

Methamphetamine Used among Thai Women: A Qualitative Study

การใช้เมทแอมเฟตามีนในสตรีไทย: การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ

Sarun Gorsanan, B.S. Pharm, M.A;* Pagamas Maitreemit, Ph.D;** Chuthamane Suthisisang, Ph.D;***

Luechai Sringernyuang, Ph.D.****

Gorsanan S, Maitreemit P, Suthisisang C, Srigeranyuang L. Methamphetamine Used among Thai Women: A Qualitative Study. Thai Journal of Hospital Pharmacy 2008;18(1):75-87.

The objective of this qualitative study was to find the factors that lead Thai women to use methamphetamine or Ya-ba using sociological and psychological factors as the research framework, and using the in-depth interview as a method for data collection. The population for this research was the women who were arrested by the police as Ya-ba addicts or Ya-ba abusers and were sent to Thanarak Institute in Pathumthani province for rehabilitation. Eight patients were selected as key informants. The researchers made the interview during July 2005 to August 2006. All the key informants came from poor families with primary school education. Additionally, they lived in the environment of narcotics consumption, with either relatives, boyfriends or girlfriends, spouses, or friends involved in narcotics. Most of them began taking Ya-ba since teenagers. The researchers found many sociological and psychological factors such as: availability and accessibility to Ya-ba, influenced of families and peers, sociological and psychological reinforcements, etc. One factor found in the study was the identity of being woman and the role of gender. This factor was not reported in previous studies. One of the most important finding from the study was that all of the Ya-ba users used the drug not because they addicted to it. This information was crucial for the campaign against Ya-ba use. The researchers suggested that the campaign should focus on specific characteristics of each group of drug abuser found in the society. The campaign should not emphasize on biological factors which do not in accord with their beliefs.

Key words: Methamphetamine, Ya-ba, Thai women, factor, qualitative study.

*Ph.D. Candidate, Graduate Program in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, Silpakorn University.

**Faculty of Pharmacy, Silpakorn University.

***Faculty of Pharmacy, Mahidol University.

**** Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University.

ศรัณย์ กอสนาน, ผกามาต ไมตรีมิตร, จุฑามณี สุทธิสีสังข์, ลือชัย ศรีเงินยวง. การใช้เมทแอมเฟตามีนในสตรีไทย: การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ.วารสารเภสัชกรรมโรงพยาบาล 2551;18(1):75-87.

การศึกษานี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่ทำให้สตรีไทยใช้เมทแอมเฟตามีนหรือยาบ้า โดยใช้ปัจจัยทางสังคมวิทยาและปัจจัยทางจิตวิทยาเป็นกรอบในการวิจัย ทำการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยใช้วิธีการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกในการรวบรวมข้อมูล ประชากรของงานวิจัยนี้ คือ สตรีที่เสพยาบ้าและถูกส่งเข้าโปรแกรมบำบัดฟื้นฟู ณ สถาบันธัญญารักษ์ จังหวัดปทุมธานี โดยมีผู้ถูกคัดเลือกให้เป็นผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักจำนวน 8 ราย ผู้วิจัยทำการสัมภาษณ์และเก็บข้อมูลในระหว่างเดือนกรกฎาคม พ.ศ. 2548 ถึงเดือนสิงหาคม พ.ศ. 2549 ผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักทุกรายมาจากครอบครัวที่ฐานะไม่ดี มีการศึกษาสูงสุดอยู่ในระดับมัธยมศึกษาตอนต้น อาศัยอยู่ในพื้นที่ที่มีการระบาดของยาเสพติด และมีญาติ ครอบครัว สามี หรือเพื่อนที่มีความเกี่ยวข้องกับยาเสพติด ผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักเกือบทั้งหมดเริ่มเสพยาบ้าตั้งแต่วัยรุ่น ผลการศึกษา พบปัจจัยทางสังคมและจิตวิทยาที่ทำให้สตรีไทยเริ่มใช้ยาบ้าหลายปัจจัย เช่น ปัจจัยในด้านความง่ายต่อการเข้าถึงและการมียาบ้าจำหน่าย อิทธิพลจากเพื่อนและครอบครัว และการเสริมแรงทางสังคมและจิตวิทยา เป็นต้น จากการศึกษา พบปัจจัยที่แตกต่างจากงานวิจัยอื่น ได้แก่ การที่ยาบ้าสามารถตอบสนองอัตลักษณ์และบทบาทของความเป็นเพศหญิง สิ่งสำคัญที่สุดที่พบจากการศึกษานี้ คือ การที่ผู้เสพยาบ้าไม่ได้เสพยาเพราะติดยา ซึ่งข้อมูลนี้ มีความสำคัญต่อยุทธการในการรณรงค์ต่อต้านการเสพยาบ้า ผู้วิจัยเสนอแนะให้ทำการรณรงค์ต่อต้านยาบ้าโดยมุ่งเน้นตามลักษณะเฉพาะตัวของกลุ่มผู้เสพยา และทำการรณรงค์โดยไม่มุ่งเน้นไปในสิ่งที่ขัดแย้งกับความเชื่อของกลุ่มเป้าหมาย

