

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Using the sample population of drug mules from the Sungai Buloh Prison, Selangor facilities, this chapter discusses the analyzed data and findings of the study. Data were gathered via in-person, semi-structured interviews. Data given here was gathered through in-depth interviews with five drug mules serving time at Prison Sungai Buloh, Selangor. A participant was the only interviewee who spoke Malay because she felt more at ease doing so. The interviews were conducted in accordance with ethical standards, as the non-English speaking participants gave permission for another drug mule offender (who was also a part of the study) to translate. The data was analyzed using a thematic approach, as described in Section 3.4.1 of Chapter 3. Coding was used to decompose data into their component parts. The researcher then sorted the key words into groups based on the overarching themes that had developed from the interviews. It's worth noting that the interviews were structured such that the respondents could share their own accounts. As a result, the reader should approach this section with the caveat that the data presented here are based on the interviewees' own opinions and experiences.

4.2 Interpretation of Data

This section is dedicated to the interpretation and analysis of the information gleaned from the 5 research participants and the researcher's semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

4.2.1 Demographic Information of Participants

The brief biographical information about each respondent and the length of each of their sentences for drug smuggling are summarized in Table 4.1.

Research Participants	Age	Race	Marital Status
1	40	Malay	Married
2	34	Indian	Married
3	39	Malay	Married
4	45	Malay	Married
5	25	Indian	Married

Table 4.1: Demographic Data from Participants

The table shows the demographic data for the 5 research participants, including their age, marital status, and the number of children they are currently imprisoned for drug smuggling.

4.2.1.1 Age at the time of the Interview

The age ranges of the people who participated in the research for the study were broken down into six categories: 25–30, 31–35, 36–40, 41–45, and 46–50. While one participant (Participant 5) and one research participant (Participants 2) were between the ages of 30 and 35 when the interviews took place, another participant (Participant 5) was in the 30- to 35-year-old age range. One of the participants (Participant 3) was in their middle to late 40s at the time of the study. Both Volunteer 1 and Volunteer 4 were participants in the research study who fell into the age group of 40 to 45 years old. According to Van Heerden's (2014) findings in part 2.4.2.1, the average age of a drug mule was between 30 and 35 years old. The age distribution that was found in this study however departs from those findings.

4.2.1.2 Race

In terms of race, the research participants were extremely diverse. Most participants were Malay (Participants 1,3 and 4). Participants 2 and 4 both declared their ethnicity as being Indian. The diversity of racial backgrounds among the participants may suggest that hiring drug mules is not racially biased, leaving all ethnic groups open to victimization.

4.2.1.3 Marital Status

At the time of both the criminal activity and the interview, all the respondents were married. Consequently, most of the drug mules in Sungai Buloh Prison in Selangor are married with families.

4.2.1.4 Number of Children

Four of the five research participants who were interviewed said they had more than one child, and one said they had just one. According to the socialist feminist theory in section 2.7.1.1.5, women should oversee their own bodies and reproductive systems to reduce the likelihood of crime (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015). Data shows that women who frequently reproduce, especially in underprivileged environments, are more likely to commit crimes because of the responsibility of raising and supporting more children without any other income, even though this theory does not discuss the kinds of measures women can take to take control of their reproductive functions to lower crime rates (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2015). The theoretical underpinnings, which were previously described in 2.7.1.1.5, are consistent with the topic of social norm expectations about the role of women who are traditionally expected to bear children, which is underlined in sub-section 4.4.1.

According to literature by Meyer and Nishimwe-Niyibanira (2016) and Viola and Martinez (2007), a household with more children or family members requires expenses that might add to the household's financial and emotional burdens. Most of

the subjects in this study were single parents, household heads, and breadwinners prior to being imprisoned. Thus, it can be assumed that even if a woman only has one or two children, she should still be able to handle the duty of raising them. The fourth research participant said, "I've come all the way. My youngster is at home. It is challenging to explain my absence to a young youngster. When asked how frequently she spoke with her kid, the research participant replied, "When does the embassy come. They arrive three months later. On the phone, I can see him and my family. But it's insufficient.

4.3 Interpretation of Interview Session

Question 1: How do individuals describe their lived experiences of becoming drug mules?

RQ 1 To explore the involvement of Malaysian of becoming a drug mule

Themes	Sub themes
Family dynamic	1. Parental Involvement 2. Number of Siblings 3. Birth Position

4.3.1 Family Dynamic

Many familial factors predict criminal behavior, as suggested by Farrington (2010). Parents' own aggressive or antisocial behavior is often the best predictor of their children's own. Large families, lack of parental supervision, parental conflict, and unstable families are all reliable predictors. According to Farrington (2010), it is the family's primary role to instruct juvenile offenders in proper social conduct and to provide support while they strive to maintain these norms. Factors at play inside a person's family, such as their parents' attitudes, the size of their family, and where they were born, are covered here.

