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The Constraints of Former Drug Users to Maintain Self-Recovery

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Abstract

The phenomenon of drug abuse in the community is becoming increasingly serious and difficult. This is getting worse because the drug which was originally a painkiller was abused. Even today's drug supply is very easy to get at a cheap price. The main objective of this research is to identify the constraints faced by former drug users to maintain self-recovery after completing the rehabilitation program. This research is qualitative research that uses a case study approach through in-depth interview methods. This research was conducted at two Terengganu State Parole Offices, Kuala Terengganu District Parole Office and Hulu Terengganu District Parole Office. This research involves an in-depth interview with 13 parolees as a research respondent. Sample selection was done through purposive sampling technique and the data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis. Research

findings show that there are two major constraints that former drug users have to face in maintaining self-recovery namely internal constraints and individual external constraints.

Keywords: Drug Recidivism, Drug Users, Internal Constraints, External Constraints.

Introduction

The phenomenon of back to drug abuse or so-called recidivism is a major challenge in drug treatment and rehabilitation. Tims (1981) states that the recidivism rate is high because it is a cyclical phenomenon. In Malaysia, there are many drug treatment and rehabilitation programs implemented since 1975 (Abdul Ghafar, 1992). However, every year about recidivist cases showed a very alarming increase.

According to the National Anti-Drug Agency (AADK) Drug Report 2016, statistics on drug abuse detected nationwide from January to December 2016 show that a total of 30,844 drug users have been detected. This showed an increase of 4,176 people compared with the same period in 2015 which recorded 26,668 drug users (AADK, 2016). Of the 30,844 drug users detected, 7,921 people were repeating drug users representing 25.7%. The amount actually showed an increase of 1,542 compared to 2015 which recorded a total number of drug users recurring of 6,379 drug users. On average, throughout the period from January until December 2016 there are 22 recurrent drug users identified each day.

If it is thought to be logical, as more and more drug users follow the treatment and recovery program, the number of repeat drug users is decreasing, but the reality is the opposite. Although drug users have been involved in drug treatment and rehabilitation programs, most of them still fail to maintain a drug-free lifestyle. If this group cannot be restored, the demand for drugs will continue to increase and ultimately it will affect the process of treatment and rehabilitation that has been done by the government. Therefore, in order to implement the nation's desire to achieve the zero-drug vision, continuous efforts must be made to combat drug abuse symptoms down to the grassroots.

Literature Review

There are various constraints that cause the occurrence of a recidivist phenomenon. Among the constraints faced by former users in maintaining self-improvement are the internal and external constraints of individuals. Individual personal constraints are the main constraints that cause recidivist. According to Cheung, Lee, & Lee (2003), in their research on 21 drug users in a rehab center in Hong Kong found that successful respondents who refrained from taking re-drugs had a good level of cognitive development because they knew the good effects and bad use of drugs. According to Sun (2007), based on a study conducted in Southwest, United States against 32 female drug users, found that a total of 26 women expressed false beliefs about drugs was the only way to solve the problem they faced was their cause re-taking drugs. A total of 16 women said they re-use drugs because of their inferiority. Meanwhile, 8 women say that the reason they re-take drugs is that they believe that "it's okay to try once".

In addition, the formation of one's self-esteem also affects the individual either to re-use drugs or not. This is because former drug users who have high self-esteem will easily receive and undergo treatment in the center and they are also able to get out of the drug abuse problem (Mahmood et al., 1999). Meanwhile, according to Chen (2006), in his research touched on the importance of 'self-efficacy'. The 'self-efficacy' is capable of encouraging drug users to stay out of the billing cycle when the drug treatment and rehabilitation program ends. However, this "self-efficacy" cannot be formed by itself and requires support from the environment, especially the treatment and rehabilitation programs being followed by former drug users.

