

### DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUTH IN MALAYSIA

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#### **Abstract**

*Drug abuse problem should have not be taken lightly by anyone. The effects it can brings to anyone especially to our youth is very detrimental. According to the Malaysian National Drug Information System, National Anti - Drug Agency (AADK), a total of 131,841 drug addicts have been registered in Malaysia between January 2010 and February 2016. From the total number given, drug abuse among youth aged 19 and below in the country amounted to 8,732 people. Young people who persistently subjected to such abuse substances often experience an array of problems, including academic difficulties, health - related problems (including emotional and mental health), poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Additionally, there are consequences for family members, the community, and the entire country as well. If we still recalled, the tragic incident involving the burning down of one religious school (Tahfiz) in Kuala Lumpur on 14 September 2017 which have killed 23 peoples mostly the school students. The incident were said to have been carried out by several suspects aged between 11 and 18 years for the case. Among all the suspect arrested, there were suspects believed to be under the influence of drug. This clearly indicate to us that drug abuse could bring many harms. It is the object of this paper to identify the causing factors which make our youth becoming victim to drug abuse, the effects of drug abuse to the youth, and finding possible solutions to the problems. This paper will adopt pure library research as its methodology. Various sources of references both in the form of primary or secondary legal sources will be adopted in this paper. Extensive reference will be made to the existing laws in the country in dealing with drug abuse problem among the youth in the country. At the end of the research, this paper will able to produce several solutions in dealing with the issue concerning drug abuse problem by the youth in the country both from legal and social viewpoint.*

**Keywords:** *Drug, Abuse, Youth, Addicts, Health.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Drug abuse among youth had always been a global issue that impacted many society as well as peoples' life negatively. Such issue has also badly effect Malaysia. For many years, governments along with the enforcement authorities, relevant institutions and concern individual not only in Malaysia but across the whole world have been persistently working hard and spend a lot of time, energy and money to find ways to deal with the ongoing issue concerning drug abuse which affect the life of the youth in their respective country.

A lot of time, energy and money have been spend to locate the best outcome or to find the suitable solution to deal with the ongoing issue within their society. Such effort has also been experienced by Malaysia.

Every year, Malaysian public has been exposed with gruesome statistic over the involvement of their youth with drug abuse problem. According to a report released by the National Drug Information System, National Anti - Drug Agency (NADA), there were 131, 841 drug abusers which have been reported or registered between the periods of January 2010 until February 2016 in the country.

Out from the number which being reported or registered through the mentioned system, the number of drug abuser among youth at the aged of 19 year old and below amounted to 8,732 people. Those aged between 20 to 39 year old being totalled 93,044 drug abusers while the last category, aged 40 year old and above, recorded the number with 29,355 drug abusers (Farhana Syed Nokman, 2016).

According to the latest statistic produced by the National Anti - Drug Agency (NADA), in year 2018 alone there were 550 more new cases being reported or registered. (Drug statistic, NADA, 2019).

Crucial for us to know that the National Anti - Drugs Agency (NADA) is an agency under the purview of the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) that oversees drug related issues and problems

in Malaysia. Being a leading agency in combating drug issues in the country, NADA has been actively offering the best treatment and rehabilitation, prevention, enforcement as well as supervision on the ongoing problem.

At the same time, NADA also plays a vital role in realizing the Malaysian government's long term goal of Drug Free Malaysia (Malaysia without Drug). The issue concerning drug abuse in Malaysia had been escalated since the 1970's that had prompted Malaysian government to declare drugs as the "Nation's Number 1 Enemy" and must be fight at any cost. (Afzan Ayub, 2011 and Sarina Mohamed, 2012).

