within drugs cause criminal behaviors. One theory does not discourage another, but rather different theories explain alternative perspectives on the correlation between drugs and crime

**Hypothesis**

**2**

The aim of this research is to conclude that illicit drug use and alcohol consumption have contributed to a high volume of criminal offences in Ireland. It is expected that augmentations in crime rates will occur during periods where problematic drug use has become apparent. Based on this assumption, the ‘Findings’ section should explore certain types of drugs including cannabis, opiates and alcohol and their correlation with specific offences against people and property. The interpretation of findings should suggest that alcohol use is commonly associated with violent crimes or offences due to the chemical effects which it has on behavioral functioning. Additionally, research should confirm that due to the sedative and addictive nature of opiates, particularly heroin, certain drugs are more likely to be linked with crimes that are committed to illicit an income as opposed to violent offences.

**Chapter 1**

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**Literature Review**

***Introduction***

In Ireland, the issue of drug use, misuse, abuse and addiction is a trend that has seen an increase in popularity throughout previous decades. Drug use is mostly popular amongst those in the Dublin City region due to the volume of people living there being higher than any other area in Ireland. (O’Gorman 1997) However, illicit drug consumption is widespread across the entire country. It has been extensively proven by researchers and speculated by society that the increase of drug use and alcohol consumption alike has contributed to an increase in crime rates. Reflecting on the rise of the drug epidemic in the late 1970’s and 80’s, the literature reviewed will document a rise in criminal activity during the period outlined. For the purposes of this review, the adverse effects which illegal drugs and alcohol consumption has had on Irish society will be the primary focus with regards to its correlation with crime rates. Thus, alternative substances such as prescription medication such as benzodiazepines and anti-depressants will be excluded from the review. Initially, a general overview of the drug/alcohol-crime link will be compiled followed by an explanation of four alternative theories. Furthermore, past and present literature on the drug-crime will be documented.

A significant amount of research into the separate societal issues of drugs and crime have concluded that drug use and dependence is inextricably linked with criminality. Hammersley (2008) wrote about studies conducted on drug-users with a variety of different drug habits which have determined that regardless of the types of drugs one uses, crime rates tend to increase as a result of elevated drug use. It has also been highlighted that those administering heroin and cocaine, particularly crack cocaine, are the largest group of drug users responsible for the increase in crime. (ibid.) But in what way does the use of such drugs contribute to criminal behaviors both internationally and in Ireland? There are a range of theories that are used to describe the link between drugs and crime. The most popular theories are represented by the following Models; The Economic-compulsive Model, The Psycho-pharmalogical Model, The Systematic Model and the Common-Cause Model.

***The Economic-compulsive Model***

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The Economic-compulsive Model “assumes that drug users need to generate illicit income from crimes such as robbery and burglary, and from consensual crimes such as prostitution, to support their drug habit.” (Connolly 2006, p. 26) Crimes committed in such a fashion are not carried out as a result of innate violent behaviors associated with drug use. Rather, it has been concluded that the type of drug user that is most likely to engage in economic-compulsive crimes is one who has become dependent on illicit substances. (Carpenter 2007) This correlation appears rational as those who use drugs on a recreational basis generally tend to exert more control over their drug consumption. Therefore, they can perhaps continue to pay for drugs with the money that they earn through employment. This does not exclude the working population from such crimes completely but merely shows that an individual from a middle-ground or strong economic background is less likely to commit such crimes due to their opportunistic lifestyle. On the other hand, not all dependent users engage in robbery, burgling and prostitution to gain income for drugs. Some individuals receive their income through social welfare payments or by pawning possessions. (ibid.) The limitations to avoiding such crimes for those receiving payments is that perhaps their source of payment will inevitably cease to afford them as much drugs as desired as their tolerance increases. Likewise, the selling of goods can only continue if the drug user has an abundance of possessions to sell.

***The Psycho-pharmalogical Model***

Alternatively, the Psycho-pharmalogical Model encapsulates the notion that the drug-crime link is prevalent based on one’s reaction to the chemicals contained in their drug of choice. (Connolly 2006) Carpenter (2007) states that the use of psychoactive drugs can result in violent and aggressive behaviors. Such drugs can also induce “excitability, irritability, fear/paranoia, disinhibition, drastic mood swings, cognitive distortions and impaired judgement.” (Carpenter 2007, p.2) It is plain to see how alterations in one’s mood as a result of psychoactive substance use could lead to criminalized actions. It is suggested in research relating to the Psycho-pharmalogical Model that the groups that are most likely to commit crimes based on behavioral distortion are those consuming cocaine or amphetamines. (Carpenter 2007) However, on the use of drugs such as cannabis, there appears to be no defined link with crime levels in relation to this Model. (ibid.) In light of the findings on cocaine use, it has been identified that the chemicals contained in cocaine are likely to cause rash sexual behaviors, amnesic behaviors and accidents.

