Youth Drug Abusers: Barriers in Help-Seeking

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Abstract: The trend of drug abuse is increasing in Malaysia and a significant number of them are youths. Past studies discover that youths do not seek professional help or do not even seek help when they are abusing drugs. Thus, it is important to understand the reason behind them. This is crucial as drug abusers are always hiding their identity. The study aims to identify the barriers which keep the youth away from seeking help. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative approach to have in-depth understanding about the barriers faced by the young drug addicts in seeking help for treatment. The study is carried out in a drugs rehabilitation centre in Kuching area targeting the youths who are currently undergoing treatment in the centre. Majority of them are not admitted voluntarily. The sampling is identified using purposive technique. Instruments used for the study includes in-depth interview by using guided interview questions. The findings are analysed using content analysis to develop themes through the verbatim data. The study enquires about their experiences on drug abuse and their journey to the rehabilitation centre. Thus, the major finding indicates the barriers faced by them during the journey. Most of the respondents never had the intention to seek help until the family members took action. They had made drugs abuse behavior as part of their youth culture. Majority of the respondents are lack of awareness on the existing help system and concern on the legal action if they expose themselves. The findings of the study have implications on the community with the drug abusing youth in prevention and recovery policy.

Keywords: Drug abuse, youth, help-seeking, barrier, treatment

I. INTRODUCTION

According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019), the drug problem is becoming viral globally and it is worrying as there is an estimated 271 million people of the global population had abused drugs. The World Drug Report states that there is more than one drug abuser in every 10 drug users (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). In year 2018, South-East Asia arises as the fastest growing market of methamphetamine in the world. Most countries from South-East Asia which includes Malaysia had reported methamphetamine as main concern in drugs treatment (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019; National Anti-Drugs Agency, 2019).

Drug abuse is known as one of the major issues for school youths. As cited in Sike et al. (2009), study shows that drug abuse is going viral among the youths that the youth in almost all the countries in the world had significant number in abusing drugs. World Drug Report (2015) states that the number of youth who engaged in drugs is increasing (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015) as they are using drugs to satisfy their need which includes to release stress or enhance enjoyment (United Nations, 2006). Khantzian, Mack, and Schatzberg (Abadinsky, 2018) find that often the youth uses drug to cope with their psychological demand which includes stress, emotional pain, or developmental crisis. In America, studies have shown that the youths are at risk of getting into contact with drugs. The school is one of the parties that plays a primary role in detecting, identifying and preventing youth drug abuse (Council on School Health and Committee on Drug Abuse, 2007). The school counselors are the educators with drug abuse and mental health knowledge; thus, it is important for them to be able to detect and react immediately when they come across any youth drug abusers.

The trend of drug abuse among youth continues to increase in Malaysia (Mohamed et al., 2008) and the issue has been highlighted in many research conducted in the country (Chie et al., 2015; Tam & Foo, 2013; Mohamed et al., 2008). A research conducted in Selangor has found that it is common for secondary school students to experience depression and drug abuse can be one of the factors (Adlina et al., 2007). As there are connections between drug abuse and depression (Fergusson, Bode, & Horwood, 2009; Hamalainen et al., 2001; Glassman et al., 1990), some interventions need to focus on the early stage of drug abuse. On the other hand, Mohamed et al. (2008) find that there are not many research done in examining this field and thus the prevention programs are formulated from other sources such as government body, private organization and research through students (Samudin et al., 2014; Vicknasingam & Mazlan, 2008). Meanwhile, Chemi et al. (2014) believe that the research on the outcome of drug abuse should be studied in details to ensure a more effective approach. Therefore, we can see that many research focused on the subject of drug abuse does not include the youth drug abuser’s help-seeking process.