“My mother and father used to fight in front of me. Whenever my father is drunk, he will use vulgar words towards my mother and my siblings. This is the reason I don't feel like staying at home often.” (R3)

4.3.1.1 Parental Involvement

In this study, 4 participants reported not being raised by both parents. One person involved in the study was brought up by their mother alone. Participant 4 declined to discuss her family dynamics with the researcher when asked about her parents' engagement and the social environment she was raised in, and the researcher honored her wishes. Richter and Lemola (2017) report that people, especially children, who grow up in single-mother households are more likely to have less effective guardianship and a greater chance of family unhappiness and conflicts. Participants raised by single mothers were asked if they thought having a father around would have influenced their decision to smuggle drugs. No, I don't think so,"

responded 4. Since she "didn't spend her life wondering why her father wasn't there because that's what happened to her when she was small," she does not dwell on the topic.

“Whether my father is around or not to guide me, I think it will not affect me in smuggling drugs. I understand I’m lack with parent’s supervision but whatever I do were my decision.” (R4)

However, participant 3 reflected, "maybe if he was in my life and supported my mother with money, then maybe our life would be better." My mom was at work, so my grandmother babysat me most of the time. Maybe he would have known better if he had been there to teach me the way before I told my family about what I was planning to do to make some money. It's also worth noting that a lack of a father figure does not automatically make a child more likely to act criminally. Six out of ten male-headed households and more than seven out of ten female-headed households in rural areas were below the upper poverty level in 2018, according to StatsSA (2019). According to StatsSA (2019), having a father absent from a child's life is troublesome, according to Schwartz (2004), because it indicates a lack of social control through inadequate monitoring. The lack of social capital and resources in places where family-centered me are lacking may also be highlighted by the absence of a father, who may provide solely as a surrogate for economic deprivation.

“If my parents were rich and we are happy I will not do drug smuggling because they will guide me to do good things in life.” (R3)

One offender (Participant 2) said her father and stepmother reared her after her mother died when she was young. My dad was at the office, and she was going to be at home. Research One participant was brought up by her aunt and said, "I know that my aunt was there for me, I don't know my parents, and I don't remember them." They left me, but my aunt says it's because they were unwell. I'm not sure. Only one person out of the whole group grew up with both of their parents. Five said they lived with both sets of parents until they were twenty-one. As the proverb goes, "I had a lovely life; my parents were there for me, but then I moved to live with my lover because I wanted to be a big girl."

"I live with my stepmother who did not care for me like my own mother, I must accept faith that my mother is no longer with me. My dad is always at work, and he always ignore me because of this I mix with my friends who were doing drug smuggling and I decided to follow them to earn more money." (R2)

"I was brought up in a good environment with both my parents were there to guide me, but I choose to live with my partner, and I followed him to be a drug smuggler because I want to earn money and to be independent." (R5)

4.3.1.2 Number of Siblings

Two of the participants in the study reported having one or two siblings, while three reported having three or four. The average number of children born to women in South Africa is 2.26, per data from the Central Intelligence Agency in 2018. Family size matters because of the correlation between family dynamics and criminal behaviors, as stated by Parks (2013). This is especially true of older teenagers, especially those from larger homes. One respondent said, "I grew up with my aunt

and four siblings, so that definitely had an impact on my upbringing." There are many of us, but sadly some have already died away. Unfortunately, we ran into some difficulties. It was bad, and we often went hungry, but other family members pitched in when they could (Participant 4).

In the above excerpt, we see that Meyer and Nishimwe-Niyibanira (2016) point out that an increase in household size is likely to impose an additional burden on the household because of the higher costs associated with providing for a larger group of people in terms of food, housing, clothing, medical care, and education (Viola & Martinez, 2007).

4.3.1.3 Birth Position

When asked where they ranked in the birth order of their siblings, two individuals reported being the oldest, while three others placed themselves in the middle. One of the notable demographic findings in this study is a correlation between being the firstborn child and involvement in drug smuggling. As first-born children or "deputy parents," several people in this group stepped up to help support their families, which led to their involvement in the drug trade.

Question 2: Do you have criminal histories before, or this is the first time you have been involved in crime?

4.3.5 Criminal Data

Information about the participants' criminal histories, including but not limited to the nature of the offence for which they were detained, the age at when

they were arrested, the length of their sentence, and whether they are repeat offenders, are included in this section.

4.3.6 The Crime

Justice and Crime Documents (1992) state that the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 covers the most important drug-related offences. Drug trafficking and drug use/possession are the Act's primary criminal provisions. According to Stevens (2014), the Act's section 17(c) and (e) when read with sections 13(e) and 17(c) and (e) provide the heavier punishments or penalties, with drug dealing being the more serious offence. In the Act, medicines are classified as either "dependence creating," "dangerous dependency producing," or "undesirable dependence producing," as explained by Stevens (2014). All of the people in this study were convicted of drug dealing and served time in prison. However, participant 4 was convicted of dealing a dangerous dependence causing substance on board an aircraft. The Department of Justice states (in 1998) that "any anyone who deposits any drug in the possession, or in the premises, vehicle, vessel, or aircraft shall be guilty of an offence" (section 13 (a) of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992). This provision applies to Respondent 4.