According to NADA, there are various kind of drugs being used by drug abusers in the country. They includes Opiate (Heroin and Morphine), Methamphetamine (Crystalline) like Syabu, Methamphetamine (Tablet) like YABA pill, & YAMA pill, Marijuana, Amphetamine - type stimulants (ATS) (Ecstasy and Amphetamine), Psychotropic pill like Benzodiazepine, Psychotropic Pill and Eramine 5, and other kinds of substances which have similar effect close to drug itself like Ketum leaves, Depressant, Dissociative, Hallucinogens, and others. (Drug statistic, NADA, 2019).

Though there is no revealed statistic over the most favourite kind of drug which used by youth in the country but we can get a picture through a parliamentary reply given by Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) way back in 2017.

According to Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) through a parliamentary reply given in 2017, methamphetamine is the most used drugs by students (youth) in the country based on a statistics received by them. Through the parliamentary reply given by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE), it also been disclosed that drug abuse involving students in the country was still low as it involved only 0.03 per cent, or 1,410 of the total 4.7

million student population up to the year 2017.

Out of the 1,410 students, 75.68 per cent (or 1,067) students are said to have taken methamphetamine, cannabis (16.73 per cent), opium (5.17 per cent), amphetamine (2.23 per cent) and ketamine (0.19 per cent). Before this revelation was made by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) in the Parliament, the then Deputy Home Minister Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed reportedly to have said that based on data received in 2015, 1,475 students were found to be involved in drugs related to Amphetamine Type Stimulant (ATS) at 73 per cent, cannabis at 19.2 per cent and other drugs at 8 per cent.

Interesting for us to note that, Nur Jazlan had also added that the reason why many school and university students in the country were tempted into taking psychotropic drugs over heroin and cocaine were because they could easily be purchased by them as some of the pills being sold as low as RM5 (around USD1). (Arfa Yunuf, Fernando Fong, and Beatrice Nita Jay, 2017).

The issue concerning drug abuse among youth cannot be treated lightly due to the serious negative consequences it can bring not only to the abuser themselves but also to other people around them. The impact of drug abuse among youth received wide attention from the public in the country due to one shocking incident which happened in 2017. On September 14, 2017 one religious school (Tahfiz) in the country capital, Kuala Lumpur was burned down and had killed 23 people mostly the religious school students.

This incident has received both local and international media attention. At the beginning it was believed by many including the government and the authorities that the incident happened due to negligence or lack of safety compliance inside the school building itself.

However, further investigation revealed shocking truth when the Royal Malaysia Police announced that they might

have been a possibility of foul play in the incident. Few days after the incident, the police have announced the arrest of seven suspects aged between 11 –18 years for the case. All the suspects have been charged accordingly under Penal Code [Act 574] for murder and mischief with fire as well as for drug abuse under the Dangerous Drug Act 1952 [Act 234].

The incident's motive is believed to have arisen from a misunderstanding which happened between the suspects and the residents at the religious school's hostel that started a few days before the incident (Ida Lim, 2017).

Due to the shocking revelation over drug abuse involvement among the suspected youths in the case, the public began to realize the serious problem concerning drug abuse which has influenced their youth.

On record, this is not the only reported case of criminal wrong committed by youth due to the influence of drugs. There are other reported cases as well which started to raise many questions over the cause of the problems, the effects it can bring and finding the effective solutions to deal with it.

#### **CAUSE AND EFFECT OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUTH**

It is difficult to identify the exact cause which gives rise to the problem concerning drug abuse among youth in the country. Though not identifying the exact cause over the cause of drug abuse among youth in the country, according to NADA, in general among the likely causes which give rise to the problem include due to peer influence, due to curiosity, to have fun, due to stress, to relieve pain, as a stimulant, aggressive, work – based, entertainment, lack of religious affiliation, financial problems, slimming, domestic violence, medical, craving for drugs, sex, betrayal, ignorance of the dangers of drugs, for study purposes and so on (Drug statistic, NADA, 2019).

Meanwhile, a more detailed study has been conducted by leading experts and

institutions all over the world over the issue and among the most identifiable causes for drug abuse among youth to have happen because of genetic predisposition, co - occurring conditions as well as due to environmental circumstances.