Besides that, from the past research mentioned above, these research focus mainly on Peninsular Malaysia. However, Sarawak as one of the states from East Malaysia also plays crucial role since Sarawak had recorded the highest number of drug abuse among the secondary school students in the country (Chie, 2019). Statistic from National Anti-Drug Agency (Ministry of Home Affair, 2019) also shows that the drug abuse cases detected in Sarawak are increasing from year 2017 to 2019 (from 440 cases to 852 cases). There are several areas in Sarawak that had been highlighted as high risk areas such as Kuching, Samarahan, Sri Aman, Miri, Sibu and Bintulu (Bernalme, 2019). Besides the urban areas, many youths from different ethnic groups were arrested in the rural areas of Sarawak because of drug abuse problems (Chie, 2019). It is a rising concern that the drug abuse problems had also hit the youths in the rural areas which include villages in Bau, Serian, Kapit, Bintulu and Lawas (Jee, 2019). Thus, it is
important to look into the insights of youth drug abusers in Sarawak.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Help-Seeking Behavior

World Health Organization defines help-seeking as:

Any action or activity carried out by an adolescent who perceives herself/himself as needing personal, psychological, affective assistance or health or social services, with the purpose of meeting this need in a positive way. This includes seeking help from formal services – for example, clinic services, counselors, psychologists, medical staff, traditional healers, religious leaders or youth programmes – as well as informal sources, which includes peer groups and friends, family members or kinship groups and/or other adults in the community. The “help” provided might consist of a service (e.g. a medical consultation, clinical care, medical treatment or a counselling session), a referral for a service provided elsewhere or for follow up care or talking to another person informally about the need in question (Barker, 2007, p.2).

On the other hand, Rickwood et al. (2005) define help-seeking as a way to cope with problem which depends on the interpersonal skill and social relationship. There are different sources of help which includes the formal and informal assistance (Rickwood et al., 2005). For informal help-seeking, it comes from the social relationship from friends and family members. Formal help-seeking resources is provided by the professionals such as counselor, psychiatrist and social worker. In our local context, the family or the extended family members are always the first source of help-seeking; while seeking help at the formal agency will always be the last resort for the problem (Ling, 2007).

For this research context, the help-seeking behavior is defined as an action or understanding of youth who recognizes that they need psychological or physical help through formal and informal sources to help in addressing their drugs abuse problem.

Youth and Drug Abuse

According to UNICEF (2011), when the youth receives wrong information and skills to cope with the growth in adulthood, they can get involved in drugs. UNICEF (2011) states that children’s behaviors and risks are to be assessed. There are youth who used drugs to cope with the problems that they are facing, to change the way they feel, to stay awake or they are influenced by their environment. Studies also shows that depression can lead to drug abuse (Kelder et al., 2001; Adlina et al., 2007). A study by Ramasamy (2012) indicates that “drugs may have strong appeal to young people who are beginning their struggle for independence as they search for identity” (p. 24). As they are at the stage of searching for identity, they are having a high risk to be involved in drug abuse (Kassim, 2006).

In Malaysia, the statistic from National Anti-Drug Agency has shown that the number of drug abusers had been increasing from year to year and almost half of them are made up of youth from the age of 15 to 29 years old (Agensi AntiDadah Kebangsaan, 2016). The number of drug abusers registered is believed to be only at the tip of an iceberg as there are many cases that were under-reported or not detected (Mohamed et al., 2008). As cited in Mohamed et al. (2008), Mohamed has a few past studies showing that the behavior of youth drug abusers who undergoes proper intervention or rehabilitation programs can be changed. Past study by Wan Sulaiman et al. (2018) shows that the students and teachers who undergo the drugs abuse prevention program have received positive feedback after the program. Ahmad and Mustaffa (2003) also find that the drug abusers in the rehabilitation centre have positive perception towards the counseling they received. In addition, Fauziah et al. (2010) mention that majority of the drug abusers in the rehabilitation centre are ready to change and recover from their addiction. Thus, it is important to provide proper intervention for the youth drug abusers by getting to know their real problems and needs.

