

Breaking the Barriers: Understanding Employer Reluctance to Hire Former Drug Addicts in Malaysia

Nurfatin Afza Binti Mohamad Murad¹, Azlina Mohd Khir², Aini Azeqa Ma'rof³ & Wan Munira Wan Jaafar⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Department of Social and Development Sciences Universiti Putra Malaysia
Coessponding Author Email: nurfatinafza@gmail.com

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Abstract

This work aims at establishing why Malaysian employers have not been willing to employ those who used to be drug addicts. Three main obstacles are identified by the research through in-depth qualitative interviews with employers from different industries: fear of stigma, concerns with reliability and safety at the workplace, and nonexistence of favorable environments or regulations. This is primarily because of prejudice and fears about slipping that so often render ex drug addicts as untamed or untrustworthy employees among employers. Employers are also dissuaded from considering ex-addicts because they also feel incompetent to cause prevention risks without institutional support even when there are no stated policies or incentives. The truth is that while some companies gladly declare that they participate in recruitment of people who have undertaken rehabilitation, they are ready to accept such a subject only if he has documents which will testify about his successful passing and guarantees that he will be given further help. The outcomes imply the need to organize specific efforts aimed at eradicating such barriers. Educational programs of the employer are necessary to combat stereotypes and increase public awareness of what can be done by persons who rebuilt their lives after addiction. Additionally, modifications in policies where either taxes or law protect firms could reduce bias in hiring a diverse workforce even more. Also, programs of certification particularly when the rehabilitation is successful and institutions for support when hiring newly reformed employees would reassure businesses of the reliability of employees who have been through drug addiction. The report includes a detailed action plan which implies improving drug addicts' employment rates which, in its turn, helps them to be socially resumed and reduces a number of people who go back to drug consuming. It does this by dealing with the issues of stigmatization and institutional decline pertinent to this subject. These tactics may likely enhance a diverse and better pool of human resources in Malaysia.

Keywords: Stigma, Past Drug Abusers, Employers' Hesitation

Introduction

Drug addiction is a widespread social and public health problem in Malaysia with long-term effects on both individuals and the community. The cornerstone of Malaysia's drug addiction strategy is its rehabilitation programs, which work to reintegrate former users into society in addition to treating their addiction. Nevertheless, in spite of these initiatives, it is frequently extremely difficult for ex-drug users to find steady work, which is essential for their effective recovery and social reintegration. In addition to providing financial independence, employment gives recovering addicts a feeling of purpose and community, all of which are essential for avoiding relapse. However, unfavorable opinions and prejudices endure, posing significant obstacles to employment.

Research Objectives

This study aims to identify the reasons behind Malaysian employers' reluctance to hire ex-drug addicts and to suggest possible solutions for removing these obstacles.

In Malaysia, those who have recovered from drug addiction are still not well-represented in the workforce. The reasons behind employers' reluctance to hire these people are frequent policy gaps, safety concerns, and stigma. Comprehending these variables is important in order to build efficacious measures that may encourage more inclusive employment procedures. Important new information about the challenges experienced by ex-drug addicts in the Malaysian labor market is provided by this study. Policymakers and social organizations can create focused policies to enhance job outcomes for ex-addicts and support their successful reintegration into society by recognising these impediments.

Literature Review

Substance use is a social and public health issue that has impacts in the long term for the Malaysian population. The key element of Malaysia's drug addiction policy is the reintegration of drug dependents into the society along with helping them get cured. However, despite such measures, it often becomes nearly impossible for the former drug dependent individuals to obtain a proper job, which is so crucial for their stability and proper rehabilitation in the society.

Apart from the income, employment offers the recovering addicts a sense of direction to avoid relapse, and they are part of people. However, negative attitudes and perceptions remain fixed and, therefore, constitute major barriers to employment. Malaysian employers' reluctance to hire ex drug addicts is the main focus of this study, the reasons for this reluctance, and recommendations that will help in eradicating them.

Malaysian drug abusers who have come out of this vice will still find it difficult to seek employment in Malaysia. Among the listed causes concerning employers' unwillingness to give those people a job, the most common issues are frequent policy gaps, concerns to the safety of the employee or other people, and internalized stigma. Understanding these variables is beneficial when seeking to develop effective strategies capable of improving the employment practices of an organization. By implementing this study, new valuable findings regarding the difficulties faced by former drug users upon their social reintegration creating a new life in the labor market of Malaysia are revealed. These barriers can be noticed by

policymakers and social organizations, which can develop specific policies derived on booster job results for the ex-addicts and successful reintegration into society.

Research Methods

The qualitative research approach of the study generates a vast amount of perspectives from Malaysian employers through the semi structured interviews conducted. Employer reluctance can only be understood when their suppositions are broken down and analyzed with the help of the qualitative method (Creswell, 2013). To ensure participants come from different industry sectors, firm sizes, and past employment experiences of recruiting ex-drug users, purposive sampling was used. Indeed, fifteen employers only participated, and interviews were conducted across the states of Malaysia (Rahim & Salleh, 2021). The employers' attitudes, concerns, and experiences are very important and necessary for the understanding of the complex issue at hand given that the sample size is relatively very small but probably because of this, the interviews were longer, ranging between 45 to 75 minutes per interview. To ensure that participants' details remained anonymous and confidential, the interviewed subjects gave their consent for their conversation to be audio taped, transcribed, and anonymised as conducted by (Creswell, 2013). Another technique employed in this study was thematic analysis through which it was determined the repeating patterns in the collected data. By doing this the researchers were able to categorize the attitudes portrayed by the employers and their concerns into viable themes justifying why they fail to hire ex drug addicts (Smith, 2018). The correct IRB provided approval for the study's ethical considerations. To ensure that the participants' identities and that of their companies were not revealed, participants provided their informed consent, and all names were accordingly altered (Creswell, 2013).

