

Chapter 6

Substance Use Counseling Among Men: Challenges Before, During, and After Sessions

Ahmad Yunus

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2734-5645>

Islamic Science University of Malaysia, Malaysia

Siti Nurleli Rusmiyati

Islamic Science University of Malaysia, Malaysia

Amin Al-Haadi Shafie

Islamic Science University of Malaysia, Malaysia

Dini Farhana Baharudin

Islamic Science University of Malaysia, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This chapter explains the process of substance use counseling for male clients. Counseling for substance use among men is crucial to discuss due to the high prevalence of substance use among men compared to women worldwide. Men experience a “silent pandemic” related to substance use. Unfortunately, men face many challenges in seeking help through the counseling process. Stigma and entrenched ideologies of masculinity around men have hindered them from seeking assistance. Moreover, men also face challenges in expressing their feelings, thoughts, and conditions during substance use counseling sessions. Outside the sessions, men also confront the reality that social support or even family acceptance may be

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something they need to fight for. In general, this chapter seeks to make counselors and practitioners involved in the substance use recovery process more sensitive to these various challenges. The hope is that the planning of counseling sessions as an integrated part of the recovery process can be more optimally executed.

In recent decades, attention to recovery from substance use for women continues to be highlighted. Institutions such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime - UNODC (2004) and The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration - SAMHSA (2013) have issued various toolkits, protocols, and the like, discussing substance use treatment among women. These efforts demonstrate concern for gender equality in substance use treatment. Unfortunately, statistically, men continue to report higher rates of substance use for almost all types of substances (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2022; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2022; 2023b). As a result, men are at higher risk of becoming dependent and experiencing a visit to the emergency room or death from an overdose (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2022). In addition, men are also more at risk of developing mental health issues due to substance use (Connolly, 2019). Consequently, men face a high risk of substance use. In response, medical and behavioral approaches—including the counseling process—must be reviewed to ensure that men’s recovery needs are entirely met. These elements are based on evidence that medical and behavioral counseling approaches are essential aspects that cannot be separated in a holistic recovery process (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2023). This chapter focuses on the recovery process through comprehensive, responsive, and gender-sensitive counseling principles for men’s conditions.

1. SUBSTANCE USE AMONG MEN “A SILENT PANDEMIC”

Towards the end of 2019, the global community was started by the outbreak of COVID-19 cases, a phenomenon that subsequently escalated to the extent of being classified as a worldwide pandemic in 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). Public and government awareness of COVID-19 as a pandemic has spurred massive efforts for treatment and prevention. The recognition of COVID-19 as a global health crisis prompted swift and comprehensive responses from governments, international organizations, healthcare systems, and communities worldwide. Unfortunately, amid the pandemic, other health issues have also come to the forefront. Most notably, issues such as mental health (Aknin et al., 2022; Javed et al., 2020; OECD, 2021;

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