Barriers of Help-Seeking

There are some barriers identified from the past studies as shown in the subsection below:

1) Parental Resistance and Shame

Some parents deny the drug abuse problem of their children as this problem is viewed as bringing shame and they will be judged as bad parents. The denial can cause the problem to become worse (Fields, 2010). In Malaysia, the community believes that social support is important for the drug abusers but they also prefer to keep them away from home because of the shame that brought upon them (Kang et al., 2005; Yusof et al., 1994). For instance, some of the drugs abusers struggle to seek help because of the fear of being labelled as drugs addict by others (Motta-Ochoa et al., 2017). Chie et al. (2015) discover that the youth believes that family support during and after the rehabilitation is crucial. Parents or the family members play an important role in influencing the drugs abuser to take the first step in seeking help.

2) Lack of Confidence in Rehabilitative Treatment or the Professional

Motto-Ochoa et al. (2017) find that one of the barriers that impedes drugs abuser from seeking help is the lack of confidence of the health system in terms of professionalism and sufficient psychological support. Some of the drugs abusers do not believe that the health service providers can really help them to solve the problem nor are they able to receive any psychological support from them (Motto-Ochoa et al., 2017). Another study also discover that the young people feel that the existing service does not have the expertise to handle their problem (Berridge et al., 2017). When the people have no confidence in the existing services that are provided by the government, they will not go and utilize them. In other words, studies have found that the refusal to undergo treatment or seeking help are caused by the lack of awareness of drugs rehabilitation (Motto-Ochoa et al., 2017; Ballon et al.,
It shows that many are not aware of the existing system which can provide help and support to the drug abusers. However, in Malaysia, the public believes that the rehabilitation service provided by private sector is more effective although it is costly (Chie et al., 2015). Similar results by Motto-Ochoa et al. (2017) shows that the drugs abuser in Canada also cannot afford the cost although they had found a good treatment centre.

3) Confidentiality and Value of Trust

Many young people view meeting a professional to talk about their problems as a taboo as they do not trust that the professionals are able to help keep their secret (Berridge et al., 2017; Nebhinani et al., 2012). Berridge et al. (2017) discover that drug abusers will choose not to talk to anyone such as parents, school teacher, counselor or general practitioner because they worry that they might share their information with others and disclose their drug use problem.

The role of school counselors and teachers are important given the long amount of time a student spends at school. They will be able to detect drug abuse students and react to it immediately (Lambie & Rokutani, 2002). However, in Malaysia, the school counselors will sometimes take up the role of disciplinarian and punish the students when they are found to be doing something against the rules (Barker, 2007). Hence, students chose not to reveal anything to the counselor when the value of trust does not exist.

In order to address the needs of youth drug abusers, the school counselors and teachers must be able to recognize and assess students who are abusing drugs (Sikes et al., 2009). The symptoms or changes of the student should be recognized by school counselors immediately so that proper action can be taken at an early stage. As teachers and counselors are available in schools and they have daily contact with the students, they should be able to detect and react to students who are abusing drugs immediately (Lambie & Rokutani, 2002). Early detection and intervention are important so that the consequences of the mental health problem and suffering of the student can be reduced (Maideen, Sidik, Rampal, & Mukhtar, 2014). The presence of mental health intervention at school also enables the youth to gain knowledge and resources of mental health and positive help-seeking behavior (Gestsdottir, 2010).

4) Self-Awareness

There are several studies in and out of Malaysia that study on the self-awareness or self-motivation of the drug abusers. Participants from a study conducted (Ballon et al., 2004) mention that only those with self-motivation would seek help for their drug problem instead of forcing them to receive the help. However, some argued that they might only have the motivation to seek help when they accept the reality of their situation (Ballon et al., 2004). Do et al. (2019) find that the help-seeking intentions were positively related with the recognition of the subjective need for help. Besides, past studies also have shown that the lack of self-awareness among the drug abusers towards their drug abuse problem is because of their own denial (Motta-Ochoa et al., 2017; Caldeira et al., 2009; Lennings et al., 2006; Ballon et al., 2004). The denial caused them to not recognize their drug abusive act as a problem which they need to seek for help or treatment (Caldeira et al., 2009). A study conducted in Hong Kong also mentions that the young drug abusers will see drug use as a culture among the young generation (Centre of Suicide Research and Prevention, & Department of Social Work and Social Administration, 2011). As a result, they are not aware that there is a need to seek help for their drug abuse problem. Motta-Ochoa et al. (2017).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was based on qualitative method with interpretative phenomenological analysis approach. The phenomenology is one of the school under the interpretivism which attempts to discover the meaning or interpretation of people’s experience in the world (Carey, 2013). This research employs qualitative method in order to obtain in-depth viewpoints from the research participants who can offer narrative of their personal experience particularly on issues which may be sensitive or personal to them. The barriers of the research participants during their help-seeking process have been studied in order to find out the reasons behind every action.