The list provided by the correctional centers and on the identity card, called a G353 card, all the sentenced offenders are required to always carry, the researcher was also able to confirm the offence for which the participants were incarcerated. The SAPS considers the offences to be drug-related crimes, and the DCS classifies

female inmates who have been convicted of drug-related offences as narcotics offenders, as detailed in sections 2.1 and 2.6.2.

4.3.7 Year Each Participants Started Smuggling Drugs

Table 4.2 Demonstrates the Year Each Research Participant Started to Smuggle Drugs.

Participant	Year each participant started smuggling drugs	Number of Participants
4	2008	1
1 and 2	2010	2
3 and 5	2012	2

One of the participants, as can be seen in the table above, began drug smuggling for the first time in 2008. In addition, two individuals in 2010 and two individuals in 2012 initiated drug smuggling. The chart above shows the year each drug mule started smuggling drugs, although this is in no way indicative of how long they have been involved in the illegal drug trade. Not all drug mules have consistently transported drugs over the years since they first began doing so. Participant 4 started smuggling drugs in 2008, but she took breaks of two or more years before she started smuggling again until her arrest in 2012. A drug mule's drug transports take place over extended periods of time to avoid raising suspicion. All of the people who took part in the study said they were first-time offenders who had never been jailed before receiving their current sentences (for drug smuggling).

4.3.8 Length of Sentence

Anyone found guilty of drug dealing under Section 17(c) or (e) of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 faces the following punishments, as outlined by the Department of Justice (1998: 38): "(c) in the case of an offence referred to in Section 13(e), to such fine as the court may deem fit to impose, or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 10 years, or to both such fine and imprisonment; (e) in the case of an offence (DoJ & CD, 1992). The range of incarceration terms for the 5 subjects in this study was from 4 to 20 years.

Table 4.3: Sentence length of Participants

Participants	Sentence Length	Number of Participants
5	1- 4 years	1
1 and 2	5-10 years	2
3 and 4	11-20 years	2

Following is a breakdown of the participants' sentence lengths during the interviews: Five participants received sentences ranging from 4 to 20 years in prison; two participants received sentences ranging from 5 to 10 years in prison (Participants 1 and 2); and two participants received sentences ranging from 11 to 20 years in prison (Participants 3 and 4). The judge declared I am a harm in society," she explained when the researcher questioned the severity of her punishment. I've actually done this kind of drug smuggling many times before, but this is the first time I've ever been caught. Perhaps the quantity of drugs I was transporting also contributed.

Participant 4 brought in 10 kilograms, 1 kilogram, 5 kilograms, and 1 kilogram of cocaine, respectively, as shown in Table 4.4. She had already delivered drugs to another country three times without getting caught. Participant 4 believes that the length of her sentence is a direct result of the number of times she was convicted of drug smuggling; nevertheless, she has indicated that the court was unaware of her prior illegal acts of smuggling drugs at the time of her trial and sentencing. Specifically, section 17 (e) of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 states that a period of imprisonment not exceeding 25 years, or a fine, as the court may deem fit to impose, may be imposed for an offence referred to in section 13 (f). This provision was previously mentioned in subsection 2.6.1 and 4.2.3.3. (DoJ & CD, 1992: 19). However, it is unclear from the Act whether or not the weight of the narcotics is taken into account when determining the length of the punishment. The study's investigators were unable to determine why one person received a sentence that was more than 25 years long, as required by the Act.

The shortest prison term in this study's sample was served by participant 5, who spent four years behind bars. Participant 5 said, "I have proof to show that I was set up," in response to the researcher's question about why her sentence was so light. As his profession, my dad investigates crimes. My lawyer was able to show the judge the threatening WhatsApp messages, and I ultimately agreed to provide the identities of those who had been threatening me. Still, I'm behind bars because I lied about drug trafficking in the first place. The length and severity of the sentences reflect the gravity of the offence, as mandated by South Africa's Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 (DoJ & CD, 1992). Section 5 (a) and (b) of the Drugs and Drug

Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 (DoJ & CD, 1992) provides that a person may be penalised or sentenced according to the type of drugs they are in possession of but does not specify whether the quantity of drugs in possession may also affect the length of the sentence.

Cocaine is classified as a dangerous dependence-producing substance under Schedule 2, Part II of the Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992, while heroin is classified as an undesirable dependence-producing substance under Schedule 2, Part III. The court has the discretion to impose any sentence between 10 and 25 years in prison for anyone caught with any of the narcotics on the list above (Department of Justice, 1999). Some have stated that the criminal justice system's approach to female drug mules is influenced by cultural expectations of how women "should" act (Mallicoat, 2019). When women commit crimes, it goes against the socially constructed gender norms for how women should behave. In these situations, women may face punishment not only for breaching the law but also for going against the norms of gender (Mallicoat, 2019).

