

Depression among female drug users in Malaysia

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Women & Addiction

- Many women who use drugs have faced serious challenges to their well-being during their lives. Often, women who use drugs have low self-esteem, depression and little self-confidence and may feel powerless.
- Women addicted to drugs also reported that their drug-using male sex partners initiated them into drug abuse.
- In addition, research indicates that drug-dependent women have great difficulty abstaining from drugs, when the lifestyle of their male partner is one that supports drug use.
- Many drug-using women do not seek treatment because they are afraid not being able to take care of or keep their children, feel shame for the family, they fear reprisal from their spouses or boyfriends, and they fear punishment from authorities in the community.
- Drug-dependent women that have been most successful have had the help and support of significant others, family members, friends, treatment providers, and the community.
- These conditions often push them deeper into depression

Dual diagnosis among women addicted to drugs

- Dual diagnosis (comorbidity of a psychoactive substance use disorder and additional significant psychiatric disorder) - drug addict with mental disorders such as depression, schizophrenia, ASP, OCD, etc
- Antisocial personality disorder (ASP) appears to predispose to both alcohol and other drug abuse (Blume, 1989) .
- Studies of dual diagnosis have shown major gender differences. This is even more marked when comorbid disorders and chemical dependency are classified as either primary or secondary depending upon their temporal order of onset (Schuckit & Morrissey, 1996).
- Sixty-five percent of alcoholic women and 48% of alcoholic men had additional diagnoses, with major depression nearly four times as frequent (19% of alcoholic women; 5% of men). The only additional diagnosis found more frequently among the male alcoholics was ASP.

Dual diagnosis among women addicted to drugs

- Studies of clinical populations find even higher rates of dual diagnosis. Hesselbrock, Meyer & Keener (1999) found that **80% of a sample of 90** drug and alcoholic women in treatment had one or more additional diagnoses.
- Another substance abuse was diagnosed in 38% of the sample, and 52% of the women were diagnosed as having **major depression**. **Phobia** was diagnosed in 44%, panic disorder in 14%, and **obsessive-compulsive disorder** in 13%. Twenty percent of the clinical sample of women satisfied diagnostic criteria for **ASP disorder**. All other diagnoses were present in less than 10%.
- Studies of samples of patients in treatment for drug dependencies (Khantzian & Treece, 1985) and comparison community samples (Rounsaville & Kleber, 1985) show similarly high rates of dual diagnosis, with female subjects showing more depression than male.
- Ross, Glaser & Stiasny (1988) found an equal prevalence of affective disorders in 260 men and 241 women applying for alcoholism and other drug-dependence treatment in Toronto. The women did show a higher prevalence of **bulimia, anxiety disorder** and **sexual disorder**, and a lower prevalence of ASP.
- Other researchers have found an association between alcohol and other drug dependence in women and **eating disorders** (Bulik, 1997) **borderline personality disorder** (Vaglum & Vaglum, 1997).

The Malaysian scenario

- In 2004, there are 692 female drug addicts (1.79%), an increase of 19.52% from 2003 (579 persons)
- There is an increase in numbers and percentage of female to male addict from 1998 to 2004 (table).
- Very little studies on female drug addict in the country, mostly data supplied by NADI, AADK
- No detailed studies done on dual-diagnosis among female drug addicts in Malaysia

| Year | number | % to male addict |
|------|--------|------------------|
| 1998 | 472 | 1.26 |
| 1999 | 532 | 1.50 |
| 2000 | 509 | 1.66 |
| 2001 | 532 | 1.69 |
| 2002 | 401 | 1.26 |
| 2003 | 579 | 1.35 |

Treatment and rehabilitation in Malaysia

- 28 Serenti drug treatment centers, 1 for female in Bachok, Kelantan
- Use to employ the modality "Terapi Insaf diri"
- Capacity is 150 residents but at present, there are 230 at Bachok
- Treatment is between 15-24 months
- Continue with rehabilitation for 24 months outside the treatment center