(Hammersley 2008) Also, the findings on the consequences of amphetamine consumption have found that such drugs are likely to cause aggression, rash sexual actions and violence. (ibid.) This information further reiterates the direct correlation that exists between chemically induced behaviors and criminality.

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***The Systematic Model***

The Systemic Model defines the drug-crime link in terms of the activities that arise as a result of the illegal drug-market. This can include fights over debt, transactions and injuries to bystanders. (Connolly 2006) This is an issue particularly in the Dublin region as there has been many cases where individuals have been harmed as a result of their participation in the drug-market. Such examples of the Systemic Model can be seen by referencing the Kinahan-Hutch feud. One newspaper article published by the Irish Independent in 2016 comprised a timeline of attacks and murders that occurred as a result of the Dublin gang’s feud. The article stated that between September of 2015 and the publication of the article in May 2016, at least 7 murders could be attributed to the actions of the Kinahan and Hutch gang feud. (Calnan 2016) To further contextualize the extent of such crimes, Russell (2017) confirmed more gang related crimes in a newspaper article in 2017 where he stated that there were 38 murders committed in 2016 in comparison to 29 such offences committed in 2015. Of those committed in 2015, 10 murders have been linked to the Kinahan-Hutch feud. (Russell 2017) Looking at the statistics provided, it appears that the drug related feud accounted for just over one-third of murder offences in the year 2015.

***The Common-cause Model***

Lastly, the Common-cause Model states that there is no direct link-between drugs and crime and rather that they are two separate issues that form as a result of similar factors. (Connolly 2006) The factors that influence a life of drug use and criminality alike are; low socio-economic status, unreliable parenting, low levels of educational attainment and inadequate employment prospects. (ibid.) This is an interesting perspective as it does not directly draw upon a link between drugs and crime but rather a third-party issue that accumulates the two issues at once. Taking drugs as a separate entity, Wilkinson and Marmot (2003) state that the use of drugs by an individual is a targeted response to a social breakdown. As for crime, research findings point towards young impressionable individuals who have a low IQ and subsequently a low educational attainment or

who have been poorly parented. (Weatherburn 2001) This constitutes two notches lost on the ladder of social opportunities. Low educational attainment and poor parenting are predictors of social breakdown and therefore highlight similarities in the determinants of one’s participation in drug consumption and/or crime.

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***Ireland’s History of Drug Use and Crime***

Dating back to the aftermath of the Second World War, Ireland had a relatively small crime rate in contrast to the level of crime recorded within the past two decades. In 1945, a total of 16,786 cases of crime were documented. (Brewer et al. 1993) The rate steadily rose during the period that followed, with the total number of indictable crimes recorded in 1993 reaching a figure of approximately 100,000. (ibid.) Indictable crimes include; offences against a person, offences against properties with violence, larcenies and other indictable offences. (Butler et al. 2016) See Appendix 1 for elevations in crime rates for the years between 1945 and 1993. Midway through this period during the late 1970’s and 80’s, Ireland’s drug culture ingrained itself within the society. This period is commonly referred to as the drug epidemic. (O’Gorman 1998) The use of the word epidemic reflects a rampant issue that appears to have had an adverse effect on Ireland’s economy. According to Butler et al. (2016), the crime statistics recorded by An Garda Síochána demonstrated an increase in crimes committed during the late 60’s and early 70’s. However, this is not reflective of the foreseeable drug epidemic. There was a decrease in reported criminal acts in 1973. This decrease was short-lived as the crimes reported in the years that followed increased again between 1974 and 1983. (Butler et al. 2016) The timing of augmented crime rates indicates that Ireland saw its first increase during the introduction of Ireland’s large-scale drug culture. It would appear that this is not a coincidence but rather the effects of drugs on criminal activity.

Regarding serious offences such as murder and manslaughter, annual statistics were mostly recorded in single figures until the 1970’s when annual crime rates consistently reached double-figures of 20 or above. (Brewer et al. 1993) A peak of 51 for such offences was reached in 1974. However, this figure can be partially attributed to the troubles between Northern Ireland and the Republic as 33 people were killed in one day that year as a result of 4 separate car bomb explosions. (ibid.) Nevertheless, the increase of figures to double figures disregarding this incident constitutes an increased level of murders and manslaughters committed. Butler et al.

(2016) has claimed that although figures were relatively low when compared with other European states, between the period of 1950 and 1998 cases of homicide were amplified by 600%. There are a number of reasons for such an amplification in figures. However, there has been significant research done to suggest that alcohol consumption was a major factor in a number of cases of murder. (Butler at al. 2016) The conclusion could be drawn that alcohol was a primitive factor in such cases due to the fact that it was not illegal and therefore easier to obtain than that of illegal drugs. Also, alcohol has been proven to provoke violent behaviors in those who consume it. (Adams and Holcomb 2019) To further exemplify the use of alcohol as a contributor of violent behaviors, approximately 50% of murders documented has shown evidence of alcohol consumption prior to the offence. (ibid.) Therefore, alcohol as a legal drug relates to crime in the way that is specified in the Psycho-pharmalogical Model. The evidence suggests that the use of alcohol is a key contributor in homicide cases as opposed to any other illicit substances or social factors.