All this draw's attention to the patriarchy those women in the CJS face, which is a central concern in both Marxist and radical feminist theories. According to Marxist philosophy, the wealthy and powerful are responsible for the societal harm of drug trafficking. However, the law does not recognise the social, emotional, or financial risk elements of drug mules as exploitation of women, hence severe punishments are handed out. Considering risk factors such as social, mental, and social vulnerability, women may be less aware of their legal rights and may not be responsible for non-custodial sanctions and procedures.

According to critical criminologists, "crimes of the powerful" (drug trafficking syndicates) are far more dangerous than "crimes of the powerful" (female drug mules) because the latter can afford to hire accountants and lawyers to protect them and have influential friends who can lobby on their behalf. As previously explored in the literature by Tibbetts and Hemmens, this may also explain why drug mules are consistently apprehended by authorities, but drug trafficking organisations, recruiters, and leaders elude justice (2015).

4.3.9 Repeat Offending

All the participants who took part in this study said they had never been arrested or convicted of a crime previously. The results show that there was no history of repeat offences among the participants in this study. But there are people whose job it is to smuggle drugs and avoid detection by law enforcement. Female participant 4 is the only repeat drug smuggler in this study. Response 4: "I smuggled narcotics four times..." I was able to successfully smuggle cocaine three times before I was apprehended on my fourth attempt. Researcher: "Uh...not really but I think so because I wasn't a drug mule," participant replies. I was trusted enough to do it on multiple occasions, and I was constantly in the loop about what was going on.

"In 2004, I went to Pakistan; afterwards, I was supposed to go to Thailand to take over for that girl who was all over the press, but that didn't happen. However, the last time I returned from one in Penang, I was detained. (Another participant) Those who participated in the study who admitted to having knowingly smuggled drugs also said they would never do it again because of the strain their unlawful

actions had put on their loved ones and themselves. The failure of rehabilitation programmes, economic pressures, a lack of support in reintegration, peer pressure, and other social provocations are all factors that contribute to offenders committing new crimes, as shown by studies cited in Murhula and Singh (2019), Khwela (2015), and Lekalakala (2016). This sample's criminal history information suggests that the typical drug mule in this population has never been convicted of a crime or sentenced to prison.

Question 3: How can you get involved in drug mule?

4.4 Motivating Factors for Smuggling Factors

Respondents said they got into drug smuggling due to financial pressures, dishonesty, and coercion. The majority of those who participated in this survey reported that financial difficulties were the primary motivation for their involvement in drug smuggling. Participants said they made hasty decisions because they needed cash to take care of their kids and families. Some of the participants (n=5) said they were misled and had no idea they would be involved in drug smuggling, but they nevertheless took the job because they were desperate for money.

This indicates that women smuggling narcotics were driven by economic necessity and a socially disadvantaged milieu. According to the works of Hunnicutt and Broidy (2004), the field of feminist criminology recognises the connection between female criminality and financial hardship. In their review of the literature, White et al. (2017) conclude that the Marxist theory demonstrates how low wages and poverty contribute to the criminalization process. These causes of drug

smuggling have also been highlighted by studies by Van Heerden (2014), Bailey (2013), and Fleetwood (2014). The other two said they took part in drug smuggling for the novelty of it and because they were forced to. When asked by the researcher why she was involved in drug smuggling, Participant 3 said:

When going on a trip. My ex-boyfriend knew I appreciated finer items because we often shopped for it together. I'd previously travelled abroad with my lover for the sake of experience and the prospect of receiving financial support while away. Respondent 2 told the researcher that she felt pressured to smuggle narcotics because she was threatened by the drug dealers. This is what transpired, then..." My friend was with her drug dealer partner so she could continue to fund her habit, but I didn't think twice about it because I don't do drugs myself and stick to cigarettes. My buddy told me that she became a drug smuggler because she was forced to start paying for all the free drugs she had previously gotten.

Then she travelled to Penang to pick up the narcotics, but she never returned, and her lover was unable to locate her. He probably became furious about that because he'd spent a lot of money to make sure she could get back home without getting in trouble with the law or anything. Her boyfriend has been calling me nonstop to find out where she is; when I told him I didn't know, he insisted I must be lying because she is my friend. A few days later, he phones me back and says that I, too, must travel to the same location as my friend in order to make up for the lost business that he suffered. Then, when I initially declined because, after all, why should I care? When they started making threats, I grew nervous. I got myself into some shady dealings and was too terrified to tell the police or my family about it. My

boyfriend had warned me about these folks, so I moved back home, and we stopped talking. This made me quite anxious, as I was sure they would soon learn about my family's and my daily whereabouts. After giving it some thinking, I decided to go through with it because I figured it would only take me a day or two to go there and back. My family thought I was going on a long journey to Europe, but I told them I was just going to Penang for a few days to spend some of the money I had saved.