คำสำคัญ : เมทแอมเฟตามีน ยาบ้า สตรีไทย ปัจจัย การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ

Introduction

Drug addiction is one of the international social problems. According to *“The World Drug Report 2004,”* opiates were the world’s most serious drug problem.¹ Opiates were 67 percent of drug treatment in Asia, 61 percent in Europe, and 47 percent in Oceania. In South-East Asia, the opium poppy cultivation continued to decline in Myanmar and Laos but methamphetamine has become the main problem.¹ In Thailand, like other countries, drug is an important problem. Thailand’s drug problem is

multifaceted, as she serves as production, trafficking, transit, and epidemic areas. Most of the drug trafficking in Thailand focuses on three major drugs, namely heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine (which is called *“Ya-ba”*).

Ya-ba is the most prevalent abused drug in Thailand. The statistics on Ya-ba seizures in Thailand increased from 33.50 million tablets in the year 1998 to 98.71 million tablets in 2002. Most of the Ya-ba is produced and smuggled from outside Thailand into the country using various routes and methods. However, there are

small-scale production sites located in the central provinces, including Bangkok and her nearby provinces. The main users of methamphetamine for the past few years were young people and students. The drug epidemic in the schools is worse since the number of student drug dealers is increasing. Although the main abusers of methamphetamine are young people and students, there are other groups of people who abuse methamphetamine. The statistical report on drug treatment had shown that the unemployment, the skilled workers, and merchants were the groups that had drug problems.¹ Furthermore, the data from the special treatment centre of drug abusers (Thanyarak hospital, Pathumthani province) had shown that there were other groups of drug abusers such as woman, homosexual, and wealthy people.

Several researches had been conducted to explain why people decided to use drugs.^{1,2} Various explanations of drug abuse have been given. Some focused on biological factors,²⁻⁴ others emphasized environmental influences.^{2,3} Some sociologists²⁻⁴ believed that drug abuse was associated with continuous and cumulative influenced from time of conception throughout the life course.

Some of the biological studies³⁻⁵ focused on the relationship between the brain and drug addiction, including brain-reward pathways. These studies have found convincing evidence that drugs act directly on the brain mechanisms, such as stimulating the areas of the brain that

create sensation of pleasure and suppress the perception of pain. Consequently, the user receives reinforcement to engage in further drug-taking behavior. Others found that genetic factors played an important role in substance abuse. The studies also showed that genetic factors influenced the metabolism and the effects of drugs, thereby contributing to the risk of addiction.^{6,7}

Psychological explanations of drug addiction focused on personality disorders on drug-taking behaviors. Some studies^{3,8} had found that antisocial personality, psychopathy, impulsivity, affective disorder, anxiety, and risk-taking personality were more common among drug abusers than among non-abusers.

Sociological explanations of drug addiction focused on how drug use and abuse fulfill a function in society.³ Many people use drugs to relief social strain and social disorganization. Families, peers, social and cultural supports, social control and learning also are the factors that influenced drug abuse.

The three dimensional factors i.e. biological, psychological, and sociological factors that affect the drug use behavior of people would be the frame for this research. Since the results of biological factors would be obtained completely by using true scientific laboratory, this research will focus mainly on psychological and sociological factors.

