

INTELLECTUAL DISCOURSE ON WOMEN AND DRUGS IN MALAYSIA FROM 2010 TO 2023

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ABSTRACT

Drug issues have been discussed in Malaysia for decades and are still a serious problem that has not been resolved. Drug abuse is typically more prevalent in men than women. Nonetheless, this paper demonstrates how women's involvement (abuse, partners of male drug addicts) has emerged as a major issue in the country. According to statistics, drug abuse among Malaysian women is increasing annually. There is a significant impact on women because they face a higher risk than men, particularly in terms of health, especially on transmitting HIV. As a result, this paper investigates the issue of women and drugs through a systematic literature review (SLR) using the SCOPUS search engine. Based on three-word strings, "drug" AND "abuse" AND "women," a search for documents on the social sciences subject area between 2010 and 2023 yielded 1,942 articles worldwide. However, only five articles were studies conducted in Malaysia. A thematic analysis of the selected articles revealed a significant pattern concerning drug issues among women, including the identity of female drug inmates, risk factors for female partners of injection drug users (IDUs), transgender women and HIV, women's relapse, and drug use during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Based on the gaps in the intellectual discourse surrounding women and drugs, this study proposed that more research to be conducted, as this issue is gaining attention not only in Malaysia but across the globe.

Keywords: Women, drug, abuse, partners of male drug addicts

INTRODUCTION

Drug issues are a pervasive problem affecting individuals across the globe, regardless of their age, gender, or socio-economic status. While drug abuse remains a significant concern among men, the alarming increase in drug abuse among women demands attention. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2004), there has been a steep rise in the number of women succumbing to drug abuse (addiction, injection of drug users (IDU), drug use during pregnancy and breastfeeding, victims of drugs, and others) over the past few years. This issue is receiving attention to identify the underlying causes, potential consequences, and strategies to address this growing problem.

Hence, this paper presents an overview of the drug issue in Malaysia, following the significance of the issue proven through statistics, cases, and various factors comprising women towards drug issues such as gender-based discrimination, limited access to education, economic disparities, and cultural norms that dictate gender roles and expectations, which serve as significant causes that triggered towards drug abuse. Finally, this paper contextualises the outcomes of a systematic literature review (SLR) analysis based on five prominent articles. The pattern of drug issues among women discovered in this study is discussed in relation to the Malaysian context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In many countries, drug issues among women have been a significant concern for policymakers, healthcare professionals, and human rights advocates. The challenges faced by women dealing with drug addiction or abuse are complex, often exacerbated by social stigma, gender inequality, and lack of access to adequate healthcare and support services. For instance, in the European

Union (i.e., Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, and others), drug use and trafficking have been longstanding issues, with women becoming involved in the drug trade as users, traffickers, or both (UNODC, 2018).

Notably, drug-related issues have also been prevalent, with women being affected by drug abuse, trafficking, and exploitation. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2018), women in the European Union (EU) involved in the drug trade are vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and trafficking, with limited opportunities for rehabilitation and support. Furthermore, the lack of gender-sensitive services and prevention programs has further aggravated the challenges faced by women dealing with drug addiction (UNODC, 2018). Dr Ingrid Edler, a public health expert and gender equality advocate (2014), has conducted ground-breaking research on the connection of gender and drug use. It highlighted the importance of addressing the social determinants of drug use among women, such as poverty, discrimination, and trauma.

In the meantime, the World Health Organization (2014) stated that the European Union had implemented various strategies to address drug problems, including harm reduction initiatives, treatment programs, and prevention efforts (WHO, 2014). However, women continue to face unique challenges, such as limited access to gender-sensitive services, social stigma, and discrimination. Subsequently, organisations such as the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) have worked to research and address the gender dimensions of drug use and trafficking. These organisations have provided valuable data and insights into the prevalence of drug issues among women in the EU, as well as recommendations for policymakers to improve gender-sensitive interventions.

There are opportunities for positive change in addressing women and drug issues in the EU or other countries. Policymakers can prioritise gender-sensitive drug policies that promote harm reduction, decriminalisation, and increased access to healthcare and social services (UNODC, 2018). Besides, investments in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs specifically tailored to women's needs can help to reduce the impact of drug issues on women and their communities. Furthermore, collaboration between governments, civil society organisations, and international partners is essential to address the root causes of drug abuse and trafficking, including poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. By working together to implement evidence-based interventions and support women's empowerment, an equitable society for all can be created.