Research Site

The research area took place in Kuching, Sarawak. Kuching is one of the divisions in Sarawak and it is also the capital city (Ministry of Social Development and Urbanization Sarawak, 2007). Sarawak is the largest States in Malaysia which consists of about 2.6 million people living in the 12 divisions where there is 42% of people living in the rural areas (The Star Online, 2014). Previous researches stated that many researches on youths involved in drug abuse are conducted in Malaysia but there are limited sources and research done in Kuching area despite Kuching is one of the high-risk area identified to have many youth drug abusers (Bernama, 2019).

Research Population and Research Participants

The population for this research consisted of youth drug abusers who are misusing all kind of drugs. The research population focused on youths aged 15-30 years old. The age range was selected for the research as the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia was focusing on the youth development activities and programs for this age range. The youth at this age range should be productive in country development instead of having drug problems (Bernama, 2020). Furthermore, the age range starts at 15 years old as this stage is considered to be the important developmental period at the end of childhood and the start of early adulthood; these transition stages can be joyful for most youth however it can be depressive to some others. Besides, youths at this stage are looking for their self-identity so they can fall into the risk group particularly in drug abuse (Kassim, 2006). Thus, the
youth aged 15 to 30 years old is relevant to be included for this research.

The research participants consisted of youth drug abusers aged 15 to 30 years old. Their experience and views of their help-seeking behavior were explored. Out of the 25 clients in the rehabilitation centre, 16 clients participated in the research and two of them are female clients. Not all the clients were involved in the research because some of them do not meet the selection criterion while one of them has privacy concern. The number of female participants were lower as there were only five of them in the centre and three of them do not want to talk more about themselves nor accept the interview session.

**Research Sampling and Sampling Procedure**

The research used purposive sampling which is a type of non-probability sampling in identifying the youth drug abusers. This sampling technique was used because the participants were selected for a purpose or because of their unique position (Engel & Schutt, 2017). Participants were identified by the representative or the officer in charge from the rehabilitation centre. They provided researcher with the name of participants based on the research criterion and who are willing to be involved in the research and share about their experience during their help-seeking journey.

The selected participants were admitted to the rehabilitation centre because of their drug abuse problem, aged 15 to 30 years old and able to communicate in a stable condition which is not having relapse on their drug problem. After the potential participants are identified, they were being approached and briefed on the research before conducting the interview session. The interview only begins when the participants had given their consent by signing the informed consent form.

**Research Instrument**

The research was conducted by utilizing in-depth interview. The phenomenological structure was applied to the interview process with questions based on contextualization of experience, apprehending and clarifying the phenomenon (Bevan, 2014). Guided interview is used to obtain data during interview session. The background and experience of participants were collected from the participants themselves. In-depth interview was carried out during the research and the conversations was carried out in a confidential manner and safe environment.

**Data Collection**

The basis of information for the research is the primary data while the participants’ experiences are the main source of information for this research. Qualitative method was employed for this research as it will involve face-to-face interview in order to obtain in-depth viewpoints on help-seeking behavior of the youth drug abusers. An interview guide was created to help the researcher to keep track of questions during the interview session with the participants.

