Drug Trafficking

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INTRODUCTION

Internet technology and its development have taken us to the next level of evolution (Dingledinel, Mathewson & Syverson, 2004). It has impacted almost every aspect of our lives.But it also has its own disadvantages such as enabling criminals to carry out their criminal operations in any corner of the world without being physically present(Sharma et al., 2018). Due to emergence of innovation in technologies, numerous ways have opened up for illegal trades, one of which is that of drugs.

It is a well-known fact that human beings have been using drugs since time immemorial, but the way they are used remains one of their most confusing behaviours(Evolutionary models of human drug use Wiki, n.d.).Though,fast rate proliferation of drug markets is taking place online with recent evidences suggesting the availability of any drug, they are the so-called cryptomarkets or the dark net markets that have been grabbing eyeballs for the guaranteed anonymity they provide to the users, be they sellers or buyers (Mounteney, Oteo & Griffiths, 2016). Researchers say, "There are now around 50 online marketplaces on the 'dark web' that trade illegal drugs, new psychoactive substances (NPS), prescription drugs and other – often illegal – goods and services" (Kristy, 2016). The internet has drastically changed the ways of doing business, including those of illegal markets.

Many organizations generate backend data that is dynamically retrieved through Web-form-based interfacesand thus not indexed by conventional search engines and this hidden, invisible, and unindexed-contentis called the Deep Web (Jung, Chun & Geller, 2008).The websites that form a part of the deep web cannot be accessed through the conventional search engines and requires specific software and configurations(Sharma et al., 2018). These sites contain the thoughts and ideas of many secret organizations, groups, and individuals who want to remain anonymous (Broséus et al., 2017). The dark web is a small portion of the deep web that is used mainly for illicit activities, because of the anonymity it offers it to its users (Mounteney, Oteo & Griffiths, 2016).

In order to venture into the deep web, a user will have to download a special browser which hidesa website's identity or IP, such as The Onion Router or TOR. As per the experts, "TOR encrypts web traffic in layers and bounces it through randomly-chosen computers around the world, each of which removes a single layer of encryption before passing the data on to its next hop in the network" (Greenberg, November 2014).

Cryptomarkets also involves financial aspects and thus, these markets also need to have some special forms of currency to provide a substantial level of anonymity. This is done by using cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin(Cox,2016). The present paper lays focus on thisnew means of acquiring illicit drugsfrom the markets available on the dark web, how these so called cryptomarkets have evolved through the use of technology to evade law and enforcement, their future and the role of governments in preventing this version of drug trafficking.

BACKGROUND

Drugs are defined as all substances and chemicals that should not be used for any purpose other than for medical and scientific research; if they are used for purposes other than these, they are called illicit drugs (Kassaye, 1999). Drugs are as old as human history and have been used for a variety of reasons in plethora of cultures; for religious purposes, for entertaining purposes, for altering the states of consciousness, as a matter of proud and for obtaining relief from pain, sadness and distress(Parmar et al., 2015).The black trading of drugs starts developing in jurisdictions where the law prohibits or restricts their sale (Drug trafficking, 2017). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime defines drug trafficking to bea global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017). Several studies and researches have been conducted on the illegal trade of illicit drugs on the dark net. Martin gives a detailed description of the illegal drugs trade on the dark web, presenting the concepts of cryptomarkets and their commercial operations, analyses online and offline markets and discusses and suggests law enforcement practices (Martin, July 2017).

On the other hand, Buxton &Bingham in explain that how the online drug trafficking reduces the scope of violence that occurs in traditional drug markets and how this approach can lead to dedication of resources towards more serious cybercrimes (Buxton & Bingham, 2015). Studies such as (Broséus et al., 2016), (Europol, November 2017), (Kruithof et al., 2018) and (Phelps and Watt, 2014) are area-specific, and analyse the situations in the respective regions. Some others analyse various cryptomarkets. Silk Road, the largest online drug market has been a topic of discussion in several papers (Aldridge & Décary-Hétu, 2014; Barratt, 2014). The geographical analysis of Agora and Evolution has been performed in (Dolliver et al., 2018) and (Broséus, 2017) respectively. Cox talks about how feedbacks and ratings impact the reputation of the vendors on cryptomarkets (Cox, 2016).Aldridge and Décary-Hétu have tried to project the future of the illicit drug markets (Aldridge et al., 2016). The same has been presented by Mounteney, Griffiths and Vandam (Mounteney, 2016). The market of illegal drugs, be they produced in laboratories or grown naturally, is gigantic and it is estimated that the annual global trade is worth $321 billion (Drug trafficking, 2017).

Today, majority of the countries in the world are getting trapped in the vicious circle of drug abuse and trafficking with the number of drug addicts increasing day by day due to many socio-economic reasons such as unemployment, poverty and socio-political disturbances (Parmar et al., 2015). Figure 1 shows the number of people by age,worldwide, as reported by the UNODC Report 2018 losing their lives due to drug use during the time period 2000-2015.

DARK WEB, DEEP WEB AND 'THE ONION ROUTER'

As per the experts, "searching on the internet today can be compared to dragging a net across the surface of the ocean. While a great deal may be caught in the net, there is still a wealth of information that is deep, and therefore, missed (Finklea, July 2017)."Thus, internet can be thought of as composed of two parts: one is the "Surface Web" and the other is the "Deep Web". The Deep Web refers to "a class of content on the Internet that, for various technical reasons, is not indexed by search engines" (Finklea, July 2017). The dark web lies in the farthest corners of the deep one and is infamous for harbouring criminal and illegal activities such as trafficking of drugs, sex and humans, child pornography, sale of arms and weapons, sale of exotic animals and other illegal goods and services. The websites on dark

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