It being stated through the research which conducted where it has been noted that drug abuse often happen or run in families which has the historical record of drug abuse, suggesting that genetics can become one of the cause which lead people including the youth to get into drug abuse problem.

If parents are themselves actively involve with drug abuse, it could put their children on the high risk to be expose with drug abuse problems. There is logic to this specific cause due to the fact that families or relatives are the closes people to the children and youth. As such, there tendency for the children and youth to be exposed or being influenced by their families or relatives is much higher (Natasha Tracy, 2012).

Drug abuse problem might also occur because of the existing mental illness or any psychological problems which being faced by the abuser themselves. For example, if individual is suffer from mental headache or having depression or simply having a bad day or mood disorder, the normal thing for them to do is to take medication in order to reduce their pain.

It would be perfectly appropriate if the medication is properly given or prescribed by qualified medical practitioner, however the concern now is if the suffered individual started to take illegal substance like drugs to deal with their internal suffering.

If they started to take illegal substance such drug on regular basis, there is a high probability for them to get addicted with such illegal substance and end up becoming a drug abuser. As we all know that, unlike adult, youth normally will faced with many difficulties and challenges to deal certain problems. As a result to this,

the tendency for youth to get involve with drug is higher (Natasha Tracy, 2012).

Youth might also become drug abuser due to environmental causes or due to surrounding circumstances. Very important for us to know that, being at young age, youth can be consider as emotionally fragile group of people. Unlike adult, their mind and emotion is not properly developed and very sensitive to the surrounding.

Due to this reasons, they can be exposed with many risks and problems which could also exposing them to become drug abuser. Among the environmental or surrounding causes which can lead the youth to become drug abuser includes unstable home environment, having a bad or poor relationship with parent or family, being subjected to influence by close friends or peers, bad or poor parenting, facing with academic problems in school or university, facing with social life problem, and others (Puteri Hayati Megat Ahmad, 2015).

Crucial to note that, there can't be any single cause which give rise to the ongoing problem among youth, as such combination of all causes mentioned above can also become the likely cause which make youth to become drug abuser (Natasha Tracy, 2012).

Effects of drug abuse among youth is normally negative not only to themselves but also to other people around them (Mohamed Ibrahim, Razak Lajis, and Mohd Isa Abdul Majid, 2004).

Youth who becoming victim to drug abuse often will started to have big changes within their personality or demeanour. They cannot control their life and started to treat other people badly including with their own parent and family. They will become anti - social and having much lesser friends (Ksir, Oakley Ray; Charles, 2002).

Such changes in their personality and demeanour will also affect their academic study and life as a whole. Drug often affect people focus. If a person cannot

give their focus into certain things in their life, it would at eventually destroyed their life and any hope to have a good future. Youth who involve with drug will also suffer mental and emotional depression.

This happen due to the heavy addiction they have with drug. Heavy mental suffering and emotional depression would also lead to suicide (Burke PJ, O'Sullivan J, Vaughan BL., 2005 & O'Connor, Rory; Sheehy, Noel, 2000 & Lua Pei Lin & Nor Samira, 2012).

Drug abuser will also suffer financially due to the fact that they need to buy the illegal substance which they have been addicted with. If they don't have enough money to fulfil their addiction to such illegal substance, there are chances for them to get involve with other crimes like stealing or robbery.

The idea which relates drug abuse to other crimes is not new as many studies have been conducted on this matter all over the world. Becoming drug abuse would lead the abuser to other kind of crimes like prostitution, cheating, rape, or even murder (Isralowitz, Richard, 2004). All these happen due to the long term effects from drug abuse.

Unlike adult, the effect of drug abuse among youth can be more detrimental due to the fact that being young, they are at the risk to become fully addicted to such illegal substance and the fact that their involvement with drug related crimes would also tainted their personal record in the society.

