

## The Effectiveness of Narcotics Rehabilitation Program in Malaysia

<sup>1</sup>I.Fauziah, <sup>2</sup>A.S. Bahaman, <sup>1</sup>N. Subhi, <sup>3</sup>Kamaruzaman Jusoff,  
<sup>1</sup>S.M. Mohamad, <sup>1</sup>N. Sarnon, <sup>1</sup>Sheau Tsuey Chong and <sup>1</sup>Z.M. Lukman

<sup>1</sup>School of Psychology and Human Development, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education

Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Forestry, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang 43400 Selangor, Malaysia

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**Abstract:** The goal of treatment is to return the individual to productive functioning in the family, workplace and community. This article is provided to examine the level of effectiveness of narcotic addiction recovery program on drug addicting relapse and to determine the relationship between effectiveness of narcotic addiction recovery program towards addicting relapse in Malaysia. Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using 'SPSS for Windows'. The sample consisted of 400 relapsed drug addicts being selected through stratified random sampling and systematic random sampling from eight Narcotic Addiction Recovery Centers throughout Peninsular Malaysia. This research is a quantitative method and cross sectional survey. The quantitative data were analyzed using analysis Pearson correlation and descriptive tests. The findings indicated that about 98.5% of respondents experienced a moderate to high level toward the program. Pearson correlation analyses indicated that there is no relationship between overall drug rehabilitation program ( $r=-.049, p>.05$ ) included program phase one ( $r=-.010, p>.05$ ), phase two ( $r=-.074, p>.05$ ), phase three ( $r=-.017, p>.05$ ) and phase four ( $r=-.042, p>.05$ ) toward relapsed addictions. The conclusion reflects that the drug rehabilitation program by the government to rehabilitate addicts is not the main factors that contributing to the relapsed addiction tendency in Malaysia.

**Key words:** Effectiveness • Drug addiction • Narcotics recovery program • Malaysia

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### INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country of 27 million people [2] and gained its independence from Great Britain in 1957. Historically, drugs were brought into Malaysia in excessively since early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Drug abuse issue would be a prolonged situation as long as the drug producing activities in the Golden Triangle still in business. The Golden triangle is situated in the area that connects the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos with land area of 750,000 square miles and is identified as the biggest poppy producer in the Asia and the world [3]. In Malaysia, drugs was identified as the nation's number one enemy since 1983 and since then the actions to fight against drug abuse has been aggressively done, by extending the awareness amongst the population,

irregardless the age and society levels. According to the National Anti-Drugs Agency in 2007, the number of drug addicts identified in Malaysia between 1998 and March 2006 was 292,696. The number is alarming as it reflects more than one percent of Malaysian's population. If these drug addicts were not being rehabilitated, they would increase the demands for drugs and in the long run, would affect the treatment and rehabilitation of drug abuse. Furthermore, the group would also cause the drug abuse problem to continue and spreads amongst their friends. This scenario would only lead drug abusers to other problems like contracting dangerous diseases such as AIDS. Indirectly it also gives negative image on the successfulness of the treatment and rehabilitation program that being conducted in the Drug Rehabilitation Centers in Malaysia.

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**Corresponding Author:** I. Fauziah, School of Psychology and Human Development, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 UKM Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.  
Tel: +60192333591, Fax: +603-89213541, E-mail: ifauziah@ukm.my.

In Malaysia, the treatment and rehabilitation program started in 1975. It was based on the objective to rehabilitate drug addicts through reformative in controlled environment to ensure they are free from physical and psychological dependency and to become drug-free citizens. The rehabilitation consists of physical rehabilitation, psychological, vocational, discipline, religion, civic and nationalism, family and community and physical activities [4, 5]. Most of the treatment and rehabilitation program conducted in any country faced with various achievement hurdles [5]. Norhayati [8], noted relapsed addictions stemmed from treatment and rehabilitation programs that views only to stop the dependency of drugs, physically (to steer them away from drugs) but in reality, it failed to fully stop the psychological dependency on drugs. Even though the treatment and rehabilitation program was set up to help rehabilitate drug addicts from drug abuse, it was viewed as less effective in creating awareness amongst addicts [8-13].

Many research found the current treatment and rehabilitation model still show high failure rate [14-17]. Research conducted by Rajasooria [18] at Narcotic Rehabilitation Centers to examine the effectiveness of the drugs treatment and rehabilitation, found there is a sub-culture that is effecting the behavior of the inmates. Most of the inmates that were detained and sent to these centers, showed dissatisfactions towards the treatment and rehabilitation services rendered compared to those who came voluntarily to be treated. From 100 respondents, 65% showed their dissatisfaction whereas the other 15% were not sure of the treatment they are receiving.

