Substance Abuse And Relapse Programs In Malaysia

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Abstract - Substance abuse is a main problem, an epidemic that strike various countries across the globe. Unsafe or risky utilization of psychoactive substances, including liquor and unlawful drugs contribute towards substance abuse. Psychoactive substance utilization can prompt reliance disorder - a group of social, subjective, and physiological wonders that create after rehashed substance use and that commonly incorporate a powerful urge to take the drugs, troubles in controlling its utilization, continuing in its utilization in spite of unsafe results, a physical withdrawal state and others (World Health Organization, 2018). There is a number of programs that can help everyone with substance abuse problems whether it is a governmental agency or private institution. These communities are willingly lending hands for the one in need. It is not just the individual itself has to reach out for help. The people around are required to cooperate and become more compassionate. This paper outlines the many programs conducted by the local government as well as rehabilitation programs conducted by NGOs in either local or non-local contexts. The rehabilitation programs listed either focus on one stage of the treatment or several stages i.e. treatment which comprises of individual motivation programs, family support programs, treatment programs, maintenance and relapse programs.

Index Terms - Substance Abuse, Rehabilitation Programs, Relapse, Family Support

I. INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse, according to Goldberg (2018) defines it as the abuse of legal or illegal substances. These substances can range from illicit drugs like heroin and cocaine to alcohol and even includes legal prescribed medication. By taking illegal drugs, consuming alcohol excessively and overdosing or abusing legal prescribed drugs, we unknowingly become addicted to the superficial but pleasurable “high” one can experience when a person overdoses on these substances (Goldberg, 2018). Overdosing on these substances may make a person become less stressed, thus enabling them to forget their troubles in life even if it is just momentary, but the effects of consuming these substances are immeasurable as they affect not only the person’s health directly but also their personal relationships with their family, friends and loved ones and on a much larger scale, even society is affected (American Psychological Association, 2017). More often than not, substance abuse and drug addiction present a detrimental impact to the individual and society as the person’s health not only deteriorates, interpersonal relationships begin to disintegrate and society is left to deal with an influx of crimes. Therefore, government agencies and even non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are taking the initiative to combat substance abuse and drug addiction by setting up rehabilitation centers which provide programs which seek to help and treat individuals battling substance abuse and addiction. The justification for this decision is because the government invested millions of Ringgit annually towards rehabilitation, giving the drug addicts another chance at life, not to mention strict punishment for smugglers and also drug distributers. The program can be broken down into 5 parts, individual motivation, family support, treatment, maintenance and relapse program. The only factor that can cause failure to this program is the heart of the person itself, if he or she doesn’t want change towards their life, no one and nothing can change him. This paper outlines the many programs conducted by the local government as well as rehabilitation programs conducted by NGOs in either local or non-local contexts. The rehabilitation programs listed either focus on one stage of the treatment or several stages i.e. treatment which comprises of individual motivation programs, family support programs, treatment programs, maintenance and relapse programs.

II. REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

Individual Motivational Programme - Individual motivational programme is the most predominant stage or programme in regards of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation, especially for substance abuse is a tremendously huge issue as this problem (substance abuse) progressively rises each and every year. Most individuals involved in this do not have the urge to bring themselves towards betterment as they are discouraged to do so due to the dark stigma clouding the community that perceived them as ‘unworthy’ or ‘unseemly’. This is where organizations, irrespective of whether it is governmental or non-governmental, play a significant role to revitalize the people affected by substance abuse. Drug abuse problem can be traced back towards self-discipline and self-respect, in which the drug abusers lack these factor. Without self-discipline, a person cannot decide on what he or she wants, neither can they withstand pressure. Aside from self-discipline and self-respect, drug addicts lack motivation to live another day. A person that lacks motivation will not see potential that he or she have to be better, thus results in lack of self-confidence. How can this be related to drug abuse you might ask. When a person lacks self-confidence, they will try their best in order to fit in any society, and when peer pressure comes, they will submit themselves and before long, they are addicted. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Persatuan Mencegah Dadah Malaysia (PEMADAM), Persatuan Pengasih Malaysia (Pengasih) and governmental organizations like Agensi Anti- Dadah...
Kebangsaan (AADK) are always trying to combat this troublesome matter. Not to forget, there are also private institutions namely Kenosis Home, Solace Sabah Retreat, and Community Excel Service (CES). For example, Pengasih has an individual motivational programme or outreach named ‘Seruan Kasih’. Seruan Kasih is an annually done programme that targets at least 50,000 people from a variety of groups (Pengasih Malaysia). Pengasih approach drug users wherever they are to give motivation and encouragement in hopes that they will realize they are cared for, which will later subsequently urge them to seek treatments or undergone rehabs. The impact of substance use on the self (financial constraints, family (inability to support aging parents and neglected responsibilities), and work and health (physical deterioration and emotional torture) was pivotal in motivating patients to seek treatment (Qiu, Cai, Bonn, Hoangh, & Khairuddin, 2016). Pengasih also work hand in hand with Government Agencies to make sure they have the right synergy in prevention of drugs, intervention and rehab efforts. They also meet religious leaders for consultations in order to enrich their programme with spiritual and moral values. Pengasih is a non-profitable organization that really care about this problem. A support group is a group in which anyone can join in and the activities are sharing sessions. In the sharing session, everyone will tell their own story, struggles, solution to the problems they face. The objective for this activity is for everyone to be able to gain support from the group which consists of people that went through the similar if not identical problem as them. Other than that, it is also important to note that through sharing, a person gains confidence to open up and as sessions go by, they will gain self-confidence. All in all, support group sessions can be an convenient alternative towards being the first step in changing a drug addicts life.

**Family Support Program** - Family is important to everyone. Importantly, family is the only one who is going to be there no matter how difficult, how excruciating the pain is, and no matter how extreme the situation is. Family matters to everyone, and that concept applies to the drug addicts too. You might inquire, “but they did not think about their family when they injected the drug inside them.”

What if the problem that pushed them into abusing drug is family complications? It can be seen through surveys that were done, in which drug pushers and addicts were interviewed. Data were gathered and the number one problem is family issues. High divorce rates, one or both of the parents are drug addicts, depressive state at home, all of the complications contribute towards drug abuse. Society often despise drug addicts. They see drug addicts as failure, disgusting people, and much more negative images I rather not say. With this hatred, it will not bring the addicts any positive results. When the society despises the family of addicts, the family will surely despise the addict. This butterfly effect can be lethal, as the addict will not have any support from anyone, even from the ones they love the most. With the aid of the counselors, it is hoped that the negativity can be changed to positive results, in which will aid the addicts to become a better person. But with this method, bear in mind that it will consume time in order to attain positive result. A step towards the right way is better than a leap backwards. The family members need to learn how to help the individuals in attaining their sobriety and recovery while having to overcome a crisis situation.

The more parents, children, spouses or relatives who take place in helping and understanding the disease faced by the individuals, the better chance for them to recover as they are given rigid support. Rather than simply promoting the sobriety the individuals, participation in a family therapy can be helpful in the recovery process. Lakeview Health offers a three-day family workshop – a group session comprises up to eight families. The first day is intended to teach and give enlightenment about the nature of addiction as a disease to the family members as explained by Ken Wynn, a family therapist. The slot mainly focuses on abstinence-based recovery and the patterns of communication. The participants in the workshop from both sides – family members and patients get to exchange thoughts and feelings to rebuild trust with each other. Moreover, the participants will learn about continued support and guidance for the post-treatment phase to stay on track. For example, the Lakeview staff and a wide range of support groups are always available to help the individuals. Examples of support groups established to help family and friends are the Al-Anon and Nar-Anon communities which emerged from 12-Step programs. As said by Wynn, attending regular meetings like the Al-Anon and Nar-Anon meetings is pivotal for the recovery after treatment. Furthermore, in this era of social connectivity, there are various group supports available on either social media or websites. An example of group support is “The Addict’s Mom” which focuses on the mothers of addicted children. This website allows its members to share their experiences and show sense of compassion towards each other. It comprises of 80,000 members. Another support group available is “Learn to Cope”, a group established in 2004 in Massachusetts. It is specially designed to offer pastoral care, education, valuable resources and many more to the family members and individuals. Last but not least, the “Parents of Addicted Loved ones” is another support group established in Arizona in 2006. Patients discharging from rehab is merely the beginning of a long recovery journey.