OVERVIEW OF DRUG ISSUES IN MALAYSIA

Over the last decade, drug issues have remained a significant global threat, especially to public health, well-being, and economic development for the whole nation. Drug issues have been prevalent in Malaysia since the 19th century (Mohamad Yasid & Zulkifli, 2021). During that time, drugs, particularly opium, were smuggled by Chinese immigrants who came to Malaya to work in the tin mining industry. Notably, the culture of consuming opium and marijuana at that time was widely accepted by immigrants as well as the locals (Mohamad Yasid & Zulkifli, 2021). Following this, the British ruler in Malaya introduced a licence to sell opium at legal stores owned by the government, as well as a licence to develop legal houses for opium consumers (Jayakumary & Nair, 2020). This situation sparked the early addiction to drugs in Malaya, and the impact of drug abuse persists up to now.

While **drug issues in Malaysia existed even before independence** (since the early 1900s), the first action taken by the British government was to introduce the Dangerous Drugs Ordinance in 1952; however, only in the 1980s did the issue of drugs become one of the main government agendas. The drug issue was first highlighted in the five-year Malaysia Plan in 1986. However, according to Mohamad Yasid et al. (2021), drug addiction is not a new issue in the country; they were well-acknowledged by the Prime Minister of Malaysia in the year 1960. During that time, drugs have been declared the number one enemy of Malaysia.

Recognising the seriousness of drug addiction and the correlation between drugs, crimes, and social problems in Malaysia, government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have implemented preventive and rehabilitative programmes to address drug abuse issues. Addressing drug issues in Malaysia requires a comprehensive approach that includes the establishment of support networks and rehabilitation programmes. In these cases, the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and community-based initiatives play critical roles in providing prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and post-rehabilitation services (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006–2010).

Creating awareness campaigns, collaborating with healthcare professionals, and incorporating drug abuse education into school curricula can help prevent substance abuse across the country. Furthermore, establishing comprehensive rehabilitation centres that address gender-specific needs, mental health interventions, and vocational training programmes can help former drug addicts reintegrate into society (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 2006–2010).

Subsequently, drug issues were continuously being emphasised in the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011–2015). In the report, drug abuse was highlighted as one of the major drivers of crime in Malaysia. The Royal Malaysian Police estimated that 50% of those arrested for snatch theft are drug addicts. For this reason, the government agenda has placed high emphasis on new measures to address drug abuse, which include improving the effectiveness of drug treatment programmes. In the recent Malaysian plan, crime prevention efforts, including drug prevention, continued to be emphasised to cater to the increase in a wide range of social issues in the country. Other than that, community participation and volunteerism programmes were also carried out to safeguard the nation and uplift the spirit of togetherness in combating crimes (Twelfth Malaysia Plan, 2021-2025).

THE SERIOUSNESS OF DRUG ISSUE IN MALAYSIA

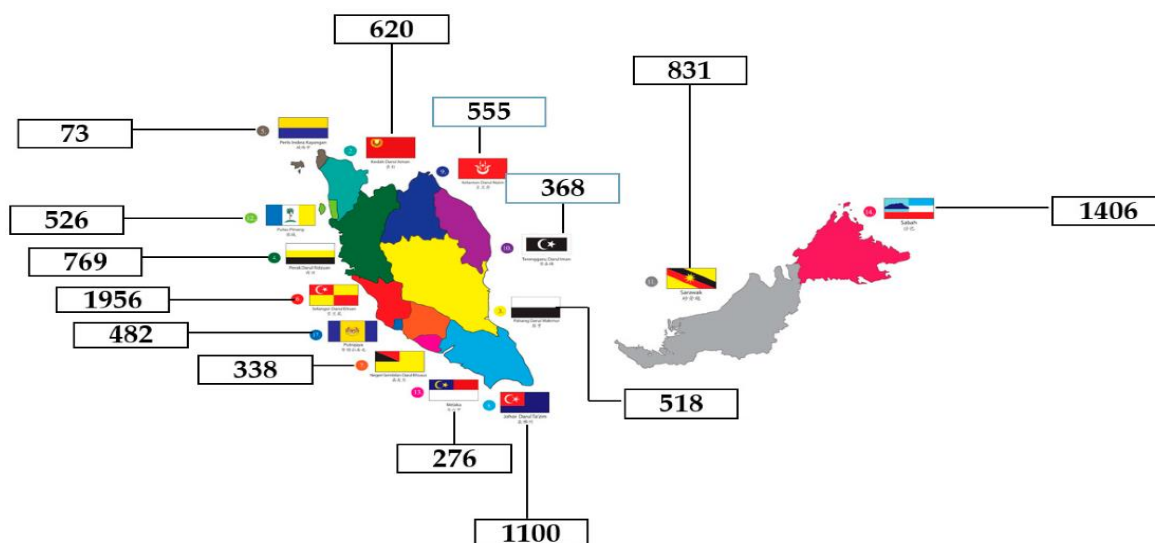


Figure 1. Prevalence of Drug and Substance Use among Malaysian (Ismail et., 2022)