In addition to individual internal constraints, external constraints also affect a former drug user to re-take drugs. Habil & Ali Mohd (2003) states that the unhealthy family environment such as having problem divorce, polygamy and child abuse issues are closely linked to drug abuse issues. This is the result of depression which ultimately causes individuals to tend to choose an easy way by taking drugs to fill the silence and clutter of the mind experienced. Hammer-Bacher et al., (2006) has shown that among the factors contributing to the recidivist is due to lack of support from the family, dismissed by family members and family dysfunction. This situation has indirectly caused drug users to feel depressed, anxious and worried and then take drugs again to eliminate such negative feelings.

A loss factor strong support from the family and the community around the former drug users has greatly affected the recidivist phenomenon (Daley, 1987; Hawkins & Fraser, 1987; Miller, 1992; Zackon, 1985). According to Habil et al., (2003), modern life is now more capitalist in nature that makes people live each other competing with each other, focusing on material and worldly things only to those who are not in power in terms of property marginalized. As a result, these oppressed people feel depressed and vulnerable to various social phenomena including drug addiction due to disappointment with the shortage experienced in life as compared to other perfect people. The phenomenon of the formation of this capitalist society also results in the loss of emotional support required by the former drug users who have just completed the drug rehabilitation program.

Cheung et al., (2003) states that former drug users who have successfully stopped taking drugs are friends with friends who are free of drug influences and have no connection with old friends after getting out of the drug rehabilitation center. Sun (2007) also prove it that among the causes of 'recidivist' among drug users in Southwest, The United States is because they are difficult to break up with drug users' networks including friends due to loyalty in friendship, sympathy and want to have by the group of friends. Based on a study conducted by Mahmood (1999), 50 percent of old friends who took drugs first persuaded the drug user to return to the drug after completion of the rehabilitation program. His research also found that 76 percent of former drug users were familiar with the site or premises for continuous drug supply.

Based on research conducted by Koo, Chitwood & Sanchez (2007) found that individuals who work less drug use because they have good relationships with families and communities, live in stable, home-based areas and have no time to engage in drug use compared to them which does not work. However, the nature of work and workplace environment also affects drug intake in everyday life.

This is evidenced by the research conducted by Watts, Cox, Wright, Garrison, Herkimer & Howze (1991) that finds work that requires too long working hours such as teaching, administrators, agricultural and clerical parts and workplace environment that does not support and many conflicts will lead to drug re-taking. According to Benda (2005), the absence of work and dissatisfaction in a work done more influenced men to take drugs again than women. This is because men usually have a high commitment and responsibility in a family as a result of their role as head of the family. So, if they do not get the job done after the recovery program, they will be more depressed and eventually re-take drugs to eliminate the pressure.

Methodology

In this research, researchers have been using qualitative research methods. Case study approaches are used by researchers to carry out this research. The location of the research is at the Kuala Terengganu District Parole Center and the Hulu Terengganu District Parol Center, Terengganu Darul Iman. The focus of the Kuala Terengganu District Parol Center and the Hulu Terengganu District Parol Center is on the prison rehabilitation program in the community. The population of parolees in both district parol centers is 40 people. All 40 parolees in both district parol centers are Malay. The total number of samples for this study was 13. The researcher's rationale chose 13 respondents as a sample for this research because only 13 of these parolees were interviewed until the end of the interview session. Sample selection for this research is using purposive sampling techniques. Research samples have been selected based on key criteria such as drug users, males, Malays and have been repeatedly undergoing treatment and rehabilitation programs either at prisons, rehabilitation centers, and private treatment centers.

In-depth interview methods and observation methods are used by researchers to collect the required data. The interviews were conducted individually and face-to-face among researchers and respondents using the topics determined by the researchers. In addition, the researchers also used observation methods to the body language shown by the respondents during the interview session. This is to ensure the comfort and safety of both parties whether researchers or respondents are assured. Researchers also use secondary data such as Prisons Department profile, parole center profile, parole monthly and annual reports and other information related to this research.