Before the interview, the participants were contacted in order to explain the purpose and obtain their consent to participate in this research. For the participants who were underage, consent by caretakers has been obtained with the help of the officer of the centre. After the referral from the officer in charge, the participants were asked again for their permission to conduct the interview. Interviews will not be carried out should the participants disagrees to participate in the study. The interviews were audio-recorded, with the permission of participants, for transcription purpose. Language used during the interview session are changed according to the preference and convenience of the client. Majority of the participants can only speak Malay language or Sarawak Language. There were only a few of them can communicate in simple English with the mix of some Malay Language. Thus, the researcher conducted the interviews by using the language which was preferred by the participants. This is so that the participants would feel more comfortable when sharing their experience. Notes were also made during the interview session to ensure the data collected is more accurate and it is reviewed to avoid missing out of important data.

**Data Transcription and Analysis**

The notes and audios recorded during the interviews were organized and stored in specific folder respectively. The audio recordings were then transcribed verbatim into textual data which included the original language used by the participants, long pauses, laughter, and repetitions. In order to maintain the originality, reliability and validity of the data, the transcripts use back-to-back translation technique which translates the targeted language back to the original language until both languages were presenting the same message (Chen & Boore, 2010). The transcripts were sent to a translator to translate back to the original language. The transcriptions are re-read for a few times in order to obtain general comprehension and clear presentation of the topic.

The data was analyzed by using content analysis with Theory of Planned Behavior as framework.

**Ethical Consideration**

This research had considered the ethical issues include ethical approval from the rehabilitation centre, voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality.

**IV. FINDINGS**

Questions such as “Why don’t you plan to seek for help?” “What is the reason that you don’t feel like you need help for your problem?”, “What are the challenges you faced during your help-seeking process?” were presented to the research participants so they can discuss on the obstacles they faced when tackling drug abuse problem. Through the in-depth interviews conducted, the perceptions and thoughts of the participants had been explored further and six sub-themes had been identified. It includes shame, opposition from the family, lack of awareness on the current help system, stigmatization, fear on the law, and lack of self-awareness.

1) Shame
The feeling of shame by the family members is one of the factors which influences the youth when they consider the help-seeking process. Family members feel that it brings shame to them if others knew that there is a drug abuser in their home. On the other hand, one of the research participants also feel ashamed to admit that he was a drug abuser. Therefore, they chose to hide their problems first. Two of the research participants shared their experience:

“My family don’t want to talk about me. They feel shame to let the [others] know they have a son like me.” (Saiful)

“(0.9) I am the first in my family and one of a few in my village entering university. If the others know about what I am doing now, sure they will gossip about me (hand on his neck and smile).” (Yahya)

The feeling of embarrassing had been shown through Yahya’s body language and smile. However, not all of them felt ashamed if their family found out rather three of them felt the they are more ashamed of themselves if their drug abusing friends knew about their drug abuse. They felt that by admitting into a rehabilitation centre and receiving treatment was a shameful act among those friends. They felt that they cannot let their friends know that they had stopped taking drugs as they will be left out by the drug abusing friends. The sense of belonging had made the participants decided not to stop their drug intake as they need to be in the friend’s circle. Thus, the embarrassment had been made as one of the limitations which kept them away from professional intervention and seeking help from the rehabilitation centre. These participants are quoted, saying:

“I didn’t let my friends know I am inside here. When I go back for Raya holidays and they saw [me], I told them I went for army training when they ask me where I had been.” (Nasri)

“I don’t want to let my friends know.” (Saiful)

“(0.9) I am the first in my family and one of a few in my village entering university. If the others know about what I am doing now, sure they will gossip about me (hand on his neck and smile).” (Yahya)

“I think my friend will laugh at me if they know I am in here [rehabilitation centre]. They sure say that I am stupid to get caught.”

2) Lack of Awareness on Current Help System

Before admitting into the rehabilitation centre, 11 research participants did not have prior awareness of the help systems available; they are either lack of trust or they do not know about the existing help system. This had been a barrier for them to try and reach out for help to resolve their drug abuse problems.