Drug abuse continues to be a major problem in Malaysia. Based on the recent statistics reported by Ismail et al. (2022), drug abuse and substance use among Malaysians show a significant trend, with Selangor reporting the highest number of cases (1,956), followed by Sabah (1,406 cases) and Johor (1,100 cases) (Figure 1.1). Although the statistics of drug smuggling cases reported in other regions were not as high as in Selangor, Sabah, and Johor, the seriousness of the drug abuse issue in the whole nation is considered rampant, which requires immediate action by the enforcement authorities.

While the statistics of reported cases of drug abuse revealed the trend as well as the seriousness of the issue, nonetheless, other aspects influence the seriousness of the drug abuse issue, such as the rise of drug smuggling reported cases in Malaysia yearly, the increase of drug smuggling activities leading to rampant drug trafficking cases, and the increase of drug abuse cases in Malaysia indirectly shows serious drug smuggling and trafficking in Malaysia (Ismail et al., 2022).

WOMEN AND DRUG ISSUES

“Drug knows no gender.”

-S. Marinelli,
Department of Medical Sciences, Italy (2023)

Drug abuse issues are known as a global concern that affect individuals from diverse backgrounds, including women. Malaysia, being no exception, faces its own set of challenges regarding drug issues among women (World Drug Report, 2015).

“A Woman”, always have a pure and genuine personality where they need to be loved and protected from all the dangers out there. According to Marinelli (2023), protecting women from harm is essential for their overall well-being and their roles in society. They should be protected from the dangers and detrimental consequences, including drugs, to ensure a brighter future for the incoming generations. However, women who addicted to drugs often face problems over the worst experiences and nightmares in their lives. For some women, these issues may act as obstacles to seeking, entering, engaging with, and remaining in treatment, as they thought.

Based on the study by Mustapha et al. (2017), drug issue rates among women, particularly in Malaysia, have been on the rise due to their complexity and require a comprehensive understanding and response from the authorities. The significance of this issue is always a matter of concern due to the stigma of society, where they tend to view women who use drugs as morally flawed or deviant. In contrast, men are often sympathised or perceived as victims. This double standard reinforces harmful stereotypes and prevents women from seeking assistance, which can impair their professional lives, and thus, affecting their productivity and success.

According to Marinelli (2023), protecting women from drug abuse is essential for their roles in society. Women play a vital role in various spheres of life—as mothers, wives, daughters, and professionals; thus, the use of drugs in their life can directly hinder their ability to fulfil these roles effectively, ultimately adversely affecting society as a whole. In this case, it can disrupt family dynamics, leading to broken relationships, neglect of children or dependents, and an overall breakdown of familial stability. Furthermore, safeguarding women from drug abuse is crucial for the welfare of future generations. This is because children growing up in households affected by drug abuse is more likely to face challenges, including neglect, abuse, poverty, and limited opportunities for growth. Hence, Marinelli (2023) stated that the cycle of drug abuse is often intergenerational, meaning that children raised in such environments may be more prone to engage in substance abuse themselves. Thus, it is crucial to break the

cycle by providing early prevention for women and offering a chance for future generations to lead healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Meanwhile, Rash et al. (2016) further argued that drug abuse among women further impacts their role as mothers, often resulting in neglect of their children and broken family relationships. This is due to the consequences of drug issues that women encounter, which encompasses multiple dimensions. Physically, these women may experience deteriorating health, including organ damage, infections, and malnutrition. Other than that, mental health issues—such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are often interconnected with substance abuse problems. Furthermore, these women may face rejection and discrimination, which can exacerbate their struggles and pose barriers to their reintegration into society (Rash et al., 2016).

Recognising the unique challenges faced by those women, Norliza et al. (2014) stated that a gender-sensitive approach is vital in addressing drug issues among women, particularly in Malaysia. The approach includes promoting gender equity, providing specialised treatment options that consider their specific needs, providing female-specific counselling and others to enhance the participation of women in policy development processes. Furthermore, it is important to focus on prevention and intervention. Education is a key component of prevention, as it empowers women with knowledge about the risks and consequences of drug abuse, particularly among women. Moreover, it is crucial to support women who may be struggling with substance abuse by seeking guidance and help.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN DRUGS

"Maybe if I stopped the drugs, then maybe they would care?"