Results

The interviews revealed three key themes: The difficulties of genuine appraisal include persisting prejudice, concerns about insurances, and weaknesses of frameworks.

Stigma that Remains

There were common biases on employers who complained that former drug addicts give poor performance, are unreliable and had questions on their honesty. As a cultural and societal construct in Malaysia, this substantially presents a considerable challenge to employment (Corrigan & Wassel, 2008 Rahim & Salleh, 2021).

Informant 1: Instead, employers tend to hear something different: rather than receptionists' proof of their skills or dependability, they tend to view former drug addicts through the lens of skepticism and mistrust based on a range of socially constructed prejudices."

Informant 2: This is the case because; drug addiction is evils' that is widely despised. This resides in the fact that even if an individual has moved through the rehabilitation process and done it efficiently, that individual still struggles to prove his or her worth to employers.

Issues with Risk Management

Organizations had massive concerns about safety and reliability in specific areas where the consequences for the worker misconduct can be lethal. Employers were wary of the risk of

the individual going back to drugs and possible impact on safety issues; employees who were former drug addicts were thus not hired (Parker & White, 2020; Said & Rahman, 2020).

Informant 3: "The views are that most employers are unlikely to employ any previous drug addiction candidates because they fear a relapse leading to disruption of organizational safety measures."

Informant 4: >Most employers might frown at the idea of a recovering drug addict going back to his or her drug taking habits again based on the status of the job for which he or she is hired, especially in sectors that entail a lot of risks for the workers involved.

Lack of Adequate Structures

Many of the firms noted a lack of incentives or even rules related to the hiring of former drug addicts as being a significant barrier. In particular, employers failed to anticipate the potential risks associated with hiring candidates with substance dependence history when failing to receive institutional support or guidelines (Baron and Kreps, 1999; Ismail and Noor, 2019).

Informant 5: There is no guideline or encouragement to help employers overcome their prejudices while hiring employees; this situation continues to prejudice former drug addicts, as Dennis and Hale noted.

Informant 6: "Possible risks of hiring these candidates are challenging to manage by employers, which is why in the absence of institutional support or standards, employers act conservatively."

Regarding Rehabilitation Programs: Mentioning the same issue, the 7th informant says that employers fail to give employment to the former addicts because of their lack of knowledge of rehabilitation programs' efficacy despite their existence.

Informant 8: Sure, rehabilitation programs are helpful, however, the stigma does mask the helpfulness of these programs unless the employer is informed of the results.

Employer Perceptions

The general unwillingness was long seen, though some companies claimed they wanted to hire the former addicts if certain parameters are met, like passing the rehabilitation tests. This was compounded by the fact that there was then a lot of stigma towards persons with substance dependence and little understanding of the effectiveness of reintegration programs (Laudet and White, 2010; Yusoff and Azman, 2017).

Regarding General Reluctance

Informant 1: The overall view is reserved, but maybe some of us would consider employing a person who used to take drugs if certain circumstances are met. There is tension that arises due to concern with future issues.

Informant 2: The writers contradict that employers in general seek employment because of the lack of confidence in the rehabilitation programs and the prejudices which make it hard to consider the applicants' past histories of substance dependency.

Conclusion

From the results, the problems that hinders work inputs for ex-drug addicts in Malaysia include stigma, safety concerns, and lack of supportive legislation. These barriers not only can hinder a person from becoming a productive member of the society again but also restricts them from being a part of it.

These issues require specific efforts to be made and it is the need to make targeted interventions. They may include education programs for employers and employees, powered sessions for sensitisation of employers on drug dependency, rehabilitation and the benefits of employment of ex drug addicts. Such measures will go further towards reducing the level of stigma and increasing awareness of the process of rehabilitation. Among such measures may be the inclusion of financial motivation in the form of tax incentives from the government to companies hiring former addicts, with the ability to deduct a certain percentage of taxes. It also provides a clear framework for how companies can support these workers, which may provide the assurance that some organizations require. Perhaps it will be useful to issue the former addicts an official certificate of their treatment completion; this way, employers will have little to fear for their reliability and honesty.

Employers also need institutional support as well as well articulated policies. Examples include developing relationships that can be relied on which a company needs when issues regarding a former addict employee surface. This may involve availability of rehabilitation or counseling services support groups, as well. Enhanced Knowledge of Rehabilitation Initiatives: The success of rehab programs and evidence of achievements could be utilized in order to counter these beliefs and erase misconceptions about hiring half baked employees who are part of drug addiction before.

Employers also have a problem related to the reluctance of willingness to reappoint the former drug users in the market in order for them to be in a position to reintegrate themselves into the society again. Therefore, Malaysia has the potential to provide a propitious working environment for ex-addicts and beneficial for all the parties involved after eradicating social prejudice, offering suitable support mechanisms and incorporating relevant legislation. Business managers, people within communities, and lawmakers should come to an agreement on how to enact favorable hiring practices. Policies concerning employment, education, positive examples, and assistance are one of the ways of improving the working conditions of those who used to be drug consumers. S Such findings imply that generalizability of results is dampened by the sample size and the study's qualitative approach. Moreover, there is an opportunity for providing biased information since the given data is received from employers. Long-term studies that track the employment outcomes of former drugged individuals should be explored in future research. In addition, comparative studies that have been made within each of Malaysia's diverse cultural zones may reveal additional information on how the various regional differences affect employer perception.

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