

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 An Overview of Addiction

The National Institute on Drug Abuse defines addiction as a chronic, relapsing disorder that involves compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences (NIDA, 2020). It is characterized by brain changes that challenge an individual's self-control and can lead to persistent alterations in brain circuits involved in reward, stress, and decision-making. Addiction is treatable, and the most effective approach to treatment often consists of a combination of medication and behavioural therapy tailored to the individual's specific patterns of drug use and any co-occurring medical, mental, and social problems (NIDA, 2016). While treatment can be effective in supporting abstinence, many individuals struggle with reintegration into the workforce, leading to financial instability, social isolation, and increased risk of relapse.

Uncontrolled substance use poses a great danger to the socioeconomic progress of a nation. In 2021, an estimated 296 million people, or 5.8% of the global population aged 15-64, used at least one drug in the past year (World Drug Report 2023). This is a 23% increase from 2011. A recent study in Malaysia found that, among the population of 11,129,316 youths aged 15 to 40, the prevalence of drug use among lifetime users was 5.5%, while for those who had taken drugs in the past 30 days or who currently use them, the prevalence of drug use was found to be 3.5% (Rosmi Ismail. et al, 2022).

Research from North America and Europe has consistently shown that unemployment is associated with higher rates of substance abuse, substance use

disorders, and addiction compared to employed individuals (Nolte-Troha et al., 2023). The same study discovered that unemployment is associated with a higher risk of developing substance abuse, with a rate ratio ranging from 1.05 to 2.19 (Nolte-Troha et al., 2023).

## 1.2 Background of Study

In the complex journey of addiction recovery, work readiness stands as a vital bridge between treatment and sustained well-being. While overcoming addiction itself is a monumental achievement, reintegration into the workforce presents unique challenges and opportunities. This paper explored the interplay between motivational readiness for change and work readiness, highlighting their potential synergy in empowering individuals in recovery to achieve successful reintegration.

The National Anti-Drug Agency (NADA) statistics for drug users in 2022, revealed a total of 137,176 individuals involved in drug abuse. This is an 11.4% increase compared to the year 2021. In general, males accounted for 95.5 % of those involved in drug abuse in 2022, while females accounted for only 4.5 %. Over two-thirds, or a staggering 88,214 of drug abusers in Malaysia fall within the age of 19 to 39 years old. This stark figure represents 64% of the total affected population. The middle-aged group (40 to 59 years old) follows close behind, accounting for 33% or 45,415 individuals struggling with addiction. Further analysis showed that 26%, or 35,598, of the drug abusers are unemployed. According to the research by Rapp et al (2007), substance usage can have a significant impact on an individual's capacity to secure and maintain a job. On the other hand, unemployment may exacerbate psychological

distress leading to substance use (Azagba et al., 2021). This vicious cycle of substance use and employment is a complex and challenging issue with far-reaching consequences. Meanwhile, a study by Cebulla et al. (2004) shows that even if their career history was inconsistent substance users often maintained or regained the motivation to work. Exploring the linkage between motivation and work readiness in a local context can help design holistic rehabilitation programs that address both addiction and economic difficulties.

Motivational readiness for change is often assessed through models like the Stages of Change, which reflects an individual's desire and commitment to overcome addiction. This internal drive can then be translated into concrete actions and engagement in recovery programs. On the other hand, work readiness encompasses job-seeking skills, financial literacy, and workplace behaviour competencies. The Transtheoretical Model (TTM) of Change by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983), provides a relevant framework for understanding motivational readiness. By identifying stages of change ranging from pre-contemplation to maintenance, the TTM emphasizes the dynamic nature of motivation and its potential to influence behaviour. In this context, clients with higher motivation levels may be more likely to engage in activities that enhance their work readiness.