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the prevalence of drug abuse among women in Malaysia, as reported by the World Drug Report (2015); thus, there is an urgent need for society to move away from the prevailing stigma associated with drug-addicted women and instead focus on providing compassionate and comprehensive care. The proposition that *"maybe if I stop the drugs, then maybe they would care"* reflects the belief that ceasing drug use could potentially alter societal attitudes towards women grappling with addiction. However, convincing this notion may seem on the surface, it is essential to recognise other factors of drug abuse involving women in Malaysia, such as (1) socioeconomic issues (poverty, low education), (2) family factors (peer pressure and influence), and (3) psychological factors (mental health).

According to Marican, Mohamed and Ismail (2007), women in Malaysia often face financial burdens due to unequal employment opportunities and lower wages. In the context of **socioeconomic issues**, unemployment, and lack of education lead to women with limited educational opportunities or prolonged unemployment in the country. This economic strain can drive some women towards drug abuse, particularly drug mules, as a coping mechanism. Drug mules often involve young people and teenagers as they are naïve and impressionable, especially those who have socio-economic issues such as poverty and illiteracy (Marican et al., 2007). Apparently, those factors would be an ideal target for recruiters, as the victims are desperately trying to earn easy and huge amount of money for their family and their survival (The Sun, 2023). In this case, most women are usually influenced by their lack of skill development and low self-esteem, which lead to vulnerability and succumbing to substance abuse, including being drug mules.

Moreover, Lian et al. (2021) stated that in Malaysia, drug abuse is attributed typically to **family factors**. In other words, peer influence and curiosity are the top contributing factors to drug abuse. Young women, particularly adolescents, are vulnerable to substance abuse due to peer pressure and influence from friends or romantic partners involved in drugs. Those raised in dysfunctional surroundings, where drug abuse is prevalent, or communication is lacking, are more likely to go astray. A lack of appropriate support systems and traumatic experiences can push women towards drug abuse. Lian et al. (2021) also argued that the social pressure to belong, be accepted, and be a part of a social group, particularly among teenagers, causes them to conform to their peer group and begin using drugs.

According to Arpa (2017), women who use substances are more likely than men to have experienced traumatic events, such as sexual and physical assault and abuse as children and adults (UNODC, 2016), and to be currently exposed to intimate partner violence (Downs & Miller, 2002). The experience of trauma can lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health problems and can also increase the risk of substance use (Najavits, 2009; Jonas et al., 2011). At the same time, as for **psychological factors**, as argued by Norliza et al. (2014), many women who struggle with mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), often self-medicate with drugs to escape their emotional pain. Women, also known as victims of domestic violence or partners of drug addicts, often turn to drugs to numb physical and emotional pain. Lack of access to proper support and resources worsens the problem (Norliza et al., 2014).

In conclusion, drug addiction issue among women in Malaysia is a critical concern that requires urgent attention and comprehensive action. Understanding the root causes, consequences, and necessary support systems is essential to tackling these issues effectively. Therefore, Malaysia can provide assistance for women affected by drug abuse by providing them with a chance for recovery, reintegration, and a brighter future. Creating a society that is committed to addressing this issue and supporting women in their journey towards a healthy, drug-free life is crucial for their well-being and the overall progress of the nation (Mustapha et al., 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to explore the growing issue of women and drugs in Malaysia from 2010 until 2023. According to Dewey et al. (2016), SLR is a practical approach to identifying, selecting, and critically assessing the data from a literature review. It is a comprehensive, transparent search of databases and grey literature that most scholars have

used and reviewed. The review identifies the type of information searched, critiqued, and reported within known timeframes. Other than that, the search terms, search strategies (including database names, platforms, dates of search), and limits need to be included in the review (Dewey et al., 2016). Thus, in this study, the proposed methodology process used for conducting SLR includes (1) identification, (2) screening, (3) eligibility, and (4) inclusion. The process used in this paper is to examine the direction of the data from the literature review published by the researcher using the SCOPUS publication platform. Figure 1 presents the flow diagram for the database search of publications for systematic reviews applied in this study.