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The emergence of gang violence and offences related to the drug-market can also be traced back by the decades. Disregarding the violent acts committed as a result of the troubles, it has been said that Ireland’s first armed robbery by a group known as Saor Éire marked a new era of gang-related criminal offences in 1967. (Butler et al. 2019) During this starting period, a family gang known as the Dunnes were considered to be the most notorious gang in Ireland due to their commitment to engaging in several armed robberies. (ibid.) Such gang-related offences have been documented in newspaper articles including the Irish Times and the Irish Independent with little academic research completed in this area. However, one article in the Irish Times has highlighted how murders in the 1970’s and 80’s were more controlled as opposed to more recent gang-killings that ensure that a higher quantity of murders are committed. (The Irish Times 2007) In other words, gang-related murders at present are taking place as a result of gang rivals trying to get one up on one another without any real reason. The relatively new Kinahan-Hutch drug gang falls into this category with its sporadic killing sprees that have already been explained and statistically referenced under the ideologies of the Systematic Model.

Burglary offences like all other offences have been recorded throughout the 20th century using Garda statistics as a primary source. The figures suggest that there was a 600% increase in burglaries between 1961 and 1984. Whilst there were only 3,000 burglaries committed in 1961,

there were a total of approximately 36,000 burglaries reported in 1984. (McCullagh 1986) The use of drugs alone is not the only reason for an increase in such offences. The increase of material goods including private cars, televisions and domestic households were major factors that allowed for a greater market for robberies to take place, particularly household robberies. (ibid.) However it is important not to disregard drugs from the equation altogether as the Routledge Handbook of Criminology made a statement in relation to their research on the drug-crime link that read:

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Much of the increase in the Republic of Ireland in the early eighties is attributed to the emergence of the use of illegal drugs, including heroin, as addicts frequently involved themselves in all sorts of theft and property crime to acquire money to feed the habit. (Brewer et al. 1997 cited in Butler et al. 2016, p.20)

This merely states that drug use was a vital component to the commitment of burglaries. However, the availability of a more valuable and varied material market made it easier and more worthwhile for drug users to obtain other people’s possessions. This is evidence that supports the Economic-compulsive Model which states that drug consumers commit such crimes to elicit income to feed their habit.

***Conclusion***

To summarize, drugs and alcohol have contributed to an increase in crime trends throughout Ireland’s history according to the literature. The drug and crime link does not just comprise of a single paradigm but is rather linked through the four Models detailed in this review; the Economic-Compulsive Model, the Psycho-Pharmalogical Model, the Systematic Model and the Common-cause Model. Through documenting the increase in crime rates dating back as far as the Second World War, it is clear to see how these Models explain the types of crimes committed as a result of the introduction of the drug epidemic around the late 1970’s and early 80’s. Much of the literature details how as illicit drug use has increased, the crime rates reflected the increase by doubling, tripling and multiplying by vast amounts. As the annual Garda Reports are the primary source for crime statistics and trends, it is suspected that the statistics do not encapsulate the entirety of crimes committed. This will be explored further in limitations under the ‘Methodology’ section. Overall, the statistics of crimes whether accurate or inaccurate and the popularity of drug use in Ireland indicates a strong correlation between the two.

**Chapter 2**

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**Methodology**

The information compiled in the findings of this project derive from a variety of secondary sources with the use of primary data being excluded from this study. The decision to use secondary data as opposed to primary data was made based on the nature of the proposed findings which have already been written about in a number of reports, journal articles and books. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been selected, referenced and analysed throughout this study from chosen secondary sources. The sources that were used as a point of reference throughout this research were; journal articles, books and research reports.

To create a credible argument for the use of secondary sources as opposed to primary sources, both types of data collection need to be defined. Firstly, primary research is any “research that is collected firsthand rather than found in a book, database or journal” (Driscoll 2011, p.154) whereas secondary research does not require the researcher to gather new information. Rather, it involves the researcher gathering data that already exists in the written form through sources such as those outlined above. Primary research methods involve the conduction of interviews and focus groups and the collection of information through questionnaires and surveys. (Driscoll 2011) If such research methods were used in this study, they would have had to be used on a sample that reflects the views of the entire general population. This would be incredibly time-consuming and costly. (Kamins and Stewart 1993) Also, the concluding information would be primarily based on speculation by individuals rather than facts. There may be some individuals who have a great knowledge of the topic area. However, they would have been regurgitating facts of which they found by reading various types of literature which is the role of the secondary researcher in this case.