A local study at six drug rehabilitation centres (PUSPEN) explores the motivational readiness for change among the rehabilitees (Ibrahim et al., 2010). The study's finding shows that 82.8% of the respondents were aware of their involvement in drug abuse which resulted in difficulties in their lives. At the same time, 78.4% of them are still ambivalent about whether drug involvement will cause them harm. This

ambivalence indicates a potential disconnects between recognizing past problems and fully committing to positive change. The research emphasizes the significance of motivational readiness for change in addiction treatment. This indicates that treatment programs should concentrate on analysing and improving people's motivation to change. This study also suggests that counsellors actively use the motivational interviewing method as a therapeutic intervention when dealing with drug abusers. Motivational enhancement therapy, for example, can be used effectively to increase motivation and readiness for change. According to research, motivating techniques can boost therapy participation, retention, and favourable treatment results. SAMHSA 2019 provides a comprehensive guide to enhancing motivation for change in substance abuse treatment. It comprehends that motivation is a dynamic process that can be impacted by various events rather than a set attribute.

The link between addiction and unemployment is complicated and diverse. According to research, substance usage can have a major impact on an individual's capacity to secure and maintain a job. Substance abusers may face difficulties with work readiness, such as difficulty with attendance, performance, and workplace relationships (Rapp et al., 2007). The financial burden of addiction can lead to debt, decreased savings, and difficulty meeting basic needs. This can limit access to resources needed for job searching and career development. Individuals struggling with addiction may face stigma and discrimination within the workplace, making it harder to secure employment or maintain existing jobs. According to the findings of a study conducted between 1990 and 2010, alcohol abuse, smoking, and prescription drug abuse are more prevalent among unemployed people (Henkel, 2011).

Economic hardship caused by unemployment may exacerbate psychological distress, leading to increased use of and admissions to treatment for marijuana, opiates, cocaine, and other drugs (Azagba et al., 2021). Unemployment can disrupt daily routines and create unstructured time. This can lead to relapse and an inability to engage in healthy coping mechanisms. Loss of social connections and support networks at work can exacerbate feelings of loneliness and isolation, magnifying addiction vulnerabilities. The stress of losing a job could be the driving force behind addiction, and an active addiction could lead to job loss. The link between drugs and unemployment may be regarded as an infinite loop.

Blayone and vanOostveen (2020) proposed five dimensions of work readiness as a vital factor in succeeding in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0). Those dimensions are technological readiness, flexibility readiness, inter-agent readiness, interpersonal readiness, and innovation readiness. The knowledge, skills, attitude, and competency of workers determine these five dimensions. IR 4.0, defined by technical breakthroughs such as cyber-physical systems and smart factories, introduces new challenges to worker skills and capabilities. NADA 2022 statistic shows a growing number of clients in the age range of 19 to 39. In the context of IR 4.0, the age disparity between NADA clientele and the rest of the workforce is especially significant. Individuals with substance misuse histories may experience difficulties accessing and adjusting to new changes as more jobs become automated and need advanced technology abilities. This may further affect their work readiness. An enhanced internal drive for change can propel individuals in recovery to consistently engage in life-improving pursuits (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Individuals in recovery might use their

increased motivation to learn new skills, establish relationships, and pursue meaningful activities. Unfortunately, work readiness among drug abusers is seldom explored.

NADA was established in 1996 to curb the prevalence of addiction and its issues. Since then, NADA has been actively advocating drug literacy, treatment, and rehabilitation. This provides a solid foundation for further discussion about NADA's specific initiatives, programs, or approaches to achieving their goals. NADA believes that rehabilitation is a life-long process. NADA's emphasis on lifelong rehabilitation recognizes that addiction is a chronic condition with a high risk of relapse. This approach implies continuous support and resources for individuals on their recovery journeys beyond any initial treatment program. Hence, the 'Model *i*-Pulih' builds upon the Biopsychosocial System Model of Addictions, which acknowledges the intricate interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors influencing addiction (NADA, n.d.). NADA's model takes it a step further by incorporating spirituality as a crucial element, recognizing its potential impact on an individual's well-being and recovery process. The model explains the incorporation of vocational aspects as an important factor in enhancing continual abstinence. Furthermore, this approach empowers individuals with meaningful work opportunities. This leads to enhanced self-esteem and a sense of direction in life. Employed individuals are financially independent. Reintegration into the workforce may reduce exposure to the environment and circumstances that could trigger relapse. Reintegration into society is one of the key objectives of rehabilitation programs.

