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LIVED EXPERIENCES OF DANGEROUS DRUG USERS IN THEIR SOCIAL CAPITAL: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the exploration of the phenomenon is through qualitative design. It intended to discover the real-life experiences of the dangerous drug user with their social capital. With the data from the participants, it provides the themes under the major theme created from life course theory. This concludes that social capital is significant either too dangerous drug use and be cured once the individual has the disorder. Therefore, recommendations are solely base to the life trend of dangerous drug users within the social capital.

KEYWORDS: Dangerous drugs, Experiences, Social Capital, Users

INTRODUCTION

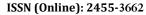
The well-known drug abuse phenomena have been a favorite topic in academic discipline for behavior like criminology. It is a disease in which the person having it cannot control craving and can also put someone dependent on it to function. The latest report about people having drug abuse disorder showed 269 million of them, which is thirty percent higher from 2009, with the number of cannabis users around 192 million. However, opioids are still positioned as number one unsafe of all due to more passing rate, which is 71 % in general increment with 93 % increment from ladies and 63 % from men (UNODC, 2020). In the Philippines, the great news is that number of dangerous drug users has decreased by more than 50 percent adding up to 1.67 million or a proportion of 2:100 Filipinos. Cannabis is the foremost common drug being abuse in the age bracket of 18 to 59 years old (Xinhua, 2020). In Barangay San Dionisio, as reported by Carrasco (year), during 2021-2022, there were numerous arrests for drug related cases and millions of pesos were seized. On the account of arrest and seizure of dangerous drugs, it is now considered by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) as hot spot for dangerous drugs. In totality of the report, the central issue in drug abuse is a continuing existence. With the issue, there is some important responsibility of social capital for it be controlled or prevented.

Social capital is the immediate influencer of any type of behavioral disease just like drug abuse involvement. In talking about behavior with social capital, they are a composition of a group of people who are directly connected to the everyday life of a person like family, peer, and neighborhood. The roles of social capital in the continuous existence of drug abuse are the

influencive attitude shown to individual that creates physical and psychological tension, and as an individual is involved in drug abuse, there are consequences. An example is suffering from unstable mind, which produces undesirable decision like crime. Another is potentiality of social capital to negative conformity, just like stigma. It makes drug abusers, upon severe use, separate from the norms of the society. Evidently, they become very suspicious with high level of distrust on people.

Researchers have reported the importance of social capital in understanding the cause and possible treatment of dangerous drug users. Di Maggio et al. (2021) stated that life satisfaction can be regained if the social capital will provide hope. It clearly shows that if we are the social capital of the drug user, we must remove the traditional labeling always given to them. Instead, we encourage and make them feel their positive acceptance in the place belong. According to Kupka et al. (2020), there are many disadvantaged neighborhoods in Czehia, all involved in drug abuse. The research utilized a cross-sectional study design with bivariate and multivariate analysis to determine if there would be a significant difference in the responses of socially excluded localities (SELs) and non-socially excluded areas (N-SELs). In the theme predictors of lifetime illicit drugs use and exposure, non-SEL respondents with a high level of education were most likely not to be in illicit drug use. Also, positive variables in the demographic profile were not affected by illicit drug use. The negative variables such as low-level housing and fear of street neighborhoods pushed individuals to be in illicit drug use.

Asumbrado and Canoy (2020) conducted a study using a narrative inquiry design to find out if social capital such as low-income communities would put individuals in drug use as a mode of





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living and thrive in communities. In the rehabilitation and reintegration aspect, environment has implications in achieving. The study showed that social capital played negatively and positively for the cause and treatment of dangerous drug users. However, the three studies on social capital role focused only on quantitative approach.

In Di Maggio et al. (2020), the question we can ask is "what had been the role of social capital to receive either the positive or negative cure for the drug use disease?" Also, the obvious gap of Kupka et al.'s (2020) study is on the conclusiveness of the true and actual scenario of the drug users' social capital. Moreover, Asumbrado and Canoy (2020) missed the other class of the society such as the high-income communities, because their study focused alone in low-income communities. For relapse aspect, the entire social capital was not part of the investigation which indicates the lack of evidence for entire social background that motivates the dangerous drug users to go back again on its use. The mentioned researches focused only on the cause of drug abuse rather than on its prevention. Thus, it is relevant for a study to focus on the true role of social capital, considering its entirety. In this approach for truth, the relapse cause and prevention can be depicted, which will help the drug user and their family in overcoming the disease.

The purpose of the study is to document the lived experiences of dangerous drug users in their social capital. This will accomplish the gap in the mentioned studies like including participants from different socio-economic status. Moreover, the entire social capital will be deeply connected as it processes the data needed. Lastly, part of the phenomenon is relapse, a factor in social capital. It is one main factor for it always happens to dangerous drug users. Utilizing qualitative approach to handle the stories from the participants' experiences, this study attempts to come up with a strong conclusion and an appropriate recommendation on the rehabilitation and prevention of drug abuser. The remainder of the paper is divided into methodology, result, discussion, conclusion and recommendation. All of this will be detailed in its section.

The qualitative aspect can be very helpful in formulating a program that addresses the issue on drug abuse. The study will be beneficial to the following:

Drug users in recovery. Drug users seek recovery from addiction needs all the social capital they have. The need for support to be sober and be in normal life is critically required. This study will provide awareness on the valuable role of the immediate social capital of the drug users' recovery. It will also encourage drug users who want to recover through the approach they need most since the formulation to be suggested is coming from the experiences and needs of drug users as part of the rehabilitation process.

The Philippines. This study may provide significant ways for addiction recovery to strengthen control over drug addiction in the country.

Rehabilitation center. This center in the country has standard sixmonth process that requires the government large budget for it. In this manner, findings will help minimize budget for recovery of drug users through a new approach in which users can stay only for minimal period in the center, thereby cutting food budget and other expenses.