After each interview session is completed, all verbatim information obtained from the interview session is collected for the purpose of analyzing the data. To ensure the accuracy of the information from the respondents, the researcher has read every verbatim twice so that the researcher can appreciate and understand his intent in more detail. After that, information is extracted to find the themes that arise for the data. Themes are identified by integrating components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which are less meaningful when they see them alone (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Through thematic analysis method, the data obtained have been filtered to obtain a particular theme expressed by a respondent. Researchers have also made a difference with certain themes obtained from other respondents. Thereafter, to identify the themes that have the equations of each of the data categories have been analyzed horizontally and have been grouped as one theme. After that, the themes were analyzed according to the question and objective of the study.

Results and Discussion

Research findings show that there are two major constraints that drug users have to face in maintaining self-recovery. The two key constraints are individual internal constraints and individual external constraints.

Individual internal constraints are divided into two factors, first, a strong memory of the drug and the second, the weakness of the soul or the heart in opposing the desire for drugs. The entire respondent stated that they still should not forget about taking drugs first or in other words they often and still remembered drugs. They still miss and remember the excitement and fantasies that they once experienced when taking drugs. They often remember these things not only after getting out of jail but even in prison they still remember it. The fun it once experienced when taking drugs often creates a reminder of drug users. This is the situation that has caused most respondents to frequently take drugs once they are released from prison.

"I always fall back and take the fit out of the prison because the taste of 'stim' is still in my body. When I see that fit, it feels like the taste is coming back in my heart. New time out of jail, does not arise anymore feeling fit. But for a long time, I lost. I finally took it back. I still want to taste 'stim fit' it...." (Respondent 1).

The second factor stated by all respondents is the weakness of the soul or the heart in resisting the desire for drugs. The memory and the desire to regain the drug always haunts all the respondents daily. Memory and desire to feel once again drugs are still strong in their souls. Once they are released their memory and desire still comes annoying their souls all the time. For those who are strong souls and hearts, they will not re-take drugs again. But for those who are weak souls and hearts, they will soon return to the drug.

"Every time I get out of a prison or rehabilitation center, I will be back to 'fit' because of the 'syok' feeling when I'm in the middle of 'stim' fit. I still want to feel 'stimfit'. Can not get rid of it before.." (Respondent 3).

"I always fall back on taking 'fit' and then after out of the prison because the sense of 'stim' is still in my body. When I look fit, I want to feel fit to let it back in my heart. From the beginning of time to come out, it's a good idea to not take that. But for a long time, I lost. Finally, I took it. I still want to taste 'stim fit' it...." (Respondent 6).

The second constraint that the respondents always face in avoiding re-use of drugs is an individual external constraint. The individual external constraints are divided into four factors. The factors are stigma and discrimination by members of the community, the pressure caused by the absence of jobs and money to sustain life, the influence of friends who are still drug users and re-take drugs after earning money.

Stigma and discrimination by members of the community against former prisoners are often a factor in the phenomenon of repetition of drug abuse among drug users. There were four respondents saying that they had re-taken drugs first after release was due to the pressure experienced by the attitudes of people who looked at bad drug users and former drug users and put them aside. According to a third respondent, drug users and former drug users are particularly sensitive. If you feel like someone's words or deeds, they will be heartbroken and enthusiastic and will be easy to get back to the drug.

"In the village, everyone knows that I'm a 'mat' fit, so people do not want to be friends with me. If I go to the coffee shop, when I'm sitting, the person sitting next to will wake up to sit somewhere else. No one wants to be friends with me. I became 'tension' as well. Everybody looked at me badly. Even though I stopped taking 'fit', people still despised me.." (Respondent 2).

"The issue of public acceptance of drug addicts is also why I re-take 'heroin'. People are despicable when I want to change. That support does not exist.." (Respondent 4).