Most of the researches in Thailand, which had been studied to find the reasons of using

drugs,^{1,8} were conducted with the students. Few researches on addiction had been conducted in women.^{1,7,9} The researchs showed no male-female difference with respect to trying the drug when having an opportunity to do so, although males were more likely than females to have an opportunity to use drugs. There was a research⁹ showed that females were likely to get their first opportunities to use cocaine at an earlier age than males. Age was 19 for females and 20 for males, but that there was no difference among males and females in age of first opportunity to use marijuana, heroin, or hallucinogens.⁹ The reasons of start using drugs of women were different from men in some points e.g. the role of partner.¹⁰ Women used drugs in order to improve mood; increased confidence; reduced tension; coped with problem; and in some cases, sexually abused. Although women in general, had lower levels of drug using compared to men for the majority of substance, they were at greater risk of developing health related problems.¹¹ In Thailand, males are more likely than females to be arrested by police and sent to the treatment centre. However, there was little evidence about social problems or crimes which caused by women who used Ya-ba. It is interesting to set the research on the drug problems of Thai women.

Objective

The objective of this study was to find the sociological and psychological factors that

predisposed Thai women to abuse Ya-ba (methamphetamine).

Method

1. Research Site. The research was conducted at Thanyarak Institute, Pathumthani province, a major rehabilitation and treatment centre for drug abusers in Thailand. The qualitative method by the in-depth interview was used to investigate the sociological and psychological factors that predisposed Thai women to abuse Ya-ba. The research was done during July 2005 to August 2006.

2. Samples and the Key Informants Selection. At the time when this research started (in July 2005), there were nearly 160 patients in 3 women in-patient rehabilitation wards. The patients were asked for their willingness and permissions before the in-depth interview took place. Thirty patients were first selected. After verification, only eight were included as key informants. They were the representative of women in variety of ages, reasons of Ya-ba using, women's roles, reasons for selling, and reasons for drug reabuse.

3. The In-depth Interview. The questions for interview were composed of demographics data, experiences and history of drug use, drug used behavior, feeling, attitude, opinion, belief, and knowledge of the selected samples. The interview was set up in order to find which factors were the major reason for

the samples in making decision to use Ya-ba and to find the relationship among the socio-logical and psychological factors, demographics of the samples, and other factors that might be found from the interviews. The interviews were conducted along with the observations of all verbal and non-verbal expressions and behaviors of the samples. Both close-ended and open-ended interviews were used to assist the person's reflection and recall the information. The researchers interviewed individuals by themselves. The interviews were conducted in a semi-private place where the informants could tell their stories conveniently. The interviews were performed until the received data had no change among the informants.

4. The Data Verification. The internal validity of the data was verified by triangulation technique. The key informants were asked the same questions at different time in order to confirm the validity of the answers. The researchers also compared data collected from the informants, the nurses, and the documents. If the data from these three sources had the same meaning, it showed that the data were valid.

5. The Data Analysis. Data processing was performed by categorizing, coding, and grouping in written field notes. The data were analyzed by using the framework and theory of three dimensions (the biological, psychological, and sociological factors) that affected the drug use behaviors of the drug abusers. Finally, the

researchers concluded the findings, reviewed them, recommended for the drug situation solutions and suggested for future research.

Results and Discussion

1. Number of Cases Interviewed. Thirty cases were interviewed and 8 cases who used Ya-ba were selected as the key informants for the in-depth interviews. The detail of their demographics data were summarized as followings:

Case 1, Bus: *"Strong confidence in her own decision."* She is a 29 years old woman. She first started using Ya-ba when she was 17-18 years old. Her boyfriend was the one who introduced Ya-ba to her. She became a drug seller before she was sent to the institute.

Case 2, Nan: *"She has girlfriends."* She is 16 years old. She started using Ya-ba since she was 13 years old. She used Ya-ba in order to spite her parents who blamed that she must addict to drug. After started using it, she became a drug dealer. She thought she did not addict to Ya-ba because the addiction must relate with the withdrawal symptoms like the heroine withdrawal symptoms.

Case 3, Amp: *"Who loved the nightlife"*. She is 16 years old. She lived with guardians. She felt that they did not love her because they were not her real parents. She had been involved with Ya-ba since she was 13 as a buyer for her sisters, but she really started using it by herself when she was 14.

Case 4, Boon: *“No one hired a woman aged over 30 and Ya-ba made me had income.”* The 33 years old widow. She was caught by the police for selling Ya-ba and was sent to prison for seven years and six months. When she was released, she lost her job and returned to drug business again.

Case 5, Sri: *“Her boyfriend had introduced Ya-ba to her.”* Sri’s first experienced Ya-ba was when she was 18 years old. Now she is 31. She worked as a night worker. She had behavior that she stopped using Ya-ba for an average of 4 or 5 months each year because she had no money and sometimes just did not want to use it.