According to Dennis [19], counselors also have direct and indirect effects on patients (addicts) on the relapsed addiction issue. Negative attitude and the inability to induce the patient to change their behavior would hamper the rehabilitation treatment process. The counselors' failure to create awareness amongst the patients to follow the rehabilitation process throughout the treatment can contribute to the relapsed addiction. Other than that the center itself also contributes to the relapsed. For example, the weaknesses of patient care plan, the failure to get support from each family in the rehabilitation process, less effective activities, counselors that are lack of base knowledge and skills as well as the failure of the management to provide effective supervising. These factors are the contributors to the relapsed addiction tendency. Thus, this research was

conducted to identify the effectiveness of the rehabilitation program on relapsed addiction. The findings are expected to contribute not only for the academia but also to the management of such centers as well as the law makers, in regards with the relapsed addiction problems in Malaysia.

The aim of this study is to identify the level of effectiveness of the drug rehabilitation program amongst the relapsed addicts and to determine the relationship between the effectiveness of the drug rehabilitation program with the relapsed addiction tendency.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

This research was conducted using cross-sectional survey and analyzed using statistical correlation test. According to Malhotra, Sham and Crsip [20], the cross-sectional involves the data collection method on one type of sample from the population that has to be experimented once based on the existing respondents' attribute. Meanwhile, correlation analysis according to Cohen and Manion [21], is being used to see the relation or influence from one factor to another. Through correlation analysis, the idea on the strength and the direction of relation that exist between two variables that being looked into could be determined [22].

**Instrument:** This research used questionnaires and significant tests to examine the hypotheses. The effectiveness of the drugs rehabilitation program is being measured with 26 items of questions that has been developed by Bahaman, *et al.*, [1] with the rate of the overall reliability of the rehabilitation program of 0.905. Likert's scale were used as: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree and (4) strongly agree. To determine whether there is a significant relationship between the overall drug rehabilitation program on relapsed addiction, the correlation Pearson test based on Guildford's Rule of Thumb' [23] was used: <0.20=Negligible Relationship, 0.20-0.40=Low Relationship, 0.41-0.70=Moderate Relationship, 0.71-0.90=High Relationship and >0.90=Very High Relationship.

**Respondents:** The population in this research refers to relapsed addicts, the drug addicts who still undergoing the treatment and rehabilitation services in Drug Rehabilitation Centers in Peninsular Malaysia. This research utilized a stratified random sampling, where all elements in the population were separated according to

zones and drug rehabilitation centers with the highest number of inmates were chosen to represent each zone. Eight rehabilitation centers representing four zones were selected to be the research samples namely (i) South zone = Tampoi, Johor Bahru and Tiang Dua, Melaka, (ii) East Zone = Besut, Terengganu and Raub, Pahang, (iii) Central Zone = Jelebu, N. Sembilan and Rawang, Selangor and (iv) North Zone = Bukit Mertajam, Pulau Pinang and Perlop, Perak. Research data was analyzed using ‘Statistical Package for the Social Science for Windows’ (SPSS for Windows). Descriptive statistic was used to determine the frequency, percentage and average. Meanwhile, inferential statistic using Pearson Correlation test is to determine the relation between the effectiveness of drugs rehabilitation program and the relapsed addiction tendency.

**RESULTS ND DISSCUSSION**

Great majority of the respondents involved in this research were from those aged 30s and above (85.6%), with the minimum age of 20 years old and the maximum age of 60 years old. Most of them were Malays Muslims (79.5%) and bachelors (64.5%). The educational background of the respondents indicated that 90.5% of them were minimally educated, went through a primary school education until secondary school education with Certificated Education of Malaysia. As for their working experience, 47.3% of them used to work as temporary workers.

Table 1 showed research findings on the effectiveness of the drug rehabilitation program amongst the relapsed addicts in Malaysia. The responds from 400 relapsed addicts showed that in overall the drugs rehabilitation program consists of phase one till four and it was effective in helping rehabilitating the addicts. Research analysis showed 98.5% of the relapsed addicts reacts from moderate to high level in the overall program that they gone through. These gave the impression that they were satisfied with the program and the activities in the two years they received treatments in the Drug Rehabilitation Centers.

The program they have undergone provides them awareness on the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and free from drugs abuse. The research indicated that 92.6% respondent agreed with the statement, whereas 84.5% respondent agreed that the religion program offered to them resulted a feeling to repent and change. Meanwhile about 75.5% of the respondents agreed that the counseling program help them to stay away from relapsed addiction. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the rehabilitation program is not the main factors that contributing to the relapsed addiction tendency. It is because the research suggested that when the addicts went through rehabilitation program for two years in Drug Rehabilitation Centers, they successfully abstain and free themselves from drugs and became normal and functional as well as being productive member of the society. However, what dragged them back to addiction is when they faced the outside world that

Table 1: Level of the effectiveness of the drug rehabilitation program (n=400)

The Effectiveness of the Drug Rehabilitation Program	No. (n=400)	%	Mean	SP
<b>Phase 1(Discipline Building)</b>				
Low	5	1.3	2.41	0.52
Moderate	224	56.0		
High	171	42.7		
<b>Phase 2 (Self Therapy)</b>				
Low	17	4.3	2.33	0.56
Moderate	233	58.3		
High	150	37.4		
<b>Phase 3 (Skills)</b>				
Low	19	4.8	2.20	0.50
Moderate	283	70.8		
High	98	24.4		
<b>Phase 4 (Community)</b>				
Low	15	3.8	2.30	0.53
Moderate	251	62.8		
High	134	33.4		
<b>Overall: Level of Drug Effectiveness Program</b>				
Low	6	1.5	2.43	0.52
Moderate	218	54.5		
High	176	44.0		

