

Factors Affecting the Tendency of Drug Abuse among Drug Addicts: A Case Study in the Northern Region of Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Drugs are the scourge of a country. The social phenomena of drug abuse is a complex issue and have led to serious social problems among individuals in Malaysia. The aim of this study is to identify the factors which influenced drug addicts, based on the information obtained from the National Anti-Drug Agency (NADA) in the small region area in Kedah for 2015. A total of 975 drug addicts referred to NADA were used in this study. Our results indicated that the social, environmental, and personal factors as well as the level of education significantly affect fresh and relapse drug abusers.

Keywords: *social-environmental factor, personal factor, protective factor, Chi-square test*

INTRODUCTION

The close geographical propinquity of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand which is also known as the "Golden Triangle" area and other Southeast Asian countries that produce illicit drugs have contributed to drug use in Malaysia (Fauziah and Naresh 2009). According to Usman Ahmad Karofi (2005), a drug is abused when its usage is socially and medically disapproved. Therefore, drug abuse is a situation when a drug is taken out of any medication and socially disapproved for the use. From the definition, it can be concluded that drug addiction means the continued use of drugs, which leads to dependence on the drug because the addict anticipates pain or discomfort if they withdraw from the use of the drug.

In order to show that drug abuse is a major and serious social problem, the Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, on April 2016, declared that a total of 131,841 drug addicts have been registered in Malaysia between January 2010 and February 2016. Based on report released by the National Drug Information System, National Anti-Drug

Agency (NADA), from the total drug addicts, 127,797 were men and 4,044 were women (Farhana 2016). A study conducted by the Education Ministry involving 35,755 respondents, which consisted of students from secondary level found 1,457 of them involved in drug abuse. Kedah showed the highest number of students who tried drugs (274), followed by Kelantan (197), and Perak (180). Based on statistics, Form Five students recorded the highest percentage of taking drugs at 40.6%, followed by Form Four with 32.5%, Form Three with 19.8%, Form Two with 5.4%, and Form One with 0.08% ("Kedah the highest", 2016). This situation had a negative impact especially on their performance in studies.

Many factors contribute to drug abuse. A study conducted by Taheri et al. (2016), stated four main factors that affect drug use among people, this include environmental factors (friendly gatherings and socializing with drug users), family factors (the presence of a drug user in the family, loneliness, separation from the family, and family problems and disputes), personal factors (attracting the opposite sex, wealth, being an athlete, curiosity, and source of energy, the ignorance and arrogance of youth, and illness), and social factors (having a hard job, unemployment, the lack of access to recreational facilities, and the easy access to drugs). Research done by Tam and Foo (2013) found that the top two significant factors contributing to drug abuse are peer influence and curiosity. In Malaysia, family factors such as parental behavior, family relationships, home atmosphere, and economic standing are not the factors which contribute to drug abuse compared to other countries (Tam Cai Lian n.d).

The level of education contributes to the risk of drug and alcohol abuse. "The relationship between" (2015) describes that those in the lowest level of education or never went to school have a high risk of being involved in drug or alcohol addiction. Thus, this study was conducted to examine the factors affecting the tendency of drug abuse among drug addicts in small areas in Kedah.

METHODOLOGY

The secondary data was obtained from the National Anti – Drug Agency (NADA) in a small region in Kedah. A total of 975 valid and complete information data of all drug addicts for 2015 were selected for this study.

Table 1 presented the three main contributing factors which were considered in this study including social factors, environmental factors, and personal factors based on the information data given. The protective factors were classified to the educational achievement which is the higher level and lower level of education. Higher educational level is the education beyond secondary level, especially education provided by a college or university. The study was chosen to include persons with a degree, diploma, certificate, or any equivalent qualification for higher education level. Qualifications or certificates from secondary and primary school such as *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (Malaysian Certificate of Education), *Penilaian Menengah Rendah* (Lower Secondary Evaluation), and *Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah* (Primary School Evaluation Test) are categorized as lower levels of education.

Descriptive analysis statistics is used to describe the profile information of drug addicts including the gender, type of drug used, educational level, contributing factors of drug abuse, and status of drug abusers whether fresh or relapse addicts. Relapse is a resumption of drug taking behavior after a period of abstinence (Jordi and Magi, 2003). The analysis includes the measurement of frequency and percentage. The Chi-square test is used to indicate the relationship between two categorical variables such as the status of drug abusers among contributing and protective factors. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics.