Case 6, Eye: *“Who could work more in a field by using Ya-ba”.* Eye is the oldest person who was interviewed. She is 41. She worked as a sugar-cane cutter. Her income came form day by day working. She has two sons. Now she is divorced. She started using Ya-ba when she was 20. It was given to her by her friends at work. Her group said that using Ya-ba could give them energy and could cut more sugar-cane.

Case 7, Sao: *“Who seek excitement”.* Sao was pregnant when she was interviewed. She is 23 years old. She started using Ya-ba when she was 22. She lived with her husband and got monthly payment from his mother and did nothing more than taking care of the house and pets. The reason for using Ya-ba mainly came from feeling free and no need to work.

Case 8, Da: *“Ya-ba brought courage to her”.* She is 14 years old. She usually went out to enjoy the nightlife with her friends until she went to work as a bar-girl which required night long work. Da did not have a good relationship with her second grandfather. When she used Ya-ba, she felt brave enough to argue with him.

All the key informants have background of non-wealthy families and a primary school is the highest level of education attained. Additionally, they lived in the environment of narcotics consumption, and have relatives, boyfriends or girlfriends, spouses, or friends who involved with narcotics. Most of them began taking Ya-ba since teenagers.

Results revealed that all of these 8 informants did not use Ya-ba due to the biological factors. The most prominent reasons were the sociological and psychological domains.

The research findings can be summarized in the sociological, psychological, and some views of biological factors that predisposed Thai women to abuse Ya-ba.

2. Sociological Factors. The sociological factors, which were found to lead Thai women to consume Ya-ba, from this research, were the availability and accessibility to Ya-ba, peers and families, female’s identity and roles, value towards Ya-ba, labeling, and the economic factor.

2.1 The Availability and Accessibility to Ya-ba. According to the data obtained

through the interviews, all of informants revealed that they could find Ya-ba whenever they wanted, no matter where they were, even in the places where they were not familiar with before. What they had to do when they wanted Ya-ba in the strange places was just asking people around them for the source of Ya-ba, but this might require more attempts to find it. The example data from informant was: *"You know the narcotics well. If you really wanted it, you just asked for it around. Later the source for getting it would reach you very soon. You should make a lot of friends and then you just asked and asked for it then you would know where to buy."*

The informants agreed that if Ya-ba did not exist in Thai society, they would stop consuming it automatically. For the accessibility to Ya-ba, all of the informants could easily access to Ya-ba since every people around them such as relatives, friends, husbands, couples, and family members had to deal with Ya-ba. They accepted that they got the first tablet of Ya-ba from these people. The mentioned reason and the availability of Ya-ba in the society make it very easy to get. In addition, both availability and accessibility to Ya-ba also cause it to spread widely and quickly and encouraged the new comer to be very much addicted to it. Even though among the people who have never consumed Ya-ba before, they could also easily become the narcotics due to its easy access as well as the encouragement from

the people around them. The informants further explained that they heard about Ya-ba all the time and once they wanted it, they could reach them easily. These were the reasons why they finally became the narcotics.

2.2 Peers and Families. Peers and families also the sociological factors, everyone around the informants, including relatives, peers, husbands, couples, and family members had to deal with Ya-ba in some ways. Furthermore, the persons who offered the informants the first tablet of Ya-ba were among these people. The examples were: *"I had sold it to my friend for my elder sister. My friend had recommended me to try it, so I did."* or *"My neighbor sold it."* The informants' primary group of people was also an important factor affecting the informants' decisions in consuming Ya-ba. These people instilled the wrong values about Ya-ba to the informants by being a model in consuming Ya-ba and convinced the informants about the advantages of Ya-ba, e.g. *"I had seen my friends' actions and I was very curious about that, so I asked them why they could stay so energetic until the morning. They had suggested me to try it like them because I would also be energetic."*

2.3 Female Identity. Since this research focused on female Ya-ba consumers, it was found that the identity of female characteristics was considered as another factor motivating these female informants to start consuming Ya-ba. The informants identities mostly con-

cerned with beauty and shape. They tried to keep their shapes slim and not too much plump because they valued slim women were beautiful. Ya-ba was their best choices compared to other narcotics since they had heard that Ya-ba made people feel full and did not want to eat, their weights would be reduced as they expected to be the beautiful women. The example was: *“Actually, I was hungry but I just could not swallow. I loved dressing so much, being slim would match many dresses.”*