Five participants admitted that they never seek help from any professionals such as counselor or doctor before admitted to the rehabilitation centre. They believed that the professionals will not be able to help them to solve any problem at all. Some of the participants mentioned that:

“I don’t think by talking to them my problem can get solve. Better I keep to myself lah.” (Richard)

“No, I won’t share anything to counselor. But I will talk to my brother.” (Jackson)

“No use. There is no need to talk to counselor. I know they like to brainwash people but I don’t think they can brainwash me.” (Yahya)

On the other hand, there were also participant who claimed that he did not believe that the rehabilitation centre can help him to overcome his drug addiction. He thought that the environment was not strict enough so he did not have the confidence that it will be a good place to help him get rid of his drug abuse problem.

“I don’t think by entering here I can get rid of the drugs. Before I was admitted here, I heard there are still people in here can get their source (drugs they are using) from outside.” (Richard)

Findings discovered that seven research participants did not want to share their problems with someone whom they did not know. They are concerned about their privacy being disclosed to others. One of the research participants said:

“I don’t want to tell them [the counselor] more, later they will simply tell others.” (Izzatul)

Meanwhile, this research participant did not want to tell more about himself even though he was called to meet the counselor at school; he grew worried that the counselor may not keep the information he shared confidential. Another research participant also had a similar experience in meeting counselor at school.

“The teachers know my family background; they pity me so ask me to meet counselor at school. But I had nothing to talk to them. If they know what I did, I will surely be expelled.” (Farhan)

Moreover, there were four of the participants did not know about any rehabilitation centre before their admission. They also did not know that they can meet a psychiatrist at the hospital to talk about their drug problem. One of the participants who came from Miri said that:

“I don’t know anything about any rehabilitation centre. Just that I was caught all of sudden when I am bathing. My father reported me. From Miri straight away I was sent to Kuching here. Because I ‘played’ Syabu in front of him.” (Carlos)

Meanwhile, another participant who stays in the village also never knew where he could seek help for his drug problem.

“I work as fisherman in my village. I never heard of all these until I got caught and put under supervision.” (Abu)

These findings indicated that there is lack of awareness of the existing help system. 11 out of 16 research participants admitted they do not know where they can seek help for their drug abuse problem.
3) **Stigmatisation**

The findings indicated that the society usually look down on those who came out from drugs rehabilitation centre. Even though drug abusers already stopped taking drug after undergoing treatment in rehabilitation centre, they will still be labelled as a drug abuser.

“Sometimes I will hear some gossip around saying I am bad, but they also not sure it is real or not. Just they see me quite aggressive last time when I can’t control myself.” (Yahya)

“I feel that even if I go out also the same. I might be changed but people won’t think it that way.” (Richard)

“Now then if people know that I am inside here [rehabilitation centre], I believe sure they will talk bad behind me [having bad impression]” (Hadi)

The quotes of the three research participants as above suggested that participants can feel the different views of society towards them. They believed that nothing has changed even though they received the rehabilitation treatment. Once a person knew that they were once drug abusers, they are labelled forever. This caused some of them to have the perception that by receiving rehabilitation, it will not actually help them but rather it exposes them to the society that they were once a drug abuser.

4) **Lack of Self-Awareness**

From the interviews, 10 of the youths expressed hesitancy in seeking help as they never thought of it as necessary. It is because they do not think taking drugs will be a problem; so they never thought of stopping it. Questions on whether the participants will influence their friends who are also drug abusers to stop were asked and majority of them claimed that they will not do so. They think the problem should be dealt by the person itself and nobody could intervene.

“If I go out from here and meet my old friends, I won’t ask them to stop but maybe I will ask them to cut down.” (Nasri)

“I don’t want to meet them [friends] again. I worry I will be go back to drugs if meet them.” (Richard)

Furthermore, a young research respondent admitted he does not realize the importance to stop consuming drugs. Wilson is only a secondary school student when he was sent to the rehabilitation centre after the school discovered that he was taking Syabu after a urine test at school. He pointed out that:

“They asked me to come here, so I just come.” (Wilson)

Further questions were asked to know more about his intention in stopping drug consumption but the answers given were mostly “I don’t know”, “Maybe can stop” and “I am not sure”. Through the conversation, we found that he was still unsure of the purpose of this rehabilitation and the damage can be caused by the drugs he has taken. According to Hui, Wong and Fu (2014), the intention in help-seeking is very much associated with an individual’s perceived behavioral control. If an individual is aware of the problem, they will have higher intentions to carry out help-seeking behavior.