Note: Low (≤2.00) Moderate (2.01-3.00) High (3.01-4.00)

Table 2: Relations between the effectiveness of drug rehabilitation program on relapsed addiction (n=400)

Variable	r	p
The Effectiveness of Drug Rehabilitation Program		
Phase 1: Discipline Building	-0.010	0.850
Phase 2: Self Therapy Program	-0.074	0.139
Phase 3: Skills Program	-0.017	0.738
Phase 4: Community Program	-0.042	0.398
Overall	-0.049	0.325

‘stimulated’ them to reuse drugs [24, 25, 11, 26]. Empirical evidence provided by Fauziah [24] and Chuah [27] confirms that low self confidence factor triggered the relapsed addiction. The social environment factors such as lack of support from the community [28, 29] and mistrust and resistance of employers to employ addicts [24, 30, 31] has significant relation towards relapsed addiction tendency.

From the research findings, it can be concluded that the drugs rehabilitation program conducted by the government has met its objectives especially in avoiding drug relapse. In fact the research strongly suggests that the program has been effective in treating, rehabilitating and freeing the addicts from drug abuse. The research findings empirically indicated that there were no significant relation among the overall drugs rehabilitation program (phase one till four) with the relapsed addiction tendency ( $r = -.049$ ,  $p > .05$ ) as shown in Table 2. However these research findings were found not parallel with findings of Rajasooria’s (1982). His research on the effectiveness of the treatment and rehabilitation program in one of the Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Malaysia recorded that 65% of respondent dissatisfied towards the treatment and rehabilitation program service given.

It was also discovered that the current research finding contradicts with some of the Western research who claimed that the treatment and rehabilitation model for the drug addicts faced high failures rate until it induced them to become relapsed addicts [14-17, 32]. This finding also does not in tune with some researchers who thought that the drug rehabilitation treatment program for the addicts is less effective in giving them the awareness so they can continuously free from drugs abuse [9, 10, 12, 13]. It can be concluded that from this aspect the responsibility to eradicate the relapsed addiction problem should not only shouldered by the government and rehabilitation agencies alone. The opinion that the drug rehabilitation treatment program conducted by the government failed to treat and rehabilitate addicts, can be challenged, as evidenced in this research. Instead, the research proved that the program is effective in helping giving the treatment and rehabilitation program service to rehabilitate addicts. Hence, the government’s efforts to

eradicate this problem demands millions of ringgit worth of allocation to build complete infrastructures including hospitals and 29 Drug Rehabilitation Centers throughout the nation in Malaysia, were not in vain.

However, researchers found that the efforts to eradicate the drug addiction problems in total were still seen as failures because of lack of awareness, support and cooperation from the community [26, 28, 29] to take over and continue the role of helping the addicts to rehabilitate completely from drugs after they were released. In general, there are still members of the community who look down on the former drug addicts even though they have been through the rehabilitation process. There are still employers who are skeptics on giving the opportunities to the former drug addicts to get or continue with their former jobs to pay for their living after the release. In the same time, former drug addicts failed to show seriousness and high self confidence [24, 27] to the not supporting parties, thus confirmed the negative perceptions from the community that made the community giving them the bad tagging. This factor was found to be one of the causes of the relapsed addiction tendency in Malaysia. The blaming game on the Malaysian government of the failure and the ineffectiveness of the current drug rehabilitation treatment program should be changed. On the other hand, what should be done by each member of the community is they should be ready to take over the role and responsibility that has been played by the Drug Rehabilitation Centers in ensuring the drug addicts to be free from the clutch of drugs after they were released. It is because the process of rehabilitating addicts should be done continuously. The involvement and the readiness of the community to accept former drugs addicts that has been released could give them back their self confidence to recovered from the effect of drugs and in the long run it can reduce the relapsed additions issues completely.

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of the Department for Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation is to treat, rehabilitate and to prevent relapsed addiction amongst drug addicts so they

can function again as productive members of society. Despite findings of the current research indicated that the program conducted by the Drug Rehabilitation Centers in Malaysia deemed as effective in helping to treat and cure addicts, other measures could also be considered. Drug counselors appointed to rehabilitate these addicts are urged to strengthen the modules, activities and programs that was prepared, from time to time. Since the drug rehabilitation program prepared by the government in Malaysia does not showed significant relations with relapsed addictions, the government through National Anti-Drug Agency in Malaysia is suggested to strengthen the prepared extended care program. For example, National Anti-Drug Agency in Malaysia is suggested to increase its workforce including to have more trained drug counselors in every district. This is to facilitate a close monitoring and supervisions of the advancement of the former addicts who has been treated and released. Furthermore, the extended care program and supervisions should also involved the community, youth movements, residence associations to ensure the effort to eradicate relapsed addictions successful, especially when the former addicts faced the hurdles and tumbles of the outside world after the released.

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