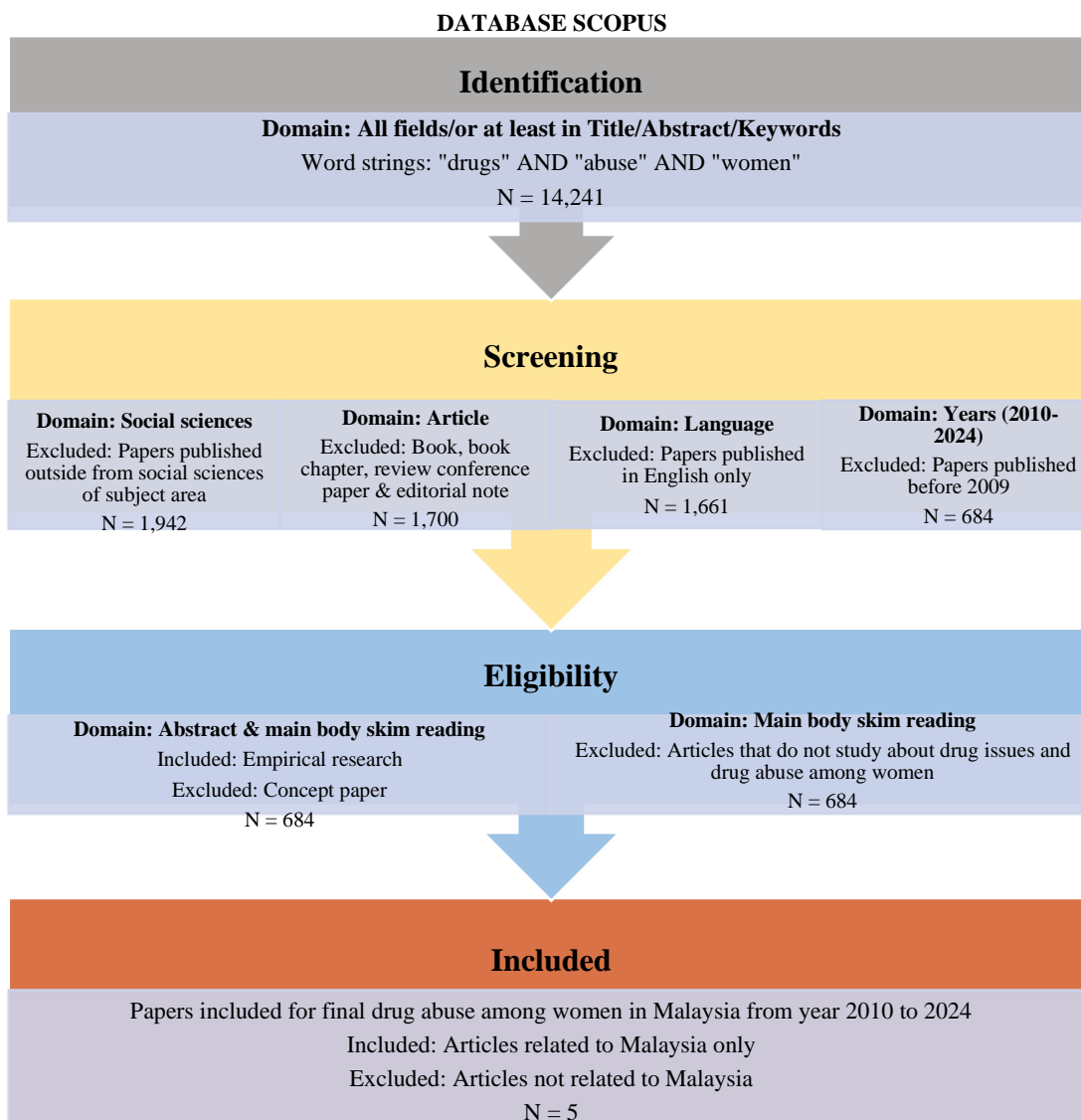


Figure 2. The flow diagram for the database search of publications for systematic reviews
Step 1: Identification

The first step in "identification", as defined by Gudina et al. (2020), is to enter a suitable keyword or word string into the SCOPUS search engine to locate any relevant publications related to the topics of study. According to Mengist et al. (2020), the first phase of identification involves searching strategy and delivery. The search strategy assists in the definition of an appropriate search string as well as the identification of relevant databases for document collection. Thus, the number of databases for SLR searches can be defined and limited. However, the nature of the topic area heavily influences the number of databases. In the context of this study, only the SCOPUS database was used as a search engine. This is due to the popularity of this database as well as its being considered a comprehensive database compared to Google Scholar. Further, the search string used as the main theme in this study is listed in **Table 1**—focusing primarily on the "drug" AND "abuse" AND "women" keywords or word string, followed by the number of articles found and the date of acquisition (January 27, 2024).

Table 1:
The searching terms used and the total number of publications from SCOPUS database

Searching string and searching terms	No. of articles	Date of acquisition
Main searching terms- using doc title, abstract, and keywords	"drug" AND "abuse" AND	14,241 January 27, 2024

“women”

This step includes identifying published articles relevant to the search term from the SCOPUS database, which yielded a total of 14,241 results. However, the number changed in the final phase when some criteria were included and excluded due to the large number of overall publications on "drug abuse." This study is limited to a number of inclusion and exclusion criteria in order to evaluate a relevant topic of study, "among women in Malaysia." The goal of establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria prior to conducting the actual review is to reduce the number of irrelevant and incorrect documents or papers that contradict the purpose of the study. This would reduce the total number of articles available. **Table 2** lists the inclusions and exclusions criteria that were used during the literature search.

Step 2: Screening

According to Hart (2018), the second step of "screening" is crucial in evaluating selected articles based on the review's main objective—by applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Thus, papers that meet all the inclusion criteria are chosen and included for further investigation and content assessment. **Table 2** presents the predefined literature inclusion and exclusion criteria used for this systematic review. Grey literature, extended abstracts, presentations, keynotes, review articles, and papers written in languages other than English were primarily excluded. There may be publications or articles that discuss drug abuse among women, even if the words "drug" or "women" do not appear in the title, keywords, or abstracts. However, these types of articles were not included in the review because they were outside the scope of the review objectives.

Table 2:

<i>List of inclusion and exclusion criteria</i>	
Criteria	Decision
When the predefined keywords exist as a whole or at least in title, keywords or abstract section of the paper	Inclusion
The paper was published in a social science field of study	Inclusion
The paper should be written in the English language	Inclusion
When the articles address at least one type of drug abuse	Inclusion
When the articles address at least one type of drug abuse among women	Inclusion
Papers that are not empirical studies	Exclusion
Papers that are not accessible	Exclusion
Papers that were published before 2010	Exclusion

In this step, the evaluated articles must demonstrate that they are relevant to the scope of the study, study topics, and main objective, as stated by Hart (2018). However, books, book chapters, reviews, conference papers, editorials, and notes are not included in the list of article types. Following that, publications published prior to 2010 that sought to investigate the current trend of drug abuse among women were excluded, as there may be a significant disparity in drug abuse among women in Malaysia. Exclusions are critical in this study context because they remove or ignore articles or document types that are outside the scope of studies and the social science subject area. As a result, the total number of publications listed after screening using inclusion and exclusion criteria is 684, as shown in Table 3.

Step 3: Eligibility

Figure 1 shows the general screening process and flow for selecting relevant literature. Nonetheless, in the initial stage of eligibility, a total of 14,241 records were discovered through SCOPUS database searches. After removing grey literature, extended abstracts, presentations, keynotes, book chapters, non-English language papers, and inaccessible publications, the number of articles was reduced to 1,661 for further title reading. Following that, only 684 articles met the eligibility criteria, which covered publications between 2010 and 2023. However, after selecting publications that are limited to Malaysia, only five articles met all of the inclusion criteria used in this SLR study. These five articles were further examined in depth using thematic analysis.

Table 3:

<i>Total number of articles after screening process</i>				
Word strings	Field of study (Social Science)	Document types (Article)	Language (English)	Year (2010 to 2024)
“drug” AND “abuse” AND “women” AND	1,942	1,700	1,661	684

To ensure that the relevant articles were examined equitably, a few additional inclusion criteria were used, including whether the publications were accessible, empirical studies, or written in English. Thus, the method entailed skimming the abstract and main text to locate the desired papers. Further, only articles limited to Malaysia were selected. **Table 4** shows that five papers met the requirements, which included both accessible and empirical works.

Table 4:

<i>Total number of papers that met the criteria for accessible and empirical papers</i>	
Word string	Accessible and empirical articles conducted in Malaysia only
“drug” AND “abuse” AND “women”	5 articles

Step 4: Included

As listed in Table 5, five publications remained to be evaluated since they met all of the inclusion criteria, including additional criteria such as articles addressing at least one type of drug and one type of drug abuse among women in Malaysia, which were systematically established. At this point, the selected articles will be thoroughly examined in light of the study's stated objectives. Furthermore, this study excluded studies that were duplicated and did not deal with drugs or drug abuse among Malaysian women. As a result, this stage may assist the reviewer in reviewing the desired publications while eliminating unnecessary study aspects, thereby focusing on the relevant literature review and ultimately reaching the genuine research gap and current knowledge of the study.