5) **Fear on the Law**

Four participants attempted to stop their drug intake by themselves as they do not dare to tell anyone. They think that they will be in trouble if any law enforcer or the authorities know about it.

“I can’t let anyone know because the amount I sell is a lot. If I was caught, then I am done.” (Izzatul)

“We can easily get the drugs from the village. It is near Battulmal area but I can’t tell u more than that. Also we have WeChat, Whatsapp and phone number of the dealer. We can easily get what we want.” (Nasri)

The participants were asked if they were met with the teachers or counselors regarding the drugs issue.

“Cannot let the teachers know. Have to be clever and hide yourself. ‘Kalau kantoi siaplah.’ ” (Izzatul)

Findings indicate that the research participants felt reluctant to share their problem to others because they worry legal action will be taken against them. They understand that their drug abuse behavior will cause them more problems if they got caught by the authorities. So, some felt lucky that they were not caught with drugs on them as the drugs they possess could have led to a death sentence by law.

“Luckily when I was caught there is no any ‘thing’ with me.” (Hadi)

“I flush all my stock into the toilet bowl. Luckily didn’t get notice.” (Izzatul)

Five participants shared that they do not want to tell their teachers or counselors at school when the teachers noticed their behavior changed. It was because they were worried that their teacher will take action by reporting them to their parents or police. They were afraid of the punishment that they will receive.

“Really cannot tell anyone. If the teacher being busybody, then they will ask the police to come and catch me.” (Andrew)

“I didn’t play [drugs] at school or in front the teacher. Even if the counseling teacher ask me I won’t tell them anything.” (Wilson)

The fear that the teachers will report the issue to police caused the participants to not reveal anything to their teacher or counselor although spend more time at school. Barker (2007) believed that the students will be punished if they did anything which is considered as “deviant” by the teacher. This resulted in fear that the students have towards their teacher and eventually led to them not sharing anything which may put them in trouble.

V. **DISCUSSION**

Study conducted by Caldeira and colleagues (2009) proven that social pressure can elevate the chances of help-seeking but the findings showed that it can also be a barrier for help-
seeking behavior to take place. The feeling of shame indicated came from the friends of the youth drug abusers. The finding is contrasted with the past studies conducted in Malaysia where the shame came from the family (Yusof et al., 1994; Kang et al., 2005) and society (Motta-Ochoa et al., 2017). The concern raised by the participants is that they would not be accepted by their circle of friends again if they had known about their drugs rehabilitation treatment. Meanwhile, research shows that some parents deny the drug abuse problem of their children as this problem is viewed as bringing shame and they will be judged as bad parents (Fields, 2010). However, the result of the current research shows that majority of the parents take action by referring their children to professional source to seek for treatment.

Besides that, the lack of awareness on the current help-system also keeps the youth drug abusers from seeking help. The drug abusers do not trust the existing health service which can help them to resolve their problem (Motto-Ochoa et al., 2017). Similar results had been found in past studies (Kang et al., 2005; Motta-Ochoa et al., 2017; Berridge et al., 2017) which shows that the youths have trust issue when choosing their help-seeking source. Comparing formal or informal source, they prefer to talk to someone whom they feel more comfortable with as they are worried on the disclosure of their problems. The participants do not aware that there is any existing treatment which can handle their problem (Berridge et al., 2017) as they have lack of information. The reason of refusal in help-seeking is consistent with the past researches which is the lack of awareness on the knowledge of drugs rehabilitation treatment (Ballon et al., 2004; Motta-Ochoa et al., 2017), It shows that many are not aware of the existing system which can provide help and support to the drugs abusers.