Barangay units. Leaders from this unit can systematically change the social phenomenon through identification of the needs and gaps for rehabilitation of drug users and eventually create policy programs in fighting drug addiction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was anchored on life course theory, which states the four principles why behavior happens: historical time and place, timing in lives, linked lives, and human agency. From these principles, the researcher formulated the research questions. Research question 1, "What circumstances in participant's life are being experienced in their social capital?" embraces the first and second principle of the life course theory. The interview questions determined the cause behind the use of dangerous substances. The following interview questions were used.

- IQ 1: What had you experienced in your family that put you in deciding the use of illegal substance?
- IQ 2: What have you experienced in your family after they had known your illegal substance disorder?
- IQ 3: What had you experienced in your friends that put you in deciding the use of illegal substance?
- IQ 4: What have you experienced in your family after they had known your illegal substance disorder?
- IQ 5: What have you experienced in your friends that put you in deciding the use of illegal substance?
- IQ 6: What have you experienced in your neighborhood after they had known your illegal substance disorder?

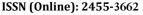
Research question 2, "What are the needs of the participants for them to accept normal life without dangerous substance?", explains the role of social capital or the link lives of the participants. The interview questions are as follows.

- IQ 7: What do you think would be the best thing for your family to do when you decide recovery from drug abuse?
- IQ 8: What do you think would be the best thing to do by your friends in deciding a recovery in drug abuse?
- IQ 9: What do you think would be the best thing to do by your neighborhood in deciding a recovery in drug abuse?
- IQ 10: How would you help yourself without family, friends, and other significant people in your life when you decide recovery from drug abuse?

Research question 3, "What approach is appropriate for the rehabilitation of participants?", deals with the principle of human agency in life course theory which can give the role of social capital in the rehabilitation of the participants. The interview question is:

IQ 11: What recommendation would you give to rehabilitate drug users?

The questions were drafted first in a matrix form and reviewed by three knowledgeable persons about the study. All their





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suggestions and recommendations were noted and considered in the final revision of the guide questions.

METHODOLOGY

This study, which utilized qualitative research design, determined the lived experiences of dangerous drug users in their social capital, the needs of drug users for them to accept the getting into normal life without dangerous substances, and the approaches that can be formulated for the rehabilitation of the drug users. Judgmental sampling technique was utilized as a set of criteria was used. Participants were 18 years of age and above, male or female, residents of the locale of the study, have used illegal drugs for at least two years, and either rehabilitated or not. Moreover, due to the sensitivity of the topic, the study employed snowball sampling. In this technique, the selection of participants was done through referral.

Based on life course theory, the pre-determined themes include causes, conformity, and change. An open-ended questionnaire was drafted based on the pre-determined themes. The personal interview was conducted among the participants who accepted to be part of the study. The transcripts of the interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions were sent back to the participants for them to check the accuracy of the content. The analysis of the data, which was done through inductive manner, revealed 11 sub-themes: Life Stresses, Means of Trading,

Temptation, Availability, Worthless, Being Misjudged, Abhorrence, Being Ignored, Aid, Self-capacity, and Motivation. The major themes include historical life event and timing in lives, linked lives, human agency, and personal control.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study explored the lived experiences of dangerous drug users in their social capital. It examined how their social capital causes drug abuse, how they conform to the situated drug dependency, and how they change their habit of using an illegal substance. The six drug users who were interviewed explained their lived experiences with their family, peers, and neighborhood to their involvement, adaptation, and habit alteration. This study consists of three major questions to resolve; hence, the answers are presented in three sections. The first section describes the participants' social-historical events they had experienced that caused them to have illegal substance use habits (Socio-historical Event and Timing), with corresponding six interview questions. The second section explores the deepest part of their life course wherein social capital knows already that they have been using an illegal substance (Linking Lives), with corresponding four interview questions. The last section addresses how the participants could change or change their habits (Human Agency and Personal Control) based on one interview question.

Discourse and Dimension

Example quote

a

Historical Event and Timing of Lives

Life Stresses, means of trading, temptation and availability of illegal drug induces drug abuse.

t

Linked Lives

Being considered as unworthy and misjudge as user of illegal drugs makes the addiction worst. Also, the way not to personally break, addicts tend to keep friends who are using illegal drugs

C

Human Agency and Personal Control

The best way to be reform again to non-user of illegal drugs, helping drug abuser through stand by always on their sides and keep telling the good thing of being change as well as having personally a strong determination to get away on addiction.

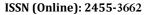
P2 "my wife goes to America to work with the kids"
P1 "We are really poor where I have to sell illegal drugs to compensate all our needs on our home"

P5 "all people known to drug user still have to respect and never show that you do not care anymore. It is better to the family members to keep reminding that to change the way he was doing with the life"

P6 "Drug addicts must determine to change their lives, as they think of changing their lives, family member should provide moral support"

The first section of the lived experiences of the participants talks about socio-historical event and timing of their lives according to life course theory principles. It determines the cause of dangerous substance use disorder. From the analysis of data, four major themes emerged, each with corresponding core narratives. Under

Life Stress, the core-narratives are broken family, intimate partner, and escaping reality. For Means of Trading, the corenarratives are livelihood and survival. Core-narratives in Temptation include offering and curiosity and for Availability, the core-narratives are nuisance area and ease of access.





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The second part is conformity, which is the principle of linked lives in the life course theory. It is comprised of three major themes, with corresponding core-narratives. The core-narratives of Worthless are inferiority and rejection. For Misjudged, the core-narratives are being misunderstood and same habit while for Ignored, the core-narratives are dubiety and tease. The last part deals with change. The themes for the principle of human agency are personal control, