

REVIEW ARTICLE

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND VIOLENCE BEHAVIOR

*Prof. Mohammad Hussain Habil**, *Dr. Rusdi Abd Rashid**, *Associate Prof. Ahmad Hatim Sulaiman**, *Dr. Huberta Peters**, *Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Ahmad Zahari**, *Dr. Amer Siddiq Amer Nordin**, *Dr Hazli Zakaria**, *Associate Prof. Noorzurani Robson**, *Dr Mas Ayu Said**, *Dr Aida Ahmad Adham**, *Dr. Aisah Abdul Rahim**, *Prof. Rahimah Abdul Kadir**.

***University of Malaya Centre for Addiction Sciences (UMCAS), Department of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.**

Abstract

Objectives: This paper examines the relationship of various licit/illicit substances and their association with violent behaviors. ***Methodology:*** The selection of related articles was searched via various database including google scholar, ovid and sciencedirect search engines. ***Results:*** Most of the literatures suggest presence of association of various substance use with violent behavior but no definite causal relationship between them. ***Conclusion:*** Further study is needed to determine the extended relationship in between substance use and violence.

Keywords: Substance, Violence, Dependence.

Substance abuse which include alcohol, methamphetamine, cannabis and opiates were now become a public health problem. Of late there was great concern about its relationship with violent behavior and other criminal behaviors. Almost all of the common drugs of abuse may lead to violent behavior and substances used and violent differ by type of drug, amount and pattern of use. According to some studies substance used was the most prevalent diagnosis among violent offenders. For example 60% of arrestees for violent offenders were tested positive for at least one illegal drug (1).

Alcohol is the substance most frequently cited as being related to aggressive and violent behavior. The most common and direct link for alcohol is through alcohol intoxication via anxiolytic action (2) Alcohol may also increase the perception of pain which can cause greater defensive aggression. In addition, there is also the theory that the link between alcohol and aggression as a matter of the expectancy of the intoxicated individual that such behavior is likely to occur. Alcohol may also serve as triggering mechanism to instigate aggressive acts for those who already have violent propensity and who find themselves in

“aggressible” situation (3, 4). There was finding to show that alcohol used by perpetrators or victims precede 50 % of violent behaviors. According to Martin et al alcohol were more closely linked to murder, rape and assault (5, 6). Alcohol abuse was also found to have strong correlation with domestic violence. Study showed that about 87 % of battered assaults of partners were under the influence of alcohol (7, 8). Alcohol abusers who abuse other psychoactive substances or who are diagnosed with anti social personality disorder are at especially high risk of chronic behavior (9).

Nicotine used has not been found to be associated with violence but nicotine withdrawal can cause mood disturbance and mild irritability. Given the high rate of substance used and psychiatric disorders associated with smoking. Therefore any disproportionate violence that may occur among smokers is likely the result of the polysubstance used or co morbid psychiatric disorders.

Benzodiazepines and other sedative hypnotics is commonly used drug in medical practice. Benzodiazepine are rarely primary drugs of abuse and usually used together with other polysubstance abuse. Pharmacological violence due to the irritability and anxiety that often results from intoxication and withdrawal (10, 11) Intoxication which produces a state of disinhibition in which mood is elevated; self-criticism, anxiety and guilt are reduced; and energy and self confidence are increased.

Illicit drug used were commonly related to criminal behaviors. They were crime like robberies and assaults more frequently than nonusers, and they commit them especially frequently during periods of heavy drug use (12, 13). In addition there is evidence that chronic used of illicit drugs (opioids,

amphetamines, marijuana or PCP) can eventually alter the nervous system in ways that disrupt social communications which may increase ones involvement in altercations that escalate to violent (14).

Even though in the first phase of national harm reduction program the issue of violent and criminality were not its main objective but it was found out that the program do help heroin dependence to reduce their criminal behavior . Therefore interventions such as harm reduction program do have some impact in minimizing criminality among addicts. In fact there were several other studies which give a strong support that medical therapeutics intervention were effective in preventing addicts from such behavior(15,16,17,18). This finding need further studies and due to the current issues about increasing prevalence of violent behaviors associated with substance use ,it is timely for further investigations especially in term of it cause and latest intervention.

The possible relationship between violent behavior and substance used is complex and moderated by host and environmental factors. In most studies it does not demonstrate direct causal relationship and it relationship were suggestive rather than conclusive. It was also observed that different substance affects individuals differently and only certain individual seem to be violent than others.

Several psychosocial factors were found to have strong correlation with violence among substance users. The main finding found to be due to developmental in origin. In this regards many substance users were coming from poor and deprived family background. They were usually lived in squatter’s area and places deprived of basic amenities. These are areas which often have high rates of crime and substance used.

In term of family background it was noted that most of them were having experience growing in broken family. This has cause lack of family supervision with other psychopathology like harsh discipline and family aggression. These experiences might expose them to both violent and substance used disorder.

Male seem to have more risk to be violent when they were under the influence of drugs. This could be due to cultural expectation and there were correlation with antisocial personality which was mainly confined to male gender.

Direct drug effects to the brain might be other possible explanation for violent behavior found among substance users. This could be due to the modulation of monoamines and reward system which often altered by drugs. The monoamines which could be altered include serotonin, dopamine and nor epinephrine. Evidence showed that serotonin depletion in these systems was associated with aggression. Similarly it was also it was found that dopamine and epinephrine were modulator of aggressive behavior.

Intoxication due to drugs is very commonly related to violent among substance users, it also include pathological intoxication which is known to cause aggressive behavior among users.

Other factors that can cause violent behavior also include brain damage due to direct brain injury, infections and temporal epilepsy.

Withdrawal syndrome when patients were not trying to detoxify from drug that they were taking or when they run short of supply can induced altered mental states which include acute psychosis, delirium and impaired judgment. All these complication

were another risk for drug dependence patients to be exposed to violent behaviors.

Drug withdrawal syndrome is commonly leads to drug seeking behavior which arises from the fear of withdrawal itself. Many of them were not having financial support due to lose of job and their desperate attempt to get drugs might exposed them to act of violent as to get money for buying drugs.

The types of violent which were reported among users can be divided into psychopharmacological violence, systemic and economic compulsive violence. Psychopharmacological violence is defined as any act of violence due to direct effect of drug. Systemic violence is define as aggressive behavior that develop due to interaction within drug distribution system and use while economic compulsive violence is any act of violent which have direct intention to get money as to support use. Study showed that overlapping of violence type were common and evidence showed that those users who were incarcerated due to drug related crimes 74 % were due to systemic violence, 7 % were economic compulsive violence while another 7 percent were categorized as psychopharmacological violence.

Conclusion

Evidence from empirical studies support a strong association between alcohol and other substance used with violence and crime. Their used are consistently mentioned as occurring prior or during commission of many violent events, leading to temporal association between the two.

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Corresponding Author: *Dr Rusdi Abd Rashid, Chief coordinator, University of Malaya Center for Addiction Sciences (UMCAS), Jln. 12/5, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.*

Email: rusdirashid@gmail.com

Tel: +603-79492068

Fax: +603-79556477

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