The finding presents that the society normally look down on drug abusers despite that they had already went through rehabilitation treatment. The finding is consistent with the research conducted by Miller and Miller (2009) which mentions that the drug abusers is normally suffering from social, economic, psychological and health problem. Studies reviewed by Lloyd (2013) showed that drug abusers were highly stigmatized by everyone in the society. This is because of their label of being a drug abuser even though they had finish their rehabilitation treatment. Past study also indicated that the judgmental views of people around the abuser caused more reluctance to the individual to seek help (Berridge et al., 2017) and this is the reason that the participants of the current research believe that they should rather not to expose themselves by reaching out for help.

Lastly, the fear of legal actions to be taken also one of the major barriers which keep the youth drug abusers from seeking help. Finding shows that the participants do not want to expose themselves and reaching out form help because they are fear on the legal action that will be taken against them. The act of abusing drug is a crime and it is against the law in the country. The finding corresponds to Wisdom et al. (2010) that the fear to be involved in the legal action act as one of the barriers in help-seeking. Thus, due to the legal concern, they youth drug abusers would rather keep the problem to themselves.

VI. CONCLUSION
The findings of the study had shown that majority of the youth do not plan to seek help or treatment for their drug abuse problem. The views of family members which includes shame and opposition in getting professional help were two of the barriers during the help-seeking process. Besides that, the lack of awareness of the existing help system is the caused that 11 of the research participants have no knowledge in getting proper treatment for their drug abuse problems. Stigmatization and the fear of legal action kept the youth from seeking help as they are worried that the disclosure of their identity as drug abusers will cause more problems to them in the future. Lastly, self-awareness marks another important element in carrying out help-seeking behavior. Two of the research participants are not aware of the problems that they are facing. The findings showed that by having the self-awareness, it will be a great help in carrying out help-seeking behavior.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS
Implications to Social Work Practice
Although the research outcome does not impact directly to the social work practices, there are some lessons can be learnt from the findings in relation to the implications to social work practices since social workers are involved in the health care services and played different roles to meet the client’s needs.

Social workers play as a neutral role and mediator in connecting both the client systems at one or more levels of the environment (Ambrosino et al., 2012). As from the findings of the research, social workers who work with the youth can help in resolving conflicts between the youth drug abusers and their family members. Social worker can help to improve their relationship with family members by listening to the clients and giving them the chance to express their opinions. A better plan after discharge for the youth drug abusers can be discussed together with them and their family members. It is important to empower the youth so that they can keep their help-seeking intention which also can prevent them from having relapse after discharge from the drugs rehabilitation centre.

Besides that, social works also promotes social justice (Goodman, 2013; International Federation of Social Workers, 2018). Social workers’ role is to ensure that equal opportunities are respected by confronting discrimination (Goodman, 2013). From the findings, discrimination and stigmatization occurred after the youth started to take drugs or being admitted into the centre. For many people, the stereotype of the drug abusers is a criminal (Goodman, 2013). It is important for a social worker to not label them but tackling on their strength and engage them in changing their life situation after they had been discharged from the centre.


**Awareness on Rehabilitation**

Stigmatization occurred among the drug abusers in the society. Even before or after receiving rehabilitation treatment in the centre, they will still be labeled as a drug abuser. The society always misunderstands drug abusers who went through rehabilitation and labeled them as someone who is useless in the society. The research participants raised the concern that this had been one of the barriers which cause them not to seek help from any professional bodies. Thus, more awareness should be created in order to encourage the drug abusers who are willing to change and at the same time give them a chance so that they are able to rejoin the society again.

Besides, the finding also shows that the research participants had low awareness on the existing help system on rehabilitation treatment. Many of them claimed that they were not aware on the voluntary treatment for drug abuse. Due to the fear of the legal action, they remained silence and never plan to seek help. They was introduced to the voluntary admission into the centre until they was reported by the family members. This had shown that the need in creating more awareness on the rehabilitation treatment for drug abusers is crucial.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should recruit more female participants as they are more vulnerable group as compared to male in the society. They might be having different experiences in help-seeking process. Future research can also attend to their needs. By including more female participants in the future research, comparison can also be made to study whether correlates of help-seeking behaviors of youth drug abusers are the same for women and men. By getting the different perception from different people, it enables the researchers to generate a more holistic perception about help-seeking process.

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