4.4.1 Disadvantaged socio-economic background and poverty.

Women's lower socioeconomic status is an important factor in why they turn to drug smuggling, as we saw in Chapter Two. This meant that the majority of the study's participants (n=5) were born into impoverished homes and faced significant obstacles as children. A few of the participants had middle-class upbringings in secure homes but struggled financially as adults. These individuals' low socioeconomic status led them to smuggle narcotics for a variety of reasons, some of which are listed below.

I was raised in Pahang by my mom and sis without ever meeting my dad. When my mom was between jobs, my brother and I often went hungry. Having to drop out of school was just one more obstacle I faced as a child. I've had a tough go of it, but I never gave up (Participant 2). I lost my father when I was young, and my mother and I struggled financially as a result. I married young, and my husband died a few years later. That's why I made the choices I did. There wasn't enough money from my employment to support all of my kids, so I worried about them (Participant

3). Not a terrific time in life. No one was around to aid my mom, and she collapsed. She worked hard as a housekeeper, but it was difficult for her to support us all when she wasn't working two jobs. Due to financial difficulties, there may be times when we go without food (Participant 1). Life is very busy for me right now. Life in poverty is no laughing matter. Still today, both my family and I live in abject poverty. In the absence of my biological father, I was raised by my maternal grandmother while my mother fought to make ends meet. As a large family, we would rely on the money from my grandmother's grant. It was going to be tough, and work was hard to come by (Participant 4).

As of 2018, the Gini Coefficient for Thailand was 36.4, indicating that income inequality is still a major problem there (Khidhir, 2019). (The World Bank, 2018). This made it the most unequal country in ASEAN in terms of income and one of the four most unequal countries in the world, according to a graphic compiled by economist Shidhir (2019). The generational differences between Thailand's rich and poor, Jitsuchon (2020) argues, are fueled by unequal access to credit, a lack of modern-day job skills training, inadequate education, and legal discrimination. The last time Cabo Verde's gini-coefficient was measured, in 2007, it was 47,2 (The World Bank, 2018c). The lack of work prospects, especially for women with secondary or higher education, is a major problem in Cabo Verde (Barnett, 2018). The rate of employment creation has lagged behind the rise in the economically active population (Barnett, 2018).

Gender equality can be analysed in either a "formal" or "substantive" setting, as stated by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC, 2017). Laws

and regulations that treat men and women equally are examples of formal gender equality. However, because they do nothing to address the underlying causes of inequality, such laws and regulations may actually make things worse. Substantive equality¹ or equity² seeks to achieve equal results by treating individuals and groups differently, while structural or structural disparities are ignored (SAHRC, 2017). Structural or structural disparities include unequal systems, hierarchies, and relationships of power that shape our society and economy and oppress women and people (SAHRC, 2017). As a result of their lack of employment opportunities, female drug mules from single-mother households were more likely to rely on government assistance programmes and their parents' retirement savings to support their families. Statistics South Africa found that female-headed households have a larger poverty gap (the distance from the poverty line) and a higher intensity of poverty measures than male-headed households. Low levels of education, inability to afford food and shelter, high rates of unemployment, and a large number of homes in which women play the primary breadwinner role all contributed to respondents' vulnerability, which in turn may have influenced their propensity toward criminal behaviour. Women are more likely to commit economic crimes like drug trafficking, which is consistent with feminist philosophy because more women oversee their own households. In households where women are the primary breadwinners, the prospects for advancement in school or gaining access to essential amenities are dismal at best.

Gaining an education will improve women's capabilities and open economic chances. Consequently, it is the duty of the state to ensure that all citizens could receive a good education. Different from men in many ways, women are not lesser

in any. According to Nienaber and Moraka (2016), liberal feminism emphasises equal educational and occupational possibilities for women and men. People in impoverished areas frequently lack basic necessities such as potable water, proper sanitation facilities, schools, homes, medical care, and food. The insecurity of both life and money compounds the lack of basic human necessities. Due to these factors, there is a complex relationship between poverty and drug smuggling (Montilla, 2019). Although Tibbetts and Hemmens (2015) argue that economic hardship is not the root cause of criminal behaviour, several of the participants in this study cited it as a reason why they smuggled narcotics. According to Fleetwood (2014b), women's agency is constrained not just by economic and familial realities (such as poverty and single parenthood), but also by their identities as women. In other words, their stories for why they took part in drug smuggling revolved on their becoming parents, sisters, moms, and daughters.

Women's material conditions are influenced by social dynamics, and their narrative sense of self is shaped by cultural norms about what women should do and how they should behave. Thus, narrative theory offers fresh ways of considering solutions to the problems of women's offences and participation with material and political inequality.