### III. Treatment Program

Treatment programme is basically the fundamental part of rehabilitation. This stage is compulsory in every rehabilitation centre wherever they are located. In regard to treatment availability and accessibility in Malaysia, an upgrading exercise was recently carried out by Malaysia’s National Anti-Drugs Agency (NADA) whereby existing rehab centers were reclassified into a more systematic and specialized structure. Thus, a number of categories of facilities, such as Cure and Care 1Malaysia clinic, Cure and Care Rehabilitation Centre (CCRC), and Cure and Care Service Centers (CCSC), were created with somewhat different sets of specialized treatment offerings (Qiu, Cai, Bonn, Hoangh, & Khairuddin, 2016). Meanwhile, as of Pengasih, the Rumah Pengasih (RP), is a private treatment and rehabilitation centre gazetted by the government, operated from the year 1993 until present, the treatment centers around ‘Peer Recovery Guidance’ or ‘Bimbingan Kepulihan Rakan Sebaya’ which accentuates restructuring of thinking patterns, emotion management and stability, behavioral changes, vocational and survival skills building, and spiritual awakening (Pengasih Malaysia). The treatment is deemed as intensive, will be around 6 until 2 months, depending on the participants, and all participations are

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voluntary (Pengasih Malaysia). Afterwards, the residents would join the Integration Programme which focuses on re-integration into society and deals with matters pertaining society. Then, they are also encouraged to join the Kelompok Sokong Bantu (Aftercare). Other than that, Pengasih also have a hospice (Muara Kasih) where it highlights the treatments for severe medical condition, commonly HIV/AIDS or patients that need intensive care (Pengasih Malaysia). Proper attention would be given to the patients in terms of welfare, healthy food, medical needs, not to forget, emotional and spiritual requirements. With the aim or purpose to reignite their will to live, an assortment of programmes and counseling sessions are given from time to time (Pengasih Malaysia). Special care services would be given towards members and clients of Pengasih who are suffering from the cases of chronic AIDS/HIV disease and also for them who suffers other terminal illnesses. Ensuring that they will be given the best treatment is a given, however, fortifying that the treatment is accepted by the Ministry of Health is a must. Therefore, there is a special training by the Ministry for Pengasih’s staffs who will be managing this particular project to effectively become a ‘care giver’. That being the case, the patients would be designated proper and legitimate treatments according to each of their special needs. Treatment programs differ from country to country. Malaysia uses the ‘cold turkey’ method for addicts under 55 years of age, in which a person is faced with a sudden cessation of drugs as opposed to easing with the use of alternative medication. Once the withdrawal ends, the person is medically examined and sent to a rehabilitation centre. There are outpatient treatments and inpatient hospitalization, but the best treatment program would be a long-term residential that is a participative, group-based approach to long-term mental illness, personality disorders and drug addiction. For severe drug abuse cases that requires constant attention, addicts are placed in a 24-hour care situation, with the benefit of removing them from situations that contribute to relapses or factors that worsen their addiction. Daily rehabilitation activities can consist of many individuals, multiple group counseling sessions and in some degree, community services. Many residential treatment centers also provide monitored detoxification and withdrawal, or more intense treatments for dual diagnosis (both mental illness and drug abuse problems) or behavioral addiction issues. A long-term residential treatment may provide care for 24 hours a day, in generally in non-hospital settings (villas). The therapeutic community (TC) is the best-known treatment model, with planned lengths of stay between 6 and 12 months. TCs makes use of the resocialization of the patient and use the program’s entire community, that is including other patients, treatment staff, and the social context of being an addict as part of the treatment. Once a patient has made a commitment to continue treatment for a drug abuse problem, they will enter the recovery stage which is (early) abstinence. It is highly difficult to cope with because of many factors, including continuing withdrawal symptoms, cravings, psychological dependence, and triggers that can tempt an person into a relapse. Drug replacement and maintenance programs have a long history of providing addicts struggling with treatment with legal use to drugs that would otherwise be obtained through illegal means. A maintenance program is required to systematically reduce of the dosage of a drug for a patient to a level that maintains protection against exacerbation of the condition or trigger a possible relapse. The focus of program is to maintain abstinence by avoiding a relapse. Patients musts learn all the warning signs that lead to relapse and how to deal with triggers. Addicts in early recovery have not only stopped using the substance(s) to which they were addicted, but they have also begun learning how to remain drug-free for the long term. On a negative side, early recovery is also a time of great vulnerability. The addicts are in the process of abandoning people, activities, and behaviors that have been significant parts of their habits, yet they have yet to completely establish the foundation of their newly drug-free lives. Some NGOs advocates for making both drugs more accessible, through changing attitudes towards them, laws, regulations, and health insurance policies. For addicts who have found little success with methadone, Heroin-Assisted Treatment (HAT) has been the most dramatic developments in drug substitution therapies. HAT programs, as part of treatment strategies, provide substantial benefits to long-term heroin addicts who have not been responsive to other treatments. Studies have shown that those enrolled in HAT programs demonstrate a significant reduction in drug use and an improvement in overall physical and mental health. Additionally, several studies have also found that individuals who participated in these programs significantly reduced their involvement in criminal activities, generating large cost savings for the country. Heroin maintenance may be a feasible, effective and cost-effective strategy for reducing drug use and drug-related harm among long-term heroin users when other maintenance programs have failed.