2.4 Female Roles. There were some particular roles of female that were also considered another factor encouraging the informants to consume Ya-ba. Traditionally, Thai women are expected to manage the household and stay home all day especially at night time. The young informants offended and opposed this social value. They wanted to be free from this social norm. Therefore, when someone offered them Ya-ba, they were pleased to challenge it. The example was: *“When staying at home, I feel lazy. Hearing complaint, so I used drug. Sometimes, I did not wash clothes, so I used drug to finish it. When using drug, I did all housekeeping works.”*

Besides the well-behaviors expected of Thai women, this research found that they also had the significant role as a mother who had to look after their children and families. They were forced by this role to earn more money to support their family members. Therefore, the informants in this group wanted to work

more in order to get more money. Hence, when someone offered them Ya-ba by showing them many benefits of Ya-ba; for example, it could make people work in agricultural area faster and longer e.g. *“I thought I needed it. You know, the more (sugar cane) you can cut, the more money you would get. I had to think a lot about my family and my children. What they would be, if I could not earn enough money.”* and *“My friends in the group of sugar cane cutting workers told me that Ya-ba could make us feel tireless. It helps us feel energetic so we just used it,”* and it could make those night workers worked longer without feeling sleepy, they accepted it.

2.5 Value towards Ya-ba. The value towards Ya-ba was one of the sociological factors. The informants believed that the people being addicted to Ya-ba were also superior to people being addicted to other kinds of drug e.g. *“I first took Ya-ba when I had was about 19 or 20. Before that, I had taken the evaporation for 4 to 5 months. Later, I had met the friends who were in the higher status.”* In addition, the ways in consuming Ya-ba were also divided into classes. The informants viewed the people consuming Ya-ba through smoking its vapor were superior to those consumed it through eating since the latter group was mostly the laborers or the truck drivers e.g. *“There were only the laborers who had eaten it. We had smoked it because it looked better and more enjoyable.”* Consuming Ya-ba

through smoking its vapor was considered superior to consuming evaporations of marijuana, therefore, the informants were very proud to consume Ya-ba rather than other kinds of drug.

2.6 Labeling. This research discovered that being labeled the narcotics was another factor motivating the informants especially the young informants to consume Ya-ba. Some of the informants were labeled from everyone in their families that they must also be the Ya-ba narcotics like their friends, although the informants insisted that at that time they had never consumed Ya-ba at all. Therefore, when being accused by the families who should be the people trusting them the most, the informants decided to consume Ya-ba in order to mock at them. The examples were: *"Dad and Mom did not understand. I just went out with friends. When I got home late, they assumed I was using drug. Since I wasn't using it, I tried to explain, but they didn't believe me. Later on, I had decided to use it".* or *"Dad and Mom often complained that I used drug, so I sarcastically took it."* or *"Brother thought my boyfriend used drug, and so he complained to me. After that I used the drug because I was sensitive."*

2.7 Sociological Reinforcements. The informants also got the sociological reinforcements from people around them. They got positive reinforcements from peers. They felt that they could get along with their friends better especially the peers who were Ya-ba

consumers. Their peers are the people who look for Ya-ba for them and support their every business concerning Ya-ba. The peers presented their own positive experiences to the informants. Therefore, when the informants became a Ya-ba consumers, they felt that they were a part of the group they belonged to. This drove them to keep consuming Ya-ba in order that they would get along well with their peers. The example was: *"When I wanted to go out in the morning, I would take Ya-ba so I did not want to sleep and could catch up with my friends."*

The informants revealed that after taking Ya-ba, they would be very energetic and wanted to do many things. Therefore, the roles of female were expressed; for example, managing household works. They told that once Ya-ba affected their bodies, they wanted to release the energy they got through many activities; for example, cleaning clothes and floors. In addition, Ya-ba made them want to stay home only as they were ashamed of other's eyes towards them. After they did a lot of household works, they would be admired from the members of their families. They were totally the brand new persons; the lazy became the diligent. This was also another positive reinforcement the informants felt from consuming Ya-ba. To sum up, they wanted to be admired from the roles of female they expressed e.g. *"I did not feel like going out but I wanted to do the household works. I had become the diligent*

person after consuming it. Besides, I was not hungry at all. It was very good to me; it made me more hard working.”

Although consuming Ya-ba caused the informants to waste more money in order to buy it, this happened only at the beginning. When they took Ya-ba for a period of time, they could work more from the effect of Ya-ba and made more money. Furthermore, they could develop themselves to be Ya-ba sellers in order to earn money from it and got it for free as well.

As for the informants wanting to work more for the better lives of their children, Ya-ba did it as they wished. They could work more; for examples, cutting the sugar canes without feeling tired, working late at night without feeling sleepy, and finally they had more income for the families.

3. The Economic Factor. The economic factor also caused the informants to be involved with Ya-ba again after they had disposed of it. Even though some of them had disposed of Ya-ba and intended to avoid Ya-ba absolutely, they did return to deal with it. This was because they wanted to work but they were only the uneducated old women and no one wanted them to work for. Therefore, when their friends persuaded them to do the business about Ya-ba as the sellers, they agreed with it since it was the only way to earn enough money. The example was: *“I had stopped taking it for 7 years. Then I was free from jail and worked for 2 years.*

Later, I returned to consume it again because I met my old friend. She had returned to sell Ya-ba first and had persuaded me to do so. I did not have to invest anything. I could get both Ya-ba to consume for free and the money to use as well.”

4. Psychological Factors. The psychological factors, which were found to lead Thai women to consume Ya-ba from this research were personality, wrong perception and belief about Ya-ba, lacking of knowledge, positive attitude towards Ya-ba, and psychological reinforcements.

4.1 Personality. The research found that personality of the key informants was one of the factors that led Thai women to consume Ya-ba. The personalities that related to the factors were the high self-confidence and high self-efficacy personalities. These personalities made the key informants dared to do the things they had never done before, included in consuming Ya-ba. The examples were: *“It was all because of me. Well, I had followed my heart. I did what I wanted to do. I wanted to try everything even the drug.”* or *“It was all about ourselves. It depends upon whether we could force our own selves or not.”*

The research also found that some of the informants possessed both the low self-esteem and the negative self-concept. The informants used Ya-ba in order to make their lives more meaningful and energetic. Consuming Ya-ba made the informants felt worth and

meaningful e.g. *"I completely forgot everything and felt only the happiness inside me."*

4.2 Wrong Perception and Belief about Ya-ba. Following the Health Belief Model, it was found that the informants possessed the wrong informations about Ya-ba in the perceived susceptibility and perceived seriousness. This led to the wrong belief towards Ya-ba and caused the informants consume Ya-ba finally. The examples were: *"I did not know that I could be addicted to it such easy. I always thought that it could be disposed but that was not true."* or *"I thought that I would never be addicted to it and I could stop taking it. Actually, at that time, I knew that it was the dangerous drug but I had underestimated it."*

When all of informants consumed Ya-ba for the first time, they did not believe that they were going to be addicted to it. Even though, they learn from many medias that *"Ya-ba is a narcotic"*, *"Once we consumed Ya-ba, we would be addicted to it"* and *"Ya-ba is a narcotic. You would be addicted to it even though you took it only once,"* they put their faiths in their direct experiences. They heard from their friends being addicted to Ya-ba that they could stop consuming Ya-ba once they wanted. Therefore, the informations they acquired from the medias sharply contradicted their background experiences. They concluded everything about Ya-ba themselves that they would never be addicted to Ya-ba such easy

as the government and other medias tried to present. They further concluded that in case that they were addicted to Ya-ba, they could stop having it very easily by their controls. The examples were: *"Ya-ba could not be compared to heroine at all. Heroine is much stronger. I would never take heroine at all, ever. For Ya-ba, I could take it or stop it very easily. Just depended on the situation."* or *"Ya-ba has never killed anyone. We may feel sleepy at most. Those people got mad and robbed other people, I believed that they must take other kinds of drugs with Ya-ba. When consuming Ya-ba, we were just nervous about the coming of the police."*

4.3 Lacking of Knowledge. The lacking of knowledge about how Ya-ba is (looks like), e.g. *"My boyfriend was working unscheduled hours, and used the drug. What was it? I asked. It was Ya-ba, he said. I did not know Ya-ba before, and did not truly believe it was what he had. He let me try, and after trying I had became addicted."* The lacking of knowledge about danger from consuming Ya-ba and having knowledge only in the positive side of Ya-ba. It could be concluded that incomplete knowledge of Ya-ba is one of the psychological factors that caused Thai women to consume Ya-ba.