Regarding the broad topic of the drug-crime link in Ireland, primary data was already collected by the relevant institutions. Although the researcher is writing about information that already exists, secondary researchers acquiring sources of data require “knowledge of their existence, and the means for accessing them” as well as “the time and effort to acquire them.” (Kamins and Stewart 1993, pp.1-2) Fortunately, reports by An Garda Síochána and studies completed in multiple environments are easily accessible through a range of online sources and printed books.

The fact that websites, data bases and books compile data that captures a period in time that has already passed is considered an advantage. It allows the researcher to explore trends and explore a timeline of events as opposed to one event that is happening at this specific moment in time.

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Upon deciding that a mixed method approach will be used, the findings mainly consisted of quantitative data supported by qualitative data. To distinguish between the two types of information, it has been stated that “qualitative data deals with meanings” whereas “quantitative data deals with numbers.” (Dey 2003, p.11). In the case of research on drugs and crime, quantitative data is more widely available and easily accessible. However, qualitative data is a useful support structure for quantitative results as it gives the researcher a broader understanding of the topic. The quantitative data that is used in this study was collected in the form of crime statistics recorded by An Garda Síochána and drug and crime statistics from surveys and interviews conducted in various studies.

In terms of limitations in obtaining data on the drug-crime link, much of the restrictions relate to an absence of studies conducted on the correlation in the 1970’s and 80’s. This is due to the fact that the problematic influence of drugs and alcohol was not theoretically linked in Ireland in the 1970’s and only gained attention in the 1980’s when the drug epidemic became a social disaster. Also, the recorded crime rates included in the ‘Discussion of Findings’ section that support the studies are not completely accurate. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether or not these published crime rates are reflective of actual crimes committed or there has been a change in how An Garda Síochána has recorded crimes throughout the years. Butler et al. (2016) states that crimes are only documented as crimes if they contravene the law but are also reported and recorded in the same way. An Garda Síochána cannot record crimes that have not been reported or detected. Sometimes the Gardaí are not informed that such crimes have taken place as the victim of the crime has not reported the crime. Some victims do not report crimes committed against them as “they do not wish to subject themselves to the intrusion of a criminal investigation, feel ashamed, believe the crime was too trivial or because it happened a substantial period of time ago.” (Butler et. al 2016, p.16) Such crimes that are unlikely to be reported include those in the area of domestic violence, sexual abuse and child abuse. (Butler et. Al 2016) It has also been outlined throughout many research articles that it is difficult to document with exact precision the number of crimes committed and drugs used. The reason for this is because

both activities are illegal. Therefore, individuals are more reluctant to expose themselves with regards to either of these social problems. (Bewley-Taylor et al. 2005) This means that if crimes are committed but the offender remains unnamed, the statistic will be null in void and not contribute to any research on the drug-crime link.

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The findings compiled in this piece of research will focus on three studies conducted in Ireland in the 1990’s; one conducted by the Garda Research Unit, a second conducted within Mountjoy Prison and a third and fourth study on drug use that was compared and contrasted. Furthermore, references to periods of increase or decrease in terms of crime are used as a supporting factor. Only crime rates recorded by An Garda Síochána will be referenced which excludes any results in relation to detected crime. The findings interpreted throughout the studies support the drug-crime link. Therefore, references are made to the Economic-compulsive Model, Psycho-pharmalogical Model and Common-cause Model. The Systematic Model of crime was excluded from this research as there was not as much evidence to support the Model when compared to the excessive amount of information available in relation to the other Models.

**Ethical Considerations**

The term ethics in relation to research is an umbrella term that refers to the guidelines, codes of conduct and protocols that must be followed by the researcher whilst gathering information. (Bell 2005) The collection of secondary data as opposed to primary data is much less complex. For primary research to be conducted, there are many more ethical considerations. For example, if interviews were conducted in aid of this research, the following protocols would have had to be considered and applied; informed consent, anonymity and any individuals partaking in the exercise would have to be given information on the rationale and results of their contribution to the research. This is to ensure that no ill-consequences are suffered by the participant as a result of their involvement in the research process. (Farnaz et al. 2017) It is expected that any research compiled within the secondary findings of this study would have been subject to such ethical considerations considering that the findings were found as a result of primary data collection.

In the case of gathering information on the drug-crime correlation, the only major ethical concern that is apparent when collecting secondary data is that of plagiarism. Plagiarism has been defined as;

1. Using someone else’s words as if they were your own

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1. Using someone else’s ideas as if they were your own
2. Using someone else’s results as if they were your own
3. Sharing work with someone else and pooling ideas
4. Getting your ideas from a text book (Dawson and Joyce 2006, p.3)

It is important to understand that as the findings within this research project are solely based on secondary research, all information compiled in this report will have to be adequately referenced. Thus, no information will be purposely plagiarized in this project. Furthermore, multiple reasons have been given as to why plagiarism is legally and ethically wrong;

1. You may get caught and lose marks
2. It is dishonest
3. Assignments that are plagiarized fail to demonstrate your knowledge of the work
4. You don’t learn anything by copying someone else’s work
5. It steals other people’s ideas (Dawson and Joyce 2006, p.3)

Citing and referencing the data found in this study will avoid any of the possibilities outlined above.