The respondents

- 166 residents of Pusat Serenti Bachok, compare with 58 Male residents (PSBC)
- Mean age 30.9years for female (33.9 male)
- 68.9% Malays, 16.4% Chinese, 6.8% Indians
- Started to use drugs at 20.2 Years (20.9 male)
- Used drugs for 10.1 years (14.6 male)
- 95.2% smoke, 70.1% drink alcohol

Drug use among female addicts



| Type of drugs | Most frequent use | | | | | | Least used |
|---------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | |
| Heroin | 109 (65.7%) | | | | | | |
| Ganja | 5 (3.0%) | 27 (16.3%) | 7 (4.2%) | 2 (1.2%) | 1 (0.6%) | | |
| Morfia | 14 (8.4%) | 13 (7.8%) | 3 (1.8%) | | | | |
| Syabu | 32 (19.3%) | 29 (17.5%) | 16 (9.6%) | 5 (3.0%) | 2 (1.2%) | | |
| pill | 1 (0.6%) | 4 (2.4%) | 10 (6.0%) | 7 (4.2%) | 4 (2.4%) | | |
| ecstasy | 1 (0.6%) | 2 (1.2%) | 5 (3.0%) | 2 (1.2%) | | 1 (0.6%) | |
| Tre baby | | 7 (4.2%) | | 3 (1.8%) | 1 (0.6%) | | |
| Kokain | 1 (0.6%) | | 1 (0.6%) | | 1 (0.6%) | | |
| Candu | | 2 (1.2%) | 1 (0.6%) | | | | |
| W.Y | | 2 (1.2%) | | 1 (0.6%) | 1 (0.6%) | | |
| Ubat Batuk | | 3 (1.8%) | 1 (0.6%) | | | 2 (1.2%) | |
| Cannabis | | | 1 (0.6%) | | | | |
| Kopi | | | | 1 (0.6%) | | | |
| Minuman Keras | | | 1 (0.6%) | | 1 (0.6%) | | |

Occupation of male and female addicts

| Occupation | Male | | Female | |
|-------------------------|------|-------|--------|-------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Small business | 19 | 36.5% | 39 | 29.5% |
| Self-employed | 16 | 30.8% | 17 | 12.9% |
| Drivers | 7 | 13.5% | | |
| Factory workers | 6 | 11.5% | 12 | 9.1% |
| Construction | 4 | 7.7% | | |
| SRO | - | - | 18 | 13.6% |
| Nite clubs | - | - | 10 | 7.6% |
| Hotel, tourist industry | - | - | 5 | 3.8% |
| Drug peddler | - | - | 9 | 6.8% |
| Unemployed | - | - | 11 | 8.3% |
| Students | - | - | 5 | 3.8% |
| Government | - | - | 6 | 4.5% |

Reasons for taking drugs

| Reasons | Male | | Female | |
|--------------------------------|------|-------|--------|-------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Peace and relaxation | 7 | 14.0% | 9 | 6.1% |
| Curious | 18 | 36.0% | 56 | 38.1% |
| Tension | 12 | 24.0% | 35 | 23.8% |
| Sexual | 3 | 6.0% | - | - |
| Influence from friends/husband | 10 | 20.0% | 20 | 13.6% |
| Enjoyment | - | - | 14 | 9.5% |
| Family/personal problems | - | - | 13 | 8.8% |

Relationship with spouse

| Relationship with spouse | Male | | Female | |
|--------------------------|------|------|--------|------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Good | 17 | 85.0 | 51 | 53.1 |
| Not so good | 3 | 15.0 | 30 | 31.3 |
| Terrible | - | - | 15 | 15.6 |

Abuse by parents

| | Male | | Female | |
|-----|------|------|--------|------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Yes | 2 | 3.9 | 30 | 18.5 |
| No | 49 | 96.1 | 132 | 81.5 |