Table 5:

<i>Total number of papers that met the criteria of addressing at least one type of drug abuse among women in Malaysia</i>	
Criteria	Total papers
Articles address at least one type of drug issues and drug abuse among women	5 articles

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the systematic steps taken for SLR analysis, only five articles were chosen for further exploration into the topic of drug issues and abuse among women in Malaysia. As previously stated, the purpose of this paper is to examine the intellectual discourse surrounding drugs and women from 2010 to 2023. The findings revealed that one article was published in the following years: 2023, 2022, 2020, 2015, and 2013. This demonstrates that the issue of drugs and women in Malaysia was not the primary topic of discussion in 2010. While drug-related statistics (abuse, relapse, smuggling, and trafficking) have increased rapidly since 2010 (Tenth Malaysia Plan, 2011–2015), the focus of discussion on drugs and women has been limited in academic forums. This situation most likely arose because of the drug problem, and women were still considered taboo in society. This is consistent with the scenario of women and drugs in the Malaysian context (Wickersham, 2016; Mustapha et al., 2017; Ahmad Arip et al., 2023). Nonetheless, more discourse was evident in 2020 and beyond. It can be concluded that the issue of drugs and women in Malaysia has received attention from Malaysian academics.

The thematic analysis revealed that four out of five articles were related to "drug abuse," and only one article targeted female partners of drug addicts (injecting drug users). Among the articles focusing on female drug abuse were drug use during pregnancy and breastfeeding (Anandan et al., 2023); factors influencing relapse cases among women (Razali et al., 2021); HIV prevention and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) implementation preferences among transgender women in Malaysia (Galka et al., 2020); and self-esteem, resilience, aggressive behaviour, and religious knowledge among women drug inmates (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Most of the articles discussed the issues of drugs and women in Malaysia as a whole; two articles focused on the issue of drugs in Kelantan state: Ibrahim et al. (2013) and Nasarruddin et al. (2015). This finding revealed a significant trend of drug issues among women in Kelantan, in particular.

One of the earliest discussions on drug abuse among women was by Ibrahim et al. (2013). While acknowledging the increase in drug abuse among women at the time, the authors also highlighted various government initiatives aimed at addressing drug issues in Malaysia. The research by Ibrahim et al. (2013) focused on the identities of female drug inmates who undergo drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes in Bachok, Kelantan. Ibrahim et al. (2013) discovered that the majority of female inmates undergoing drug rehabilitation programmes at the time had a moderate level of self-esteem, resilience, aggressive behaviour, and religious knowledge. Following these findings, the research proposed that the rehabilitation centre takes responsibility for rebuilding the identity of female inmates following their release (Ibrahim et al., 2013).

In 2020, Galka et al. published an article on transgender women's willingness to use pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP is a medication used to prevent HIV. The study's findings revealed that informants' education influenced their willingness to use PrEP to prevent HIV. However, this study also found that transgender women who use drugs are less willing to take PrEP. As a result of this study, transgender women in Malaysia are very willing to use PrEP for HIV prevention. Education, ethnicity, substance abuse, and age differences in willingness to use PrEP indicate that different strategies may be needed to scale up PrEP for this diverse community of transgender women in Malaysia (Galka et al., 2020).

Further, in 2021, Razali et al. conducted research on factors that influence relapse among female former addicts six months after receiving treatment at the Cure and Care Rehabilitation Centre. The findings of their study revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between "family support," "support from friends," and "relapse." However, "motivation" and "self-esteem" were found to have a significant negative relationship with "relapse." In other words, the inclination to relapse decreases when there is an increase in family and friend support, motivation, and self-esteem (Razali et al., 2021).

Anandan et al. (2023) conducted a recent study in which the issue of drug abuse was discussed both among pregnant women and while they were breastfeeding. Based on findings by Anandan et al. (2023), 38 per cent (n = 75/200) reported using illicit substances during pregnancy, while 15 per cent (n = 30/200) used them while breastfeeding. Notably, women continue to use drugs while pregnant, particularly if they have an intimate male drug user partner. As a result, this study proposed timely and targeted interventions to inform, engage, and promote the participation of women who use drugs in pre-and post-natal care services (Anandan et al., 2023).

Finally, only one paper focused on female partners of injecting drug users—sociodemographic features, HIV risk factors, risk perception, and the adoption of preventative actions (Nasarruddin et al., 2015). The data revealed that the majority of respondents came from a low socio-economic background and had no additional risk factors outside heterosexual HIV transmission via their male IDU partners. Although 45.5 per cent had not been tested for HIV, and more than half (53.5 %) did not use condoms during sexual intercourse, only 44.6 per cent of the women believed they were at risk of contracting HIV. The majority of the women (86.1%) were willing to receive voluntary counselling and testing (VCT). This study concluded that female partners of IDUs remain vulnerable to HIV as a result of their sexual encounters with IDUs as well as their socio-economic status in the community. Therefore, to prevent HIV transmission among IDUs' female partners, HIV prevention efforts from various modalities must be consolidated.