The second factor is the pressure caused by the absence of work and the money to sustain life. There are five respondents stating that among the factors that have caused them repeatedly to take drugs after getting out of jail or the center are pressure because of the absence of work and money to sustain life. We all know that someone who has been a drug user and ever been jailed is hard for the person to get a job. After getting out of the prison or a stop center a former drug user needs a job to cover his daily living expenses. However, for most drug users it is difficult for them to get a job.

"The problem is no work for me to become tension and feel like I need fit to calm down.." (Respondent 6).

"In addition, the problem is no work as much as I want to take back fit. The former drug user like me was hard to work. People do not believe to give me work. When I'm don't have a job and hard to get work, I become tension. Do not want to use my wifemoney only. When it's tension, the fell to take fit to become more strong. It feels good to go back. When it comes to 'fit' and 'stim', it loses all the tension that exist.." (Respondent 8).

The third factor that often causes respondents to use drugs after they get out of prison is the influence of friends. After leaving prison, most respondents will return home and home village. As long as the respondent lives in his home, no one community member wants to be friend with respondent. Only friends who are still using drugs only want to be friends with respondents. Due to the boredom and attitudes of members who do not want to be friends with respondents, the respondents return to friends with their friends who are still using drugs.

After the respondent started meeting with his friends, the respondent would be back in the 'port' together with his friends. Once in the 'port', the respondent will always see his friends take drugs and

be in a state of fantasy and 'stim'. Whenever he sees his friends like that and sees his friends take drugs, the desire in the heart of the respondent who still wants to feel the drug will overwhelm. From day to day, the desire will increase until a time when the respondent can not afford to resist the growing desire then the respondent will also be with the friends to take drugs again.

“My friends in my house who are still 'on' 'fit' always offer me to take 'fit'. When back home, nobody wants to be with me. Only friends who are still 'on' 'fit' want to be friend with me. So afternoon when I'm home, I'm going to meet my friends at their home. I went to chat first. while chatting, sometimes they take 'fit' in front of me. I can see how they take the 'fit' and look at them 'stim' after grab 'fit'. they always offer me to take 'fit' back. When I'm looking at their 'stim' after taking 'fit', feel like to take back 'fit' then come back to me..” (Respondent 1).

“When free from a rehab center or prison, I will return to my parent's house in Perlis. My village is a lot of friends who are still on 'fit'. If I go back to my village, they will be looking for me. First of all, just chat. In the long, they will offer me a 'fit'. At first, I did not. But for a long time, after my friend offer me every day, my feeling to take 'fit' just back...” (Respondent 3).

“When free from prison, I returned to my hometown. My village is a lot of my friends who are still on 'fit'. When I go back to the village, they all look for me. If I can, I don't want to be friends with them anymore. I know, if I'm back with them all, I'm mistaken then I'll fall back to 'fit'. But what to do. The villagers all do not want to be friends with me. I knew they were scared of me because of the time I had a lot of stolen people. So I had to compete with gangs who still on 'fit' again..” (Respondent 13).

Conclusion

The phenomenon of drug abuse that has taken place in the country is increasingly serious today and is very difficult to contain if all walks of life refuse to cooperate in addressing this phenomenon. The phenomenon of drug abuse is due to two major constraints that a former drug user must face in maintaining self-recovery. These constraints are individual internal constraints and individual external constraints. Therefore, all levels of society should work together and cooperate with the government to assist former drug users in dealing with all obstacles and constraints in maintaining self-recovery from drug abuse. And ultimately, reducing the number of recurrent drug users recorded in annual drug statistics by the AADK from year to year. As the research proposal is coming, the number of respondents should be increased and expanded to other states to obtain more data and strong.

Besides, the result of this study can be utilized by the parties involved as a reference for them to design specific programs or policies. In future, other researchers can improve this research by take a look others dimension or respondents. On top of that, researchers or academicians can provide materials or tools about drug users self-recovery interest. It is very much losing if not using the available resources optimally.

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