**Chapter 3**

**13**

**Findings**

The findings to be compiled in this section will consist of three studies that have previously been conducted in Ireland in an attempt to discover whether a link between drugs and crime truly exists. All of the results from the studies in this chapter were identified by various researchers who gathered their own primary data. Three of the studies took place in the late 1990’s whilst one comparative study was completed during the early 2000’s. The first study is a qualitative study conducted within a prison setting. The second study was conducted based on the professional opinions of those directly working with criminals. The final study is a comparative study between two similar sets of findings that were compiled in two separate non-consecutive years.

***Study 1***

Looking at the criminal population, there has been multiple studies conducted in prisons across Ireland that have also attempted to define a link between drugs and crime. One such study was carried out in Mountjoy Prison over a six-week period between mid-August and September of 1999. Mountjoy Prison was chosen as an ideal location to conduct such a study based on its vast drug-using population. Figures showed that 66% of the prison population at the time had a history of opiate use whilst 86% of the population were consuming cannabis. (Dillon 2001) Upon deciding that the location was ideal for research purposes, the researcher decided to compile a sample of participants by using qualitative methods. The method used to identify the sample was snowball sampling. (ibid.) Snowball sampling is defined as a method that “yields a study sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest.” (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, p.141) Once the results were gathered and the ideal candidates were selected, a total of twenty-nine prisoners were selected to take part in the study. The sample was comprised of twenty-one men and eight women, all of whom were between the ages of nineteen and forty-three. Each of these participants were subject to a one-to-one in-depth interview with the researcher who was the sole and only interviewer throughout the process. (Dillon 2001) This allowed for a consistency of results in relation to findings. The interview also allowed the researcher to determine the quality of the statistical findings.

To give the study a relevant background, the entire population possessed a criminal record. With regards to the sample, the crimes that the respondents committed ranged in variety and included; shoplifting, burglary, fraud, syringe attacks, mugging, murder, drug dealing and drug smuggling. Twenty-four out of twenty-nine respondents had admitted to using drugs before entering prison whereas five prisoners had not used drugs prior to their incarceration. Additional information was also provided by respondents that concluded that they all had low educational attainments with just two of the participants receiving their junior certificate qualification. It was also found that the entire sample experienced long periods of unemployment throughout their lives. (Dillon 2001) It is important to note that long periods of unemployment have also been linked with augmentations in crime rates. (Brosnan 2018) Only twenty-four participants from the sample said that they had engaged in drug use. Prior to imprisonment, those who used drugs chose opiates, in particular heroin, as their main drug of choice. (Dillon 2001)

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The key findings of this research concluded that thirteen respondents had been involved in offending behavior prior to their drug use, nine reported that they committed crimes as a result of their drug use and two participants stated that their drug use and criminal activities occurred simultaneously. (Dillon 2001) Of the thirteen that engaged in offensive behavior prior to their use of opiates, the majority of the respondents said they committed crimes during early adolescents. Additionally, they confirmed that once they began using opiates their criminal activity escalated. The entire nine respondents who committed crimes based on their escalated drug use said that they began to engage in daily criminal activities once they developed a dependency on opiates. The remaining two said that their drug using career and criminal career had occurred simultaneously. (ibid.) A total of three different perspectives that link drugs and crime were given in relation to findings.

***Study 2***

In 1998, a study was carried out by the Garda Research Unit to determine whether or not there was in fact a link between drug consumption and crime rates in Ireland. Unlike the first study, this study did not warrant participation from the individual involved in both crime and drug using behaviors. Instead, a sample of Gardaí from 27 stations across Ireland were appointed to observe whether drugs or alcohol were consumed prior to any criminal acts that were reported. In

an attempt to deplete any findings relating to drug offences or possession, the study excluded the Misuse of Drugs Acts and the Liquor Licensing Acts. (Dillon et al. 2001)

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The key findings of this research showed that during the trial period a total of 4,334 offences were recorded. Of these offences, 63% of crimes were observed by Gardaí to be committed under the influence of drugs or alcohol or both. On the contrary, just 37% of crimes were committed without the presence of a drug. Of the drug-positive crimes committed, 42% were attributed to alcohol consumption, 17% were related to drugs and 4% were associated with a combination of both drugs and alcohol. (Dillon et al. 2001) The crimes committed under the influence of drugs were categorized and showed the following results; opiates were present in 67.7% of the recorded offences, cannabis was present in 19.4% of offences, ecstasy was present in 7.1% of offences and amphetamines were present in 1% of offences. (ibid.) Other drugs that influenced crime in this study included; barbiturates, cocaine, hallucinogens and other substances. Delving in further, it was also found that alcohol was mostly associated with public order offences while drugs were commonly linked with robberies. (ibid.) Thus, there appears to be a partially concentrated link between certain types of drugs and specific crimes which be explored further in the ‘Discussion of Findings’ section.