Table 1 Contributing and Protective Factors

Contributing Factors			Protective Factors
Social Factors	Environmental Factors	Personal Factors	
Pleasure	Peer Influence	Overcome mental illness	Higher educational level
Stimulus		Reduce pain	Lower educational level
		Curiosity	

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents' demographic profiles shown in Table 2 provided a background information about drug addicts. The profile information was represented based on the frequency and percentage in order to illustrate the information data. The number of respondents considered in this study was 975. The results showed that the majority of drug addicts are males which is 957 (98.2%) compared to females of only 18 (1.8%). From the figure, fresh addicts indicated a higher percentage of 531 (54.5%) than relapsed addicts of 444 (45.5%).

From the data on academic achievement, 930 (93.9%) of the respondents have a lower educational level and 45 (6%) are from higher educational level. Opiates were the major drug abused among drug addicts which is 771 (79.1%) compared to marijuana (*ganja*) which consisted of only 69 (7.1%). Opiates cover a huge variety of drugs, ranging from legal drugs such as fentanyl, codeine, and morphine to illegal drugs such as heroin and opium (Eric, n.d.). The findings of the study showed that personal factors include overcoming mental illness, reduce pain, and curiosity as the primary factors on the tendency for drug use which is 380 (38.9%), followed by environmental factors which is 316 (32.4%), and social factors contributed the lowest percentage which is 279 (28.6%).

Table 2 Profile Information of Drug Addicts

Variables	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Male	957 (98.2)
Female	18 (1.8)
Status	
Fresh addicts	531 (54.5)
Relapsed addicts	444 (45.5)
Types of drug	
Amphetamine - type stimulants (ATS)	135 (13.8)
Marijuana (<i>ganja</i>)	69 (7.1)
Opiate	771 (79.1)
Protective factor	
Higher levels of education	45 (6)
Lower levels of education	930 (93.9)
Affecting factor	
Social factor	279 (28.6)
Environmental factor	316 (32.4)
Personal factor	380 (38.9)

A chi-square test of association was performed by cross tabulating two variables, namely contributing and protective factors were cross-tabulated through chi-square test. Based on results in Table 3, we obtained a chi-square value of 15.896** and 2 degrees of freedom with a p-value of less than .01. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the status of drug addicts influence the factor of taking drugs.

Table 3 Association between the Status of Taking Drugs and Contributing Factors

Status	Contributing factor			Total
	Social factor	Environmental factor	Personal factor	
Fresh addicts	207 (182) 34.3%	172.1 (199) 37.5%	151.9 (150) 28.2%	531
Relapsed addicts	173 (198) 44.6%	143.9 (117) 26.4%	127.1 (129) 29%	444
Total	279	316	380	975

$$\chi^2 = 15.896^{**} \text{ (df = 2) } **p\text{-value} < 0.01$$

The results obtained were: 34.3% of fresh addicts compared to relapse addicts of 44.6% on social factors, 37.5% of fresh addicts compared to relapse addicts of 26.4% on environmental factors, and 28.2% of fresh addicts compared to relapsed addicts of 29% on personal factors.

Table 4 showed that the association between the status of taking drugs and protective factors consist level of education. We got a chi-square value of 5.273** and 1 degree of freedom with a p-value of less than .05. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the level of education influence the factor of taking drugs.

Table 4 Association between the Status of Taking Drugs and Protective Factors

Status	Protective factor		Total
	Higher levels of education	Lower levels of educations	
Fresh addicts	24.5 (32) 6%	506.5 (499) 94%	531
Relapsed addicts	20.5 (13) 2.9%	423.5 (431) 97.1%	444
	45	930	975

$$\chi^2 = 5.273 * \text{ (df = 1) } *p\text{-value} < 0.05$$

In this case, it shows 6% of fresh compared to relapse addicts of 2.9% for higher education level. 94% of fresh compared to relapse of 97.1% for lower education level.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the most frequent factors contributing to the tendency of drug abuse amongst fresh and relapsed addicts are personal factors, namely overcome mental illness, reduce pain, and curiosity. To ensure that the number of registered drug addicts in Malaysia decreases, the Government and schools can establish courses or rehabilitation programs to educate and provide knowledge on the negative consequences of taking drugs among adolescents and students. The support from family members, community, and peers are very important to ensure that drug addicts change their habits and are free of a drug taking lifestyle after the rehabilitation process.

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