If their personal record are being tainted, it would be very difficult for them to get proper job or having a family of their own due to the negative social stigma which people have over drug abuser. Drug abuser will also exposed themselves with many well – known transmitted diseases which being faced by our modern society like Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) or Hepatitis.

Sharing needles among drug abuser fosters possible exposure to infected blood

or body fluids and is one of the most common ways individuals develop diseases such as AIDS/HIV or Hepatitis (Natasha Tracy, 2012).

### **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

There can be no single solution to deal with the issue concerning drug abuse among youth in our country. In order to solve the problem more effectively, everybody must play their part. Parents, schools, community, non – governmental organizations (NGOs) and the government must work together if they want to deal with problem.

Youth are the one who going to inherit the country, thus it is very important for us to protect our youth so that our country can be given to the generation which value their own life and the life of other people.

It has been a constant duty and responsibility of adult to not only to guide but also to protect our youth so that they will not get involve into any social problems which can jeopardizing their own life and their future. Though the task given here is huge and tough, it seem that we don't have any choice except to receive such duty and responsibility with open heart and mind.

Among all the people which should and can a vital role to stop our youth from getting involve with drug abuse problem is the parent themselves. Among other people, parent are the one who is most close to the youth.

Youth often seek advice, consultation and even assistance from their own parent as parent often been seen as the most trusted people which truly care for their own life.

Parent must actively play their role in protecting their own children. Parent must constantly monitor or supervise their children so that their children will not get into any trouble, get involve with and social problems which currently engulf the society including getting involve with drug abuse problem.

Parent must know their children friend and if possible get know with all the activities undergo by their children. Parent must make sure their children are not being exposed in any situation which can put their children into trouble.

Such duty and responsibility is not only moral in nature but it is also a legal duty and responsibility mentioned by the law in the country. In this regard, it worth to note that, Malaysia have enacted the Child Act 2001 [Act 611] in order to fulfill its obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC) which Malaysia has become party to since 1995 (United Nations Treaty Collection (UNTC), 2019).

Child Act 2001 [Act 611] has been created in order to protect the welfare of all children below the age of 18 years old in the country. Child Act 2001 [Act 611] was regarded as a comprehensive act addressing the issue on child welfare and protecting their interest which was created and enforced in 2001. Child Act 2001 [611] has repealed the Juvenile Courts Act 1947 [Act 90], the Women and Girls Protection Act 1973 [Act 106] and the Child Protection Act 1991 [Act 468] which have been used in the country for a very long time.

Child Act 2001 [Act 611] also provide particular section dealing specifically with the ill – treatment, neglect, abandonment or exposure of children in which every parent need to be aware off and take the matter seriously.

According to Section 31 of the Child Act 2001 [Act 611] any person who, being a person having the care of a child (a) abuses, neglects, abandons or exposes the child in a manner likely to cause him physical or emotional injury or causes or permits him to be so abused, neglected, abandoned or exposed or (b) sexually abuses the child or causes or permits him to be so abused, commits an offence and shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding twenty thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years or to both.

As such, it has been a constant legal duty and responsibility of the parent to take a good care of their own children. Parent must not allow their own children being exposed with any social ill which will affect the life and the future of their own children. Sadly, there are still parent in the country which take this matter lightly. Often we heard from reported news whereby parent themselves neglect over their basic duty and responsibility to take care of their own children.

Due to this reason, on July 2016, the government has gazette the Child Act (Amendment) 2016 (Act A1511) whereby it's provide for comprehensive structure for the act in protecting the safety and welfare of the children in the country.

Interestingly, the new amendment also provide heavier penalty for those found guilty of abusing, exploiting or neglecting children which has been increased to RM50,000 and the prison sentence was increased to 20 years (New Straits Times, 2016).

Beside parent, school must also play their role in dealing the problem concerning drug abuse among youth in the country. School often been regarded as the second home for most youth who relatively still in school (Either in primary or secondary school).