***Keogh Study and Fury and Browne Study***

In an attempt to analyze the relevance of the Economic-compulsive Model, Connolly (2006) compiled a comparative analysis of two separate studies. The first study was completed by Keogh in 1997 on a sample of individuals who use illicit substances. The second study was carried out by Furey and Browne in 2004 on the same type of sample. Survey findings from Keogh’s study suggested that 59% of respondents credited crime as their main source of income. The average daily rate of expenditure per person stood at a total of 51 euro. 51% reported that they had begun their criminal career before engaging in any drug use whilst a lower figure of 30% claimed to have used drugs before committing any crimes. The remaining 19% of the sample stated that their drug use and criminal activities occurred simultaneously. Additionally, 81% of the participants said that they had been previously incarcerated. (ibid.) When the Furey and Browne study was conducted just seven years later, the figures were quite different to those compiled in Keogh’s research findings. Fury and Browne’s study concluded that just 13% of the sample population confirmed that they regularly commit crimes to illicit an income. The average

daily expenditure by each person jumped from 51 euro in 1997 to a total of 75 euro in 2004. Just 33% of respondents claimed that they engaged in criminal activities before they used drugs while 56% claimed to have used drugs before committing any crimes. The remaining 11% of drug users said that their criminal careers and drug use occurred concurrently. Only 66% of those in the Fury and Browne study said that they had been previously imprisoned. (ibid.) The vast differences in percentages between the two studies are apparently reflective of economic issues that occurred at the time.

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**Chapter 4**

**17**

**Discussion of Findings**

Based on the findings of this research, it has become clear that studies have shown a correlation between drugs and/or alcohol and crime rates. The findings outlined above will be analysed to reflect the theories provided within the literature review in an effort to identify which type of drug-related crime trend is the most popular and why.

***Interpretation of Study 1***

Beginning with the first study on Mountjoy Prison during 1999, many conclusions can be drawn in relation to varied drug use and alcohol use. Firstly, it was noted that heroin was the most popular type of opiate used among those involved in the study both before and during incarceration. (Dillon 2001) This is reflective of the second drug epidemic that occurred in Ireland in the mid-1990’s. (O’Gorman 1998) The number of heroin users were commonly identified by the number of individuals who sought help for their misuse of the substance. An increase was documented in the number of heroin users on methadone treatment programmes for the year in question and showed that at least 4,332 were abusing the substance. (Government of Ireland 2001) Also contributing to a prevalence of opiate use was the additional information supplied before the commencement of the study that showed how 66% of the entire prison population were involved in opiate use. (Dillon 2001) Thus, opiates seemed to be the most prevalent drug used among both the prison population and study sample which shows a strong correlation between opiate use and crimes.

Thirteen respondents from the sample explained how their offending behaviour commenced before they started using drugs whilst just two claimed that they had begun using drugs and committing offences simultaneously. It may be plausible to suggest that perhaps there was no apparent link between drugs and crime for in relation to these participants during their initial onsets. However, based on the literature it could be concluded that such a high proportion found themselves involved in both social problems as a result of the ideologies expressed in the Common-cause Model. The Model states how there is no direct link between drugs and crime yet both social problems occur as a result of social disadvantage. (Connolly 2006) This view is supported by the findings in the study as the entire sample were affected by disadvantages

including a low educational attainment and long periods of unemployment. However, it is important to note that many individuals in this grouping said that their criminal activity escalated when they eventually began to consume drugs. They explained how the expense of opiate use and their dependence on such drugs caused them to engage in crimes that were more profitable. (Dillon 2001) This aligns with the theory outlined in the Economic-compulsive Model of drugs and crime. Thus, a transition can be seen from a Common-cause perspective to an Economic-compulsive perspective

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Just nine participants involved in the study claimed that they committed crimes as a result of their drug use. Like the previous grouping of respondents, this group admitted to mainly engaging in crimes that earned them an income to feed their drug habit. In order to elicit this income, some participants said that they involved themselves in small-scale drug dealing and women said that they were more likely to partake in prostitution. The reasons as to why they selected these crimes was because they were less detectable than shoplifting and robberies. (Dillon 2001) In the years leading up to this study, crimes such as robberies were coincidentally declining with a figure of 6,547 recorded in 1996, 4,990 in 1997 and just 3,817 such offences in 1998. Subsequently, there was also an incline recorded in sexual offences over the three-year period. (An Garda Síochána 1999) As stated in the literature, a drug dependent individual cannot support their drug habit over an extensive period of time with the money that they receive via social welfare payments. (Carpenter 2007) This was reiterated in statements made by the prisoners in this study who explained how crime was the only way to ensure that they get their fix. (Dillon 2001) Again, the drug-crime link in relation to this grouping shows a strong and direct correlation with the Economic-compulsive Model.