Abuse by spouse

| | Male | | Female | |
|-----|------|-----|--------|------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Yes | | | 30 | 27.5 |
| No | 21 | 100 | 79 | 72.5 |

Victims of domestic violence

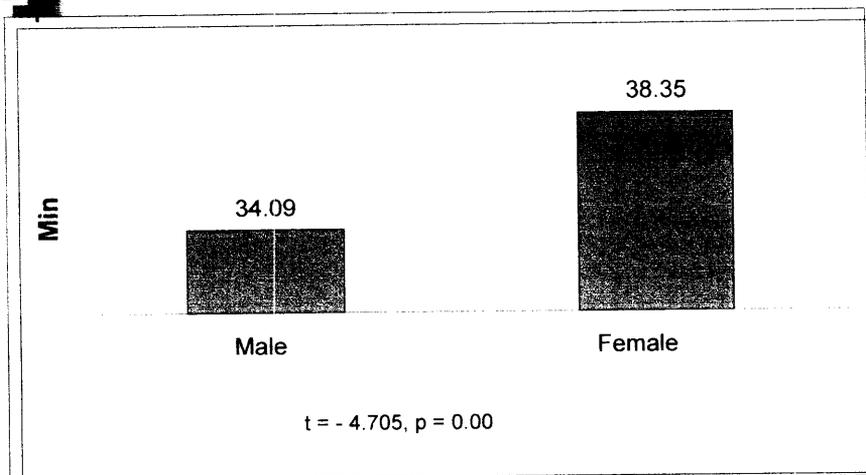
| | Male | | Female | |
|------------------|------|------|--------|------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Yes, victims | 1 | 2.1 | 39 | 27.5 |
| No, not a victim | 47 | 97.9 | 103 | 72.5 |

Victims of sexual violence

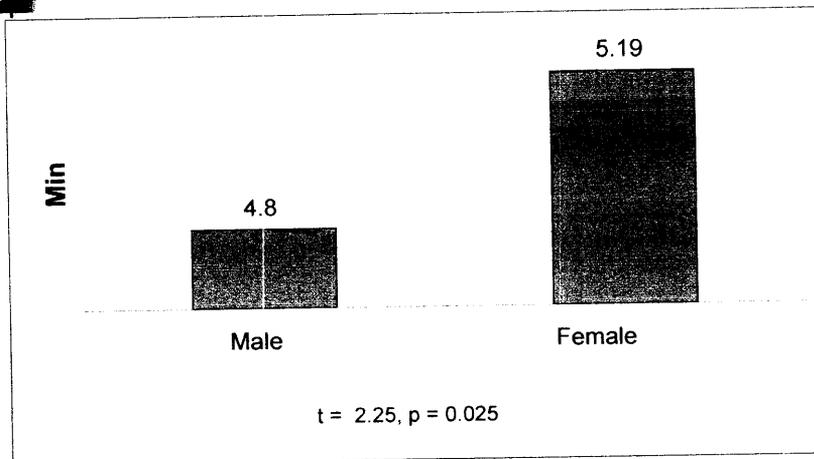


| | Male | | Female | |
|-----|------|------|--------|------|
| | Freq | % | Freq | % |
| Yes | 1 | 2.1 | 24 | 15.1 |
| No | 47 | 97.9 | 135 | 84.9 |

Depression



Powerlessness



Discussion

- Due to history of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, women addicted to drugs has greater tendency to experience depression then men
- Therefore there is a need to treat female drug users differently, specifically focusing on their anxiety, depression and other related disorders
- For light to mild depression, medical or psychiatric intervention may not be necessary, but those experiencing mild to severe depression, such interventions is imperative before addiction treatment and rehabilitation can be done
- Increase familial and peer support can be helpful to alleviate their depression
- Because depression can be caused by the anticipation of difficult and compromising life and a return to the same lifestyle after treatment, there must be efforts to detach them from previous lifestyle and environment so to give them avenue for a possible new start.