IV. MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

The next step into giving a better life for the drug addicts is maintenance program. Maintenance program that I want to suggest here is leaning more towards mental and physical actions that will change the life of the addicts. At this stage, the maintenance program is one more step towards success for an addict to be clean from drugs. Maintenance can be hard as it might costly for the addicts to attend the support group sessions, or maybe to have their treatments done. Why is it hard, in terms of financially especially? Because the stigma and prejudice that is put upon drug addicts. When you happened to be an ex-drug addict, people immediately despise you because of the mistake you have done in the past. This further complicates the idea of getting hired for jobs and earning money. The maintenance program majorly involves job offers and also skill development for the addicts. In today’s economic market, it is seen that specified skills such as welding, automobile department, sales as well as retail business are the list of the businesses that excel and majorly affect the economic state of Malaysia today. I believe with skill development we can further rebuild the lives of the addicts. This program is implemented within prisoners, so why can’t we implement the same with ex-drug addicts? The objective of this program is for the ex-drug addicts to not depend on others for them to earn money. It is for them to create their own opportunity because out there, they might not even survive for one day, let alone to live the rest of their life depending on others for food and

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shelter. With the skills they obtain, they can rebuild their lives and further improve and diminish the negative stigma and prejudice the society put on them. All in all, skills development is important towards maintaining the positive progress the ex-drug addicts already gained.

Other than that, the counselors program also must continue, with the same objective as support group brings. But, with the counselors, the ex-addicts can get professional aid and advices for them to face the negativity the world brings for them. The concept that I want to emphasize is the law enforcement part in which if there are any friends of the ex-addict that attempts to influence them into relapsing, they can immediately report it to the authority, and with immediate and effective action, the statistics of drug abuse can be curbed down to bare minimum. Not just that, ex-drug addicts are also monitored by the police, both for safety and relapsing purposes. The reason why I suggest the police to monitor this group of people is because they have the most potential to relapse, mostly due to peer pressure. All in all, with all the concepts combined, the major problem that is faced by ex-drug addicts can be toned down, and hopefully diminished. All in all, with this program, it is hoped that the epidemic of drug abuse can be toned down. It is understandable that drug addiction can be difficult to be medicated, but with professional help and efforts, nothing is impossible. The success rate of this program can only be determined by the participants itself, but by no means the program can be executed with nothing else but a hundred percent of commitment and passion. Imagine our country being free from the epidemic of misuse of drugs and pushers, the picture is magnificent. But, with the amount of money involved in drug trafficking, it is by no means easy in order to combat the crime. With all the efforts put in, one can only hope that the program will have high success rates and most importantly, a better future for everyone especially the participants of this program.