4.4.2 Employment and Financial Status

Montilla (2019) claims that those who are part of low-income communities have greater difficulty making ends meet than those whose financial situations improve with time. Several (n=4) of the people surveyed said they came from

financially unstable households where their parents did not provide for their basic requirements, while the rest of the people surveyed said they came from stable homes where their parents did. Some of the latter interviewees, however, noted that they had fallen into poverty or near-poverty due to unforeseen difficulties in adulthood, such as unemployment. Those who experienced poverty as children, on the other hand, were not afforded the chance to build a better future for themselves through avenues like education or employment.

We were able to survive after the money my father left us ran out since my mom was still alive and my older brother was employed. However, as soon as my mother died away, I realized that I would need to help around the house because my younger brother was entering matric. As a result, I actively searched for jobs because I had matriculated. I started talking to my buddies about smuggling the drugs after that didn't work out (Participant 3).

Even though Participant 5 claimed that being unemployed did not lead her to smuggle drugs, she suggested that perhaps things would have gone more smoothly if she had found employment after graduating from matric: "I got very demotivated because I tried looking for a job when I moved out of home. I didn't want to spend the evening doing nothing with my lover, but that is exactly what transpired. I was among the wrong crowd, and they made sure I was okay. I even temporarily lost sight of my issues. Maybe I wouldn't be here right now if I had gotten a job or attended school sooner.

"The person who recruited me wasn't lying when he stated there aren't any jobs in Malaysia. It's accurate since I spent a very long time looking [for a new job] after losing my position as a cashier at the supermarket where I was previously employed. The fact that they want to go to school right away and don't consider your experience made it much harder.

They requested a resume, so I had to create one. Everywhere I turned, people asked for resumes, but I had no idea what they were and had no computer skills, so I ended up doing drugs (Participant 5). Since I was the first child and there was no money for college, I had to get a job to support my mother after completing my 12th grade education, although it only lasted a short while. Even as I grew older, all my jobs were temporary; I never had a genuine work. I used to get by on the money my kids gave me. When the lady told me about the medicines, I did it since it was a lot of money and I was going to save it to make our life better, but that's no way to live because even the grant is insufficient (Participant 2).

4.4.3 Involvement by Deception

Participation in drug smuggling was reported by five participants, all of whom cited dishonesty as a driving element in their involvement. This lends credence to Fleetwood's (2010) claim that drug mules are enticed to trafficking illegal substances with engagement by deception. Claims of being "set up," however, are generally viewed with skepticism because they are difficult, if not impossible, to prove legally (Fleetwood, 2014). These conclusions are expressed in the following

direct quotes from some respondents when the researcher questioned if they knew they were smuggling drugs:

With the lady assisting me, I naively believed I was travelling abroad to conduct business. No idea it would lead me here (Participant 1). To paraphrase, "I was going to start a new job. If my family is taken care of, leaving for a few years was fine with me. The realization that things wouldn't work out like that was devastating. When I confronted him, he lied to me. I was upset and enraged at the same time (Participant 2). No, not at all. This is what really pisses me off. No, I didn't wake up this morning and decide I was going to do this because I knew I was supposed to be here. I was forced to do it. I can't believe this happened! (Participant 3). Nothing like that, the atmosphere was warm and inviting. On my last day there, I finally started to get suspicious (Participant 4). I didn't realize I was becoming a drug smuggler. With no luck finding work in the home, I thought starting a clothing business would be a good way to supplement my income (Participant 5). Poor and social outcasts are the most likely to engage in drug trafficking. All of the participants in this study are single mothers who are the primary breadwinners in their homes. Participants shared the vulnerabilities associated with structural poverty, as stated by Artz et al. (2012) and Van Heerden. (2014) in South African women.

According to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation (2003), the UNODC (2018), and Geiger (2006), women become drug mules due to the participation of their male partners, a history of exploitation, childhood or adolescent abuse, or because they are predisposed to criminal behaviour. Some respondents' involvement in drug smuggling was prompted by economic hardships and major life events like losing

custody of their children. The opportunity to travel for free was cited as a motivating factor by one participant and by Fleetwood (2010), although this was not a particularly popular reason for wanting to participate. The literature used in this study and the findings of other national and international academics all point to economic and social factors as the primary drivers of female drug mules.

4.5 Recruitment Process

Whether they are professional couriers or just drug mules, Heaven (2009) says that people are recruited in many ways. This section describes the mules' recruitment process and the instructions they were given by their recruiters. Three of the research participants (Participants 1, 2, and 4) said they were offered phoney jobs, while two others (Participants 3 and 5) said they were duped into thinking they were going abroad for business when they were actually recruited into smuggling drugs.

Those in Participants 1, 2, and 4 all thought they were going to another country to pick up inventory: "Someone I know stated they have a position for me in Thailand." A customer who became a friend frequently visited the shop where I worked. She was making a good living, I learned from her tales, selling garments imported from Thailand at a discount. When I informed her my goal of starting a business of my own, she stated she would be happy to assist me. I was able to sell clothes and make money with her assistance, so I decided to leave my retail job. Sometimes I'd beg her to come with me when I knew she was leaving for another country, because she went there all the time. The day finally arrived, but she stated

she couldn't accompany me; instead, I was to travel to Thailand and meet her boss to acquire the discounted apparel (Participant 01).