Similar with the role played by parent, teachers must also actively engage with their own pupil and get to know each of the pupil closely so that they can identify any potential problem among their own pupil which deserve to be serious attention. The duty and responsibility of teacher is not limited to teaching in classes only.

Teacher must try their very best to talk with their own pupil and offer help when the need arises. It is crucial for school administration to take the issue concerning drug abuse seriously. School administration must not hide any social problem facing by the school under the carpet in order to protect the school name and reputation.

It's often been said that early prevention is the best way to avoid any problem. As such, school administration must identify closely each of their pupil so that none of them becoming drug abuser or involve with any social problems.

School administration must work closely with all the relevant authorities to deal with the problem concerning drug abuse. School administration must constantly educate their pupil with the issue concerning drug abuse and the danger it can bring to their own life and the life of others.

This approach of educating the pupils is part and parcel of creating long term awareness over the issue concerning drug abuse which currently effecting the life of everyone including the youth.

Beside school, the surrounding community must also do their part to ensure our youth are not being exposed or becoming drug abuser. The community must not leave the matter to be solely solve by the parent or school or by any agencies. Community must actively engage with the problem as much as they can.

Malaysia has created the Neighbourhood Watch or in Malay known as *Rukun Tetangga*. The Neighbourhood Watch (*Rukun Tetangga*) is a volunteer committee under the supervision of the Department of National Unity and Integration under the Prime Minister Department.

The establishment focuses on residential areas in the city, suburbs and high risk areas. The main role of the Neighbourhood Watch (*Rukun Tetangga*) is to organise groups for patrol duty at night to reduce crime in surrounding neighbourhoods.

Through this Neighbourhood Watch (*Rukun Tetangga*), the surrounding community can offer their help to ensure youth in the country will not get involve with any illegal activities including matter related to drug abuse.

In every society including Malaysia, the important role played by the non -

governmental organizations (NGOs) in dealing with the issue concerning drug abuse problem and other social problems effecting the youth in particular is undeniable.

Most of the NGOs operate by using their own money which mostly come from donation given from the public. Most of the NGOs being set up in order to focus on many social issues facing by the society. Though the number of NGOs in the country is huge but there is NGO which has played a very important role in dealing with the problem effecting the youth the country like the Women's Centre for Change (WCC).

WCC is a registered, tax - exempt, non - profit organization set up in 1985 to help women and children facing crisis, irrespective of race, religion, or social background. WCC outreach work expanded to reach out to children and youth, mainly focusing on personal safety and sexuality.

With their valuable experience of working with women, children, and youth, WCC has successfully launched three main sections in their outreach work namely child sexual abuse awareness programs for primary schools, RESPEK programs for youth, and outreach talks to the public.

Such works and activities carried out by WCC can become a good model for other NGOs in the country to follow particular in deterring our youth from become victim to drug abuse.

## CONCLUSION

The government must also try their very best to deal with the problem. This is in line with Article 33 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC) which Malaysia has become party to since 1995.

Article 33 of the CRC clearly states "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in the illicit

production and trafficking of such substances”.

It is not deniable that for the last many years the Malaysian government has been actively carry out many policies and plans to deal with the problem either through creating general awareness within the society, through education in schools and universities, conducting activities and programs targeting the youth as well as strengthening the country legislations.

The relevant ministries like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports must find ways for the youth in the country not get involve with any social problems including drug abuse.

The mentioned ministries must create special activities or programs for youth in the country to participate so that their valuable time can be properly been fill up. The government must give this issue as their top priority in order to create a country free from drug abuse.

Huge budget allocation must be given to any relevant agencies or NGOs for them to do all the necessary activities and programs targeting the youth and to deter the youth from becoming victim to drug abuse. Huge allocation must also be given to universities to carry out deep research into this problem so that the problem can be properly examine and effective solution can be identify.

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