***Interpretation of Study 2***

Results from the Garda Research Study of 1998 showed that drugs were a factor in the majority of the crimes committed during the study period. This majority was defined by a figure of 63 out of 100% which means that 63% of crimes could be attributed to the influence of drugs, alcohol or both. (Dillon et al. 2001) This figure is too high to be considered an extraordinary coincidence. It was also found that 42% of crimes were committed under the influence of alcohol. (ibid.) This could be due to the fact that alcohol as a legal substance is seen as safer to consume, less costly and more easily accessible than illicit substances. Also, there was evidence

to suggest that alcohol consumption was increasing in popularity in the years leading up to the study with 13.06 litres of alcohol on average being consumed by each member of the general population over 15 years of age. (Fanagan et al. 2007) See Appendix 2 for average annual consumption rates from 1995 to 2006. The figure of those consuming alcohol also ranks much higher than that of any other drug used that year. In the study, alcohol was mainly associated with public order offences. A public order offence can range from being drunk in a public place to disorderly conduct and the use of threatening language. (Lewenburg & Lewenburg Solicitors 2019) As stated in the literature, alcohol is mainly associated with violent and aggressive behaviours. Therefore, the observations made in the study support the theory provided by the Psycho-pharmalogical Model. To recap, the Model states that the chemicals within one’s drug of choice, in this case alcohol, cause individuals to act in a way that is considered offensive, violent or criminal. In respect of this study, the perspective of psycho-pharmalogical crimes appears to dominate any other perspectives posed by alternative Models.

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Moving on to the topic of illegal drugs in the study, drugs were observed to be a factor in just 21% of cases which is lower than the 37% of crimes committed without the influence of any substances. (Dillon et al. 2001) However, the drug using population is lower than that of the non-drug using population which could be a reason as to why the crime rate was lower. Illicit substances also did not show as much of an impact on crime as alcohol did. Again, this could be attributed to the population of alcohol consumers being higher than that of any other drug user. Like the previous study that confirmed a surge in opiate use among the prison population with 66% using the substance, opiates were recorded as the most common drug in this study. Opiates were reportedly a factor in 67.7% of crimes during the research period. (ibid.) Thus, the link between drugs and crime in this study may also be relative to the Economic-compulsive Model. This theory is supported with evidence from the study by the Garda Research Unit as they confirmed that those linked to crime through drugs were mostly involved in robberies. (ibid.) Robberies are committed to elicit income and goods and are seen as a profitable crime.

***Interpretation of Keogh Study and Furey and Browne Study***

The Keogh study conducted in 1997 noted that 59% of participants elicited an income by committing criminal offences. (Connolly 2006) Again, this could be reflective of the heroin epidemic that occurred in the mid 1990’s due to the timing of the study. (O’Gorman 1998) It was

interpreted by the researcher that the reason for the sharp increase of crime rates was due to high unemployment rates. In fact, unemployment levels were experienced at a rate of 84% across the sample population at the time. However, when contrasted with the percentage from the Furey and Browne study, there is a major gap. Only 13% admitted to committing crimes to elicit an income. The unemployment rate was extensively lower in the year of their study with only 55% of the sample confirming that they are unemployed. (Conolly 2006) The fact that individuals committing crimes to elicit an income dropped during times of high employment shows that illicit drug use has had less of an impact on crime rates than initially thought. Economic-compulsive crimes appear to be prevalent during times of socioeconomic decline. This makes sense as an individual who is addicted to a substance and wishes to spend an average of 51 euro on their fix each day would not be able to afford it. This reiterates the piece in the literature review that explicitly states how as the dependence for a drug increases, social welfare payments are unlikely to cover the expense. (Carpenter 2007) Thus, if an individual is unemployed or employed and not earning enough money, it is plausible to suggest that they may begin to engage in crime to elicit an income.

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In terms of whether drug use occurred before crime, crime occurred before drug use or both drugs and crime occurred simultaneously, the figures are quite different in relation to both studies. 51% of Keoghs participants claimed that they were involved in crime before they began using drugs in contrast with 33% from Furey and Browne’s study. (Connolly 2006) For those that committed crimes before using drugs, the Common-cause Model may be a fitting theory. As stated in the literature, social deprivation can cause both problems of drugs and crime to occur independently without the presence of a link between the two. Those who reported that their drug use and criminal activities occurred simultaneously are a minority and may also revert to the Common-cause Model as an explanation as to why such problematic behaviours arose. 30% of Keoghs sample and 56% of Furey and Browne’s sample claimed that their commencement of drug use began before they committed any offences. (ibid.) Of those, there may be links to the Economic-compulsive Model based on the fact that a percentage of the study previously claimed that they elicited income from crime. However, no Model can explain the totality of the sample as the only information that is given to indicate criminal behaviour is that in relation to gaining money for substance use. There is no information as to whether the criminal behaviour was

violent or offensive to suggest a possible link between alternative Models such as the Psycho-Pharmalogical Model.