This concept is further enhanced by Rubery and Grimshaw (2020) in their book on Organization of Employment. This book explores the importance of employment in

our lives because it meets our economic demands for income and financial security while also defining our sense of identity through self-esteem, social relationships, and chances for advancement. However, the influence of employment varies depending on the work environment, culture, and job type, making it critical to ensure that work does more than just provide a salary. Meanwhile, the government is expected to strive for equal employment opportunities, economic progress, and a system that serves everyone, not just the wealthy few. This entails establishing regulations that promote decent employment, regulate labour practices, and redress disparities. Finally, responsible government action aims to build a society in which employment provides basic needs, fosters personal growth, and contributes to a fairer and more equitable world (Rubery & Grimshaw, 2020).

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Substance abuse is a significant issue that affects millions of individuals worldwide, including Malaysia. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding the factors that influence treatment outcomes in substance abuse, particularly the role of motivational readiness to change. This research aims to investigate the relationship between motivational readiness for change and work readiness among clients in a rehabilitation centre in Melaka. Rehabilitation officers in PUSPEN Tiang Dua are constantly finding ways to match suitable jobs for their clients. This is part of the motto of integrating the clients back into society. Nonetheless, they are often met with obstacles where due to past substance use, some individuals may have gaps in their work experience or lack specific skills required for desired jobs. In

comparison, some of the clients may have low self-esteem and motivation stemming from past experiences. This can hinder job search efforts and success in the workplace. Hence, identifying individual clients' level of motivational readiness for change and work readiness can significantly help these officers in addressing the vocational challenges faced by individuals in addiction recovery.

In the context of unemployment, substance abuse treatment programs must address not just the addiction, but also the individual's readiness for change and work readiness. Treatment programs can better support individuals in overcoming barriers to employment and achieving long-term recovery by recognizing the complicated interplay between addiction, treatment readiness, and employment. This could entail incorporating vocational training, job placement services, and assistance in developing work preparation skills into substance abuse treatment programs. Furthermore, addressing motivational factors and treatment readiness might be critical in assisting persons transitioning to a condition where they are better equipped to seek and keep employment.

The relationship between motivational readiness for change and work readiness among individuals in recovery from substance abuse is an important area of study. Several research articles have emphasized the significance of motivation in substance abuse treatment (Opsal et al., 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2010). For instance, a study published in Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy highlighted the importance of a patient's motivation on the outcome of treatments for substance use disorders (Opsal et al., 2019). Additionally, research has shown that individuals who exhibit treatment readiness are more likely to succeed in drug treatment programs.

However, most of the literature focuses on self-efficacy as the factor driving work readiness (Tentama et al., 2019; Kadden & Litt, Lau et al. 2019). For instance, the study by Tentama et al. (2019) on vocational high school students reveals a strong relationship between self-efficacy and work preparation. Students with high self-efficacy are more confident and more prepared to use their skills in real-world situations. According to Kadden and Litt (2011), self-efficacy is the belief that one has the ability to carry out the necessary behaviours to achieve the intended result. In the context of substance abuse treatment, it refers to an individual's belief in their ability to resist cravings, manage triggers, and maintain abstinence. There has been no specific study conducted to explore the relationship between motivational readiness for change and work readiness.

There are several studies investigating work readiness among rehabilitees and motivational readiness for change (Noh Amit et al., 2018; Amin Al Haadi Shafie et al., 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2010; Khairunneezam Mohd Noor et al., 2015). However, these studies did not assess the relationship between motivational readiness for change and work readiness. According to Khairunneezam Mohd Noor et al. (2015), the client in PUSPEN has a moderate level of communication skills, specialized skills, and soft skills. Whereas, a high level of knowledge, skills required for the work situation, and motivation to work. However, the NADA 2022 statistic shows a 26% unemployment rate among substance abusers which is almost six times higher than the national unemployment rate. Conducting a study within this context could provide valuable insights into the factors influencing the discrepancies in transition to work readiness during the recovery process. Understanding the relationship between motivation and work readiness can aid in the development of focused interventions that address both

characteristics successfully. Interventions such as motivational interviewing techniques and programs by counsellors could be conducted to empower clients to explore their ambivalence about change and overcome resistance. This would eventually lead them to act toward their career goals and could result in more effective transitions back to work following treatment.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

Based on the literature review, this study has the following research questions.