The former drug addicts might have recovered in physical aspects of substance dependency but psychological addiction, desire can take a great toll in ex-addicts lives. People are at higher risks of relapsing after a full-blown recovery. Maintaining and staying on a healthy is one of the most challenging phase that every former drug addicts have had to face. The recipes for continuous sobriety are loving relationships and emotional resilience. There is a deep connection between stress and drug addiction. Most people who have taken hazardous substances experienced stress during their early life like child abuse, domestic violence and other inconvenient and destructive environment towards the child’s development. These individuals are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety or other mental disorders which trigger their prescriptions of drugs. Thus, former drug addicts need to be surrounded in positive environment to rebuild their spirits. An example of recovery centre which offers relapse prevention program is the Four Circles Recovery Center. It offers a specialized 28-day relapse prevention track for the people who have received treatment within the past 12-month and relapsed. This program uses research-backed approaches like Gorski-Cenaps Model which has been proven to be highly effective in helping the individuals during the relapse cycle. The therapists have been given extensive training in using the model which helps clients to identify the early stages of relapsing. Their main goal in Relapse Prevention Program is to help clients pinpoint the warning signs and subsequently work on those triggers before it leads back to old abusive habits. By recognizing the early signs, the individuals can minimize the risks of a full-blown relapse. After that, the individuals can return to their residence and continue their daily lives (Four Circle Recovery Center, 2018).

V. RELAPSE PROGRAMS

Relapsing is a process of movement away from recovery. A gradual process which takes place stage by stage - the urge to take the psychoactive substances all over again. This phase should be recognized at early stages in order to avoid from exacerbating the condition. According to Melemis (2015), there are a few main ideas in relapse prevention. First of all, relapsing refers to slowly going back to the old ways. Therefore, treatment helps individuals to recognize the early stages in order to overpower the desire of taking harmful substances. It starts within the person’s mind. Second, recovery is a personal development which means there will be times the individuals will have higher risks of slipping during the process. Third, one of the most essential alternatives in relapse prevention is to start with cognitive therapy and mind-body relaxation. This helps the individuals to reconstruct their minds by having healthy coping skills i.e. removing negative thinking. Fourth, most relapses can be explained in terms of a few basic rules. However, people who relapsed are often engulfed by their own negative thoughts as they have failed to remain sober.

The number one problem that ex-drug addicts face throughout their rehabilitation program is relapse. Relapsing is a major problem due to the fact that all the effort, money and time invested in them can be burned in a split second. Relapse is a condition in which an ex-drug addict becomes an addict again. This condition can be broken down in a number of factors such as peer pressure from friends to become an addict again, low self-discipline and availability of the drugs in their vicinity which enables them to become an addict with ease. The anti-relapse program consists of the support group, counselors and addition of law enforcement all combined together in order to keep ex-drug addicts to stay clean, until the end of their life hopefully. The support group concept must be implemented in order for the ex-addicts to always have the motivation in order to be better, as well as share their success of curbing their negative addiction to the bare minimum. The support group concept not only will influence themselves to be better, it can also inspire others to be successful, and it is crucial that the concept of success is redefined; success can also be a small step towards the better. Relapses are not indicators that the treatment has failed due to the chronic nature of addiction, but can also be considered as a part of the process in treating oneself from addiction. However, newer treatments have been designed to help with the prevention of a relapse from occurring but there is no absolute program to completely prevent a relapse. In most cases, returning to rehabilitation would reduce the severity of the individual’s relapse and would offer them an opportunity to recover from the relapse. Additionally, avoiding triggers which are high-risk situations the individual is most likely to relapse under is vital to preventing a relapse. Therefore, visiting old drug or alcohol joints, seeing others who abuse substances and feeling the constant pressure to conform are all potentially high-