4.4 Positive Attitude towards Ya-ba. The obtained data showed that even though the informants did not have significantly positive attitudes towards Ya-ba, they did not

have any negative attitudes towards it. The informants had perceived about the benefits of Ya-ba created the positive attitude towards it for a long time. They observed the people being addicted to Ya-ba around them received the benefits from using it. They learnt that Ya-ba could solve any problems in life at that time; for example, Ya-ba could make them work harder; it could take them away from the fact they had to encounter. These kinds of attitude, although, were not considered pure positive, they were neither negative at all. Therefore, we could conclude that the positive attitude and the expectation from taking Ya-ba were among of many factors motivating the informants to start consuming it.

4.5 Psychological Reinforcements.

Although the reinforcing factors were not considered the direct factors causing the informants started consuming Ya-ba, they indirectly influenced the informants for this behavior. Since the informants already had positive attitudes towards Ya-ba, when they tried Ya-ba themselves, they did get the same benefits as they believed a positive reinforcement from it. Therefore, they decided to consume it continuously and became the narcotics subsequently. We might see that reinforcing factors were significantly related to the behaviors in consuming Ya-ba: initial behavior and continuous behavior.

5. Biological Factors. Since the limitation of the methodology, results cannot confirm

the biological factors which were the predisposing factors for Thai women. The research found that every informant used the drug not because they addicted to it. There were some points about the physiological properties of Ya-ba that related to the method of consuming it. The research found different drug effects among persons. All informants also received the pleasurable effect which came from the result of the brain rewarding system. The pleasurable effect which they received was related to the psychological factors especially that could reinforce for their expectations.

Conclusion

The study showed that the contributing factors causing Thai women to consume Ya-ba were in the same tend with the findings of previous studies.^{1,3,6,9,10} These factors were mostly concerned of the persuasion of the people around them, lacking of the knowledge about Ya-ba, the wrong belief about it, and the availability and accessibility to Ya-ba. Another factor that we found in this study was the identity of being woman and the role of gender. This factor was not reported in previous studies.^{9,11} One of the most important finding from this study was that all of the Ya-ba users consumed the drug not because they addicted to it. This information is crucial for the campaign against Ya-ba usage. The researchers suggest that the campaign should focus on specific characteristics of each group of

drug abuser found in the society. The campaign should not emphasize on biological factors which is not in accord with their beliefs.

Limitation of the Research

The limitation of this research was the setting of the research field. The key informants for this research are the women who were arrested by the polices as the Ya-ba addicts or Ya-ba abusers. They did not come to Than-yarak Institute voluntarily. They were sent to the

rehabilitation program: FAST Model of Than-yarak Institute in order to treat Ya-ba addiction in accord to the government policy. Because the setting of the research field was the rehabilitation ward, the informants from this site were not a severe drug addicted patients. They still lived as normal in the society before they were arrested. All of the limitations might affect the results of the research. These limitations may explain the difference in the results among this research and those previously reported.

References

- Office of the Narcotics Control Board. Thailand country report: current drug situation. Available at : <http://www.oncb.go.th.htm> Accessed September 15, 2004.
- Fishbine DH, Susan EP. *The Dynamics of Drug Abuse*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996.
- Kendall DE. *Social Problem in a Diverse Society*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001.
- Carroll CR. *Drugs in Modern Society*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000.
- Oltmanns TF, Emery RE. *Abnormal Psychology*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1998.
- Barlow DH, Durand VM. *Abnormal psychology: an integrative approach*. 2nd ed. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Cami J, Farre M. Mechanism of disease: drug addiction. *The N Engl J Med* 2003; 349: 975-86.
- Shedler J, Block J. Adolescent drug users and psychological health. *Am Psychol* 1990; 45: 612-30.
- Zickler P. National Institute of Health: NIDA note 2000; 15(4). Gender differences in prevalence of drug abuse traced to opportunities to use. Available at: http://www.nida.nih.gov/NIDA_notes/NNVol15N4/Prevalence.html Accessed August 30, 2006.
- National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center, University of California Berkely. Partners's influence on woman's addiction and recover: the connection between substance abuse, trauma, and intimate relationships, 2002. Available at: <http://aia.berkeley.edu/media/pdf/partners.pdf#search='Partners%20influence%20on%20woman%27s%20addiction%20and%20recovery'> Accessed August 30, 2006.
- Poole N, Dell CA. "Girl, woman and substance use." Canadian centre on substance abuse, 2005. Available at: <http://www.ccsa.ca> Accessed 1 August 30, 2006.