A woman I know recently explained to me how she had been able to fund her company. I told her I was attempting to start a side business, and she told me I could do the same. And so she claimed she would return from her business trip to China with funds to put back into the company. I told her I was keen on meeting her friend, and that she should introduce us. As soon as I told him what I was up to, he claimed he could help me out. Then he informed me I would meet a woman in China who would provide the initial capital for our joint venture. "He told me it was a lot, so I should only bring lightweight clothes," remarked Participant 3.

Fleetwood (2014) claims that, as opposed to hierarchical, formal crime groups, drug smuggling is organised through mutual or informal links (especially familial, ethnic networks, and friendship). Temporary, as opposed to permanent, organised criminal alliances are founded on such connections. Based on their verbatim responses, the research participants in this study confirmed the findings of Martel (2013) and Van Heerden (2014) in section 2.5 of their respective works, which suggest that a drug mule can be recruited through personal contact with a familiar associate, friend, acquaintance, or stranger. Afterward, according to Van Heerden (2014), a drug mule is either told that she would be smuggling narcotics or is offered work or a vacation chance in exchange for carrying the drugs and receiving money.

4.5.1 Risk Factors being as a drug mule.

Fleetwood (2014) found that in Ecuador, recruiters' prey on poor, impressionable women. According to Heaven (2009), women are more likely to be recruited as drug mules than males are because they are typically the major caretakers in their households. This makes them an easy target because they are the ones who must decide between feeding their children and sending them to school. According to postmodern feminist theory, women are exploited because they fit the stereotype of being emotionally fragile, physically weak, and socially submissive to males. In addition, postmodern theory posits that linguistic constructions of social interactions, such as the stereotypical role of women as carers, nurturers, and the weaker vessel, are the root of the problem and the key to bringing about change.

The stated motivation is consistent with the reasons given by the research participants, who all cited the need to provide for their family as a driving force. The respondents for this study were asked their thoughts on the motivations behind their recruitment as drug mules throughout the fieldwork phase of the study. This was done to identify potential indicators of future drug mule recruitment. Participant 2 said, "I assume because of my beauty...." implying that her attractiveness was a factor in her recruitment, despite the fact that four respondents volunteered, and four respondents were offered the opportunity to smuggle drugs and voluntarily accepted it. In retrospect, I believe they were searching for a person like me, someone whose vulnerability would be surprising to the authorities. I was a young, naive fool.

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4.5.2 Methods used by drug mules to smuggle drugs.

4.5.2.1 Swallowing capsules or “bullets”

Each of the five people interviewed for this study (participant 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) admitted to using "bullets" (capsules) to conceal drugs they were carrying. In some contexts, the term "body packing" is used to describe this strategy. Body packing is defined by Gregory and Tierney (2002) as the practice of concealing medications in a person's vagina, rectum, or stomach. Latex balloons, condoms, the fingers of latex gloves, or unique drug-filled pellets are all methods of drug administration listed by Geldenhuys (2016). Radiologists play an essential role in preventing and responding to body packing incidents, which can have serious medical and legal ramifications (Sica, Guida, Brocchini, Laselli, Ladevito, & Scaglione, 2014). Below are verbatim replies from participants in the study explaining how this method of drug smuggling works:

The instructions were given to me. I've been practicing taking cocaine pills like bullets. Was awful; I felt sick from lack of food and very anxious about what might happen next. They assured me that if I ingest the medications, no one would be able to detect their presence. Well, I finally got around to it... (Participant 2). When they handed me the pills and told me to take them, I had to take them as instructed. They reminded me of a newborn carrot, and I immediately assumed they were nuts. To make the bullets easier to swallow, albeit still challenging, I rubbed a dab of oil on them. (Participant 3).

Once they showed me how to swallow the pills, that was all it took. In other words, getting there isn't a breeze. Size-wise, they're comparable to a small yet thick pencil. Initially, you will need to put in a few days of practice. No, you can't just do it now and leave. Acclimate your body to it; don't put anything acidic in it or it will explode (Participant 1).

Dorado (2005) claims that the eating process can persist all night. Over 100 doses, or roughly 900 grammes, are within the range that drug mules can safely consume. The patient must take their time eating five or six units, washing them down with silicone jelly, water, or oil. Drugs can be smuggled in via balloons, latex gloves, or condoms, all of which have the substance crushed into the finger. Professional drug smugglers may now employ less fragile multilayered, tubular latex wrapping with a smooth tight tie at each end (Sica et al, 2014). Even though there was a chance that the capsules could burst in the respondents' abdomens and cause health concerns, they were advised that ingesting the medicines would be the "safest option" because they would not get caught. It should also be noted that if a passenger refuses to eat on a flight, the staff may become suspicious, especially on a long flight.