1. What is the level of motivational readiness for change among clients at PUSPEN Tiang Dua?
2. What is the level of work readiness among the clients at PUSPEN Tiang Dua?
3. Is there a relationship between motivational readiness for change among the clients and their work readiness?

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

Based on the research questions, the main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To determine the level of motivational readiness for change among clients at PUSPEN Tiang Dua.
2. To determine if the level of work readiness affects the clients' employment outcomes at PUSPEN Tiang Dua.
3. To determine the relationship between motivational readiness for change and work readiness among clients at PUSPEN Tiang Dua.

## 1.6 Research Hypotheses

H<sub>0</sub>A: There is no correlation between motivational readiness for change and work readiness among PUSPEN clients.

H<sub>1</sub>A: There is a positive correlation between motivational readiness for change and work readiness among PUSPEN clients.

## 1.7 Purpose of Study

PUSPEN Tiang Dua has been operating for almost 20 years now. One of the biggest challenges faced by the rehabilitation officers is clients' low motivation to change and reintegration into the workforce. As of December 2023, PUSPEN Tiang Dua has approximately 290 active clients. This study will provide an overview of the motivational readiness for change and the work readiness of the clients.

The data will help them to make tailored interventions. Individuals demonstrating higher readiness might benefit from immediate job search assistance and skills training, while those with lower readiness might require focused motivational enhancement strategies first. At the same time, limited resources can be allocated more effectively by prioritizing those demonstrating greater readiness for work reintegration. This ensures efficient support for individuals most likely to benefit from immediate vocational interventions. Addressing underlying or emerging barriers related to motivation or work readiness is crucial for preventing setbacks. Early identification allows PUSPEN rehabilitation officers to provide additional support and adjust interventions to address these challenges proactively. Besides that, it allows the

rehabilitation officer and client to set realistic achievable goals, aligned with an individual's current motivation and capabilities. This is crucial for treatment success. Identifying readiness levels helps set realistic expectations and prevents individuals from becoming discouraged by overwhelming goals. Recognizing and acknowledging changes in motivation and work readiness over time can boost confidence and motivate continued progress. Regular assessments allow them to track progress and celebrate achievements, further reinforcing commitment to recovery and vocational goals.

## **1.8 Definition of Terms**

### **I. Clients**

Clients refer to active individuals undergoing community rehabilitation services at PUSPEN Tiang Dua.

### **II. Motivational Readiness**

The willingness and commitment of an individual to quit their addictive behavior. (Miller & Rollnick, 2013).

### **III. Work Readiness**

The degree to which persons are thought to have the knowledge and abilities to work independently (Tentama et al., 2019).

## 1.9 Conclusion

Recognizing the importance of both motivational readiness for change and work readiness can pave the way for a more holistic approach to addiction recovery. Supporting individuals in developing the skills, confidence, and motivation required to return to the workforce is about more than just finding work; it is about giving people a sense of purpose, fostering self-reliance, and, ultimately, creating a brighter future for those in recovery. Work readiness offers more than simply a job. It provides meaning, structure, and financial security, all of which contribute to general well-being and lower the chance of relapse. Successful reintegration into the labor force leads to a longer-term recovery vision. A synergistic effect can be achieved by treating motivational readiness for change and work readiness. Increased motivation feeds the effort to learn practical skills, while acquired skills strengthen resolve and commitment to staying clean. Individuals can take control of their recovery path and create a sustainable future because of this. Individual disparities in motivational readiness for change and employment readiness must be recognized. Offering individualized help can address specific needs and challenges, increasing intervention success.