

Current Situations and Process of Illicit Drugs Involvement among Young Female in Thailand

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Abstract

The number of female drug offenses in Thailand has been increased since 2007. About 40% of these offenders were adolescents. Out of this number, 40 – 48% was arrested in the case of amphetamines and ice users and 30-37% was drug traffickers. The number of ice traffickers was higher than other substances. Certain factors may put young women at a higher risk of drug users as well as drug traffickers. Therefore, understanding the process of becoming a victim of drug trade among young women in the Thai context is critical.

The objective of this descriptive research was to explore the situations and process of being involved with the drug trade among female drug offenses. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using self-reported questionnaires and individual in dept interview. A study sample composed of 227 young female drug offenses, aged between 12-18 years, drawn from 25 Juvenile Observation and Protection Centers throughout Thailand. Only 18% is a current student. Most of them left school prematurely, had no stable jobs, and lived in a conflict family. About 45% used to or currently had sexual partner.

Findings revealed that most subjects experienced with all kinds of substance abuse. About 80% had to abuse at least one substance. The most substance abused was amphetamines (68%) following with marijuana (30%) and Ice (27%). More than half of subjects (60%) had a history of transferring and distributing drugs. Some subject offering sex for drugs. Content analysis from qualitative data indicated some factors that might facilitate young female drug offenses to get more involved with drug dealer process: 1) having friendly and sincerely characteristics as well as relationship building skills and extensive social network; 2) families is often used the limitations of being girls and legal penalties to force them into the drug trade; 3) demands for money and advanced technology equipments motivated them to make higher incomes from being drug trafficker; 4) the influences of boyfriend who is a major or middle drug supplier; 5) despite the contributing factors, involving in drug trade was based on self-decision; 6) some certain characteristics that made this population prone to substance abused and drug trade were: commitment to life goals, having planning and system working skills and brave; and 7) influences of western belief regarding being smart by substance abuse.

The findings from this study suggesting that young female is a vulnerable group of population who can be both as a victim as well as a mean of drug trade in Thailand. There is a need to develop specific interventions in order to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors to solve substance abuse and drug trade involvement among this population.