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***Concluding Comments***

With reference to the Study 1 and Study 2, it is clear to see that there is a strong defined link between opiate use and crime rates. Furthermore, the types of crimes that opiate users have tended to engage in are those that are considered profitable as the money or possessions they gain from such crimes are likely to be used to support their drug use. Thus, a strong correlation is seen between drugs and crime with reference to the Economic-compulsive Model. Keogh’s study reconfirms this notion as he concluded that 59% of his sample admitted to eliciting an income through committing offences. However, Fury and Browne’s study confirmed that just 13% of their sample committed crimes that were seen as profitable. This was due to unemployment rates being lower for that year of study and therefore confirms a third-party influence on drug and crime trends. Thus, a link can also be identified in respect of the Common-cause Model. It appears that drug users can transition between the Economic-compulsive Model and the Common-cause Model given that less economic-compulsive crimes were reported during times of high employment.

In terms of the relevance of the Psycho-pharmalogical Model in Ireland, alcohol was only observed to be a factor in the first study whilst the second study and remaining comparative studies did not examine any factors relating to alcohol. However, based on the first study alone, alcohol is seen to have contributed to more crimes than that of any other substance. To reiterate, alcohol is the highest consumed substance in Ireland in respect of alternative illicit drugs. Therefore, the population of alcohol users in Ireland is much higher than that of the opiate using population for example. With respect to the Models outlined, alcohol is the main drug that has contributed to violent and public offences while illicit drug use has been more commonly associated with robberies and prostitution.

**Conclusion**

The literature review compiled a series of alternative frameworks that drew upon the international link that exists between drugs and crime. These frameworks were inclusive of the Economic-compulsive Model, the Psycho-pharmalogical Model, the Systematic Model and the

Common-cause Model. The Models were highlighted throughout the literature review when a compilation of drug and crime trends were documented using an Irish historical context. A more thorough investigation was made in relation to the drug-crime link in respect of the findings. Three studies were included in the research findings compiled within this report; one conducted in Mountjoy Prison, a second conducted with the assistance of An Garda Síochána and the last one conducted on the Keogh and Furey and Browne studies. The key findings of the studies firstly suggest that alcohol consumption has a major influence on elevated crime rates in Ireland. Alcohol as a substance is particularly relative to the Psycho-pharmalogical Model. Studies also confirmed that of all drugs used, opiates were more likely to contribute to increased crime rates. The study from the Garda Research Unit highlighted the prevalence of drug use among those who commit robberies which is a profitable crime. This confirmed that opiates as the leading type of drug in Ireland has a dramatic influence on the level of robberies committed and other profitable crimes. This finding was linked to the ideologies of the Economic-compulsive Model. However, the figures posed in relation to both Keogh’s study and the Furey and Browne study suggest that there is a link observed between unemployment rates and crime. This allows for an argument to be made that some drug-related crimes can be attributed to the Common-cause Model. It could be argued that if people had enough money to afford their illicit substances, crime rates would decrease dramatically. Therefore, drug-related crime could be considered a tri­partite notion that accepts the fact that one factor can influence another rather than a straight forward correlation between drugs and crime. Nevertheless, this research concluded the researcher’s hypothesis which that there is a correlation between drugs and crime in Ireland.

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**Appendices**

**Appendix 1**

**TOTAL INDICTABLE CRIMES 1945-93 ROl and NI**

**ROI**

**NI**

120000 100000 80000 60000 40000 20000

**Total Number of Crimes**

0

**28**

1945 1951 1957 1963 1969 1975 1981 1987 1993

**Years**

**Appendix 2**

|  |
| --- |
| *rr*err*
 |

**1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2009 2004 2005 2006**

**16**

**14 12 10 8** 6

**2**

**0**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **le- Beer** | **7.58** | **7.89** | **8.04** | **6.22** | **8.25****i** | **8.06** | **7.93** | **7.71** | **7.39** | **7.19** | **7.04** | **6.83** |
| **s Spirits** | **2.12** | **2.30** | **2.37** | **2.44** | **2.75** | **3.04** | **3.08** | **3.17** | **2.49** | **2.51** | **2.51** | **2.57** |
| **.e. Wine** | 1 06 | 1.26 | 1.34 | 1.53 | 1.72 | 1.87 | 2.06 | 2.27 | 2.41 | 2.71 | 2 75 | ***2.***87 |
| **4- Cider** | **0.63** | **0.69** | **0.77** | **0.87** | **1.00** | **1.13** | **1.23** | **1.07** | **1.06** | **1.06** | **1.09** | **1.09** |
| f Total | 11,38 | 12 14 | 12,53 | 13.06 | 13,72 | 14.09 | 14.30 | 14.22 | 13.35 | 13.48 | 13.40 | **13-36** |



**Appendix 3**

**29**

**Appendix 4**

**30**