Table 6:
Findings of SLR analysis based on the emerged themes

Author/year/journal/	Keywords	Themes						
		Pregnancy	Breastfeeding	Drug partner	Relapse	Transgender women and HIV	Female partners of injecting drug users (IDU)	Women drug inmates' identity
Anandan, A., Athirah Daud, N.A., Vicknasingam, B., Narayanan, S., Azman, A., Singh, D. Factors associated with drug use during pregnancy and breastfeeding among females who use drugs (FWUDs) in Malaysia (2023) Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse, 22 (4), pp. 766-781. 1)	Amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS); breastfeeding; kratom; Malaysia; Pregnancy	Use of drugs during pregnancy	Use of drugs during breastfeeding	Having an intimate drug partner				
Galka, J.M., Wang, M., Azwa, I., Gibson, B., Lim, S.H., Shrestha, R., Wickersham, J.A. Willingness to Use Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV Prevention and PrEP Implementation Preferences among Transgender Women in Malaysia (2020) Transgender Health, 5 (4), pp. 258-266	HIV prevention; Malaysia; pre-exposure prophylaxis; transgender women					Transgender women's willingness to use Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP – a medicine taken to prevent HIV). Higher education influences their willingness to take PrEP. Injection drug use, older age and Chinese have low willingness to take PrEP		

<p>Razali, A., Madon, Z., Hassan, M.S. Women and substance abuse: Examining the factors influencing relapse (2021) Asian Women, 37 (3), pp. 51-73.</p>	<p>Addiction; High risk; Motivation; Relapse; Self-esteem; Social support; Women substance abuse</p>				<p>Relapse among female former addicts</p> <p>Factors (family support, friends, motivational and self-esteem) influencing relapse</p>			
<p>Nasarruddin, A.M., Mohammad, WMZW, Hussain, N.H.N., Ali, S.H., Zubir, H.M. HIV-related characteristics among female partners of injecting drug users in Kelantan, Malaysia: A descriptive study (2015) AIDS Care - Psychological and Socio-Medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV, 27 (3), pp. 301-306.</p>	<p>Characteristics; HIV; Injecting drug users; Kelantan; Partners; Women</p>						<p>Female partners of IDUs</p> <p>Low socio-economic background</p> <p>Risk factors besides heterosexual HIV transmission from their male IDU partners.</p>	
<p>Ibrahim, F., Nen, S., Zakaria, E., Manaf, A.A., Mohamad, M.S., Tsuey, C.S. Measuring self-esteem, resilience, aggressive behavior and religious knowledge among women drug inmates in Malaysia (2013) Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 21 (December), pp. 31-43.</p>	<p>Aggressive behavior; Religious knowledge; Resilience; Self-esteem; Women drug inmates</p>							<p>Women drug inmates (self-esteem, resilience, aggressive behavior and religious knowledge)</p>

CONCLUSION

The findings of the SLR analysis involving drug issues among women in Malaysia revealed significant trends. First, most of the articles (four out of five articles) were related to drug abuse among women; however, only one article related to female partners of drug users. Second, the trend of intellectual discourse on drugs and women has been increasing in recent years (2020 and above), and third, drug issues among women in Kelantan were discussed in two out of five articles, while the remaining, based on the gaps in the intellectual discourse surrounding women and drugs. Nonetheless, this study is only limited to SLR related to drug issues among women in Malaysia from the SCOPUS database between 2010 and 2023. Hence, this study suggested that more research be conducted, as this issue is gaining traction not only in Malaysia but throughout the world.

One of the significant trends observed in this study was the articles related to drug issues among women, including addiction, abuse, pregnant and breastfeeding women using drugs, and women being victims of partners of drug users. Thus, the findings underline the need for further research to analyse the major factors that contributed to this issue. Subsequently, the article shows the trend of intellectual discourse on drugs and women, which has been increasing in recent years (2020 and above). This finding is alarming due to the fact that, traditionally, drug use has been considered a predominantly male issue. However, with changing societal dynamics, women in Malaysia are increasingly becoming vulnerable to drug issues. Hence, the analysis found that there has been a substantial rise in the number of women seeking treatment for drug issues over the past decade. Similarly, the findings of this study are consistent with the scenario of women and drugs in the Malaysian context (Wickersham, 2016; Mustapha et al., 2017; Ahmad Arip et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the SLR analysis of drug issues among women in Malaysia revealed significant trends, including the increasing rates of drug use, specific drug preferences among women, the influence of social determinants, and gaps in research. Policymakers, healthcare professionals, and society as a whole must recognise and respond to these trends adequately. Addressing drug addiction among women requires a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programmes tailored to the specific needs of this population.

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