4.5.2.2 Hidden in clothing or packages.

Three of the volunteers (identified as participants 1, 2, and 4) smuggled narcotics by concealing them in various pockets and parcels. The recruits were given instructions on how to conceal the narcotics in clothing, footwear, and a duvet cover (Van Heerden, 2014). However, Respondent 1 reported that she was asked her

clothing size during the recruitment process. She didn't know that the pills were already in the jacket when she got it. When compared to the other techniques discussed above, one may have restrictions on the quantity of narcotics that can be smuggled. I was wearing a huge jacket and the drugs were inside the jacket," one participant explained to the researcher (verbatim). The cops discovered the cocaine in special compartments sewn into the inside of the jacket. They were compactly and flatly packaged (Participant 2). He had a fresh set of sheets and a new comforter. Drugs were "like small bricks, practically the size of soap, but there was a lot," so he "stuff them in between the duvet cover and folded it and put it back in the duvet bag to make it look like I got it in Thailand" (Participant 3).

Drugs were often concealed in articles of clothing or footwear. My FILA sneakers recently had 500 grammes of cocaine loaded into them. They were a size and a half larger to accommodate the medication. My feet felt so heavy that I had to pull them when I walked (Participant 4). Small, flat bullets of narcotics were even produced and concealed in the hem of my shorts. It was quite difficult to go about (Participant 5).

4.6 The Effects of Drug Smuggling on the Offender and their families

The support system from family, the community, and correctional centers is vital in helping ex-offenders create positive personalities once they return to their communities, as shown by studies by Murhula and Singh (2019), Khwela (2015), and Lekalakala (2016). In conducting this investigation, the researcher was aware of the

potential sensitivity for some participants. However, the researcher had to make sure to ask about the participants' experiences adjusting to life in a prison, especially if they were from out of the country. In this paragraph, we will quickly discuss how drug mules and their families are affected by their activities and how they have adjusted to life in prison.

4.6.1 Psychological and emotional effects because of incarceration

Some respondents said it took them a while to accept the consequences of their actions. Some respondents blamed the long separation from loved ones for their struggles with melancholy and anxiety while in prison. According to Chen, Lai, and Lin (2013), incarceration has been linked to feelings of sadness, anger, fear, isolation, panic attacks, and even attempts at self-harm and suicide. Mental health problems that stem from abuse and trauma experienced as a kid or as an adult are exacerbated by social isolation, difficulties adapting to new environments, and a lack of support. The Malaysian participants said that having family visit them in prison helped them adjust to their new environment by bringing them necessities like soap and money to spend in the prison store. When asked about their decision to smuggle narcotics, all the women in this study said they now deeply regret doing so, claiming that they failed to fully consider the repercussions of their actions out of their desire to support their family. They believed the money wasn't worth it because they were blindsided by the length of their sentences. They blamed themselves for failing their family in

two ways: by committing the crime and by being removed from them because of it. Participant 3 stated that:

That I had let down my brothers deeply saddened them so much. For a while, nobody could figure it out. But they supported me, and that helped me keep my spirits up while I was locked up. So that I might be near my brothers, I requested a move from Perlis to this area. But I've realised that my time spent here has been wasted. Then be financially strapped in my family is preferable to this.

The Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR, 2015) found that the idea of temporarily losing a mother, sister, or daughter from the family causes emotional distress for the incarcerated family member's loved ones because the incarcerated family member will miss out on sharing important family events like their children's birthdays, weddings, and the first day of school. Moreover, the incarcerated person's loved ones may also bear the stigma of the convicted relative's criminal actions. Therefore, even though family members are legally innocent and typically were not involved in the offence, they are often thought to be accountable for or guilty of the offence by association. This adds to the hardships experienced by loved ones of an inmate. As the SCCJR (2015) points out, incarceration can put a strain on a family's finances by limiting their income and increasing their outlays for things like visits, phone calls, and gifts for their loved ones who are locked up.

4.7 Summary

According to the results of this research, women of varying ages, socioeconomic classes, and life experiences can all end up working as drug mules.

At-depth interviews with drug mules, all of whom are women, who are currently housed in Sungai Buloh Prison in Selangor, Malaysia, were presented in this section. Women in Malaysia between the ages of 25 and 45 were represented in the demographic data of the drug mules. There was a wide range of ethnic and gender identities represented among the interviewees. The study found that female drug mules transported between 10g and 10kg of cocaine and heroin, utilising both ingesting and hiding the drugs on their person or in their clothing as the primary routes of transport. The reasons, elements, and inspirations behind the individuals' criminal actions were also pinpointed by the study's author. Most of these women have one thing in common: a trusted individual who enticed the drug mule with the promise of a lucrative cash opportunity. Therefore, the crime and sentencing had serious repercussions for the ladies, with several citing lower socioeconomic status, destitution, and work difficulties as a result. The study's findings are summarised and suggestions are made in the next chapter.