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risk situations which will likely lead to a relapse occurring. Thus, successful relapse programs are rehabilitation programs which teach individuals to recognize, understand and avoid their own personal triggers. In Malaysia, other forms of therapy offered in the Cure and Care Clinic to keep individuals preoccupied with their time and to prevent relapse are Art Therapy, Hypnotherapy, Trans CC and others (National Anti-Drugs Agency, 2018). On the report of the statistics available from the National Anti-Drugs Agency (NADA), from January to June 2010, a number 3,095 of 12,079 drug addicts were detected as repeat offenders or relapse. The number of repeat offenders was found to be enlarging compared in January to June 2009 where only 1,136 people repeat offenders were detected (Azmi, Hussin, Ishak, & Daud, 2018). Meanwhile, a total of 2,792 new cases and 1,968 cases of drug addicts has been identified during the January to June 2012, in which case repeatedly fell by 24.20% (Azmi, Hussin, Ishak, & Daud, 2018).

This situation is alarming because the problem of relapse in Penang and Kuala Lumpur are still exceeding. Statistic from the National Anti-Drugs Agency (NADA) also revealed that in 2015, 1,973 or 41 per cent from 4,838 drug abusers who were in treatment fell back to their old habit (relapsed). Added to the fact, the number of female drug abusers from 2010 until 2015 totalled 3,889 people and from the amount, those who went back to their old habits stood at 538 people or 14 per cent, with 3,351 or 86 per cent being new cases of drug abuse (Nokman, 2016). There are a lot of contributing factors for relapsing. However, in a study done, there were two personal factors (lack of willpower and mental health issues) and also three environmental factors (easy substances availability, parental rejection, and methadone replacement therapy) cited exclusively by patients as the ground basis or reasons for substance relapse (Qiu, Cai, Bonn, Hoangh, & Khairuddin, 2016). Some of programmes for relapse must include a more realistic example of drug use to be able to relate and empathize with the impact of drug use on the individual’s life (Qiu, Cai, Bonn, Hoangh, & Khairuddin, 2016).

Different approaches and prevention activities should be used and be conducted periodically to reinforce their knowledge. Public health programmes are one of those programmes that need to be done regularly as it is very important for people to know their health issues. Rehabilitation for many of these addicts is not only limited to a physical level only but includes their psychological state as well. Therefore, setting up a proper environment (i.e. drug and alcohol-void places) would be the first step to preventing oneself from addiction. Additionally, as the saying goes, ‘prevention is better than cure’. As prevention is often touted as better than cure, the society itself should be educated on drug abuse and situations that they should avoid from an early age. Relapsing is actually such a common thing to do after being addicted for a long period of time. A strong will is truly needed as well as a huge amount of motivation. Continuous support from their families and loved ones would certainly make their journey easier. Not to forget, this heavily stigmatized and biased perceptions towards ex addicts need to stop for them to be a better version of themselves. Moreover, drug use trends should be addressed such as how to avoid being duped into using drugs unknowingly.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are many aspects to consider when it comes to treating individuals with drug addiction and substance abuse issues. Rehabilitation for many of these addicts is not only limited to a physical level only but includes their psychological state as well. Therefore, setting up a proper environment (i.e. drug and alcohol-void places) would be the first step to preventing oneself from addiction. Additionally, as the saying goes, ‘prevention is better than cure’. As prevention is often touted as better than cure, the society itself should be educated on drug abuse and situations that they should avoid from an early age. Relapsing is actually such a common thing to do after being addicted for a long period of time. A strong will is truly needed as well as a huge amount of motivation. Continuous support from their families and loved ones would certainly make their journey easier. Not to forget, this heavily stigmatized and biased perceptions towards ex addicts need to stop for them to be a better version of themselves. Moreover, drug use trends should be addressed such as how to avoid being duped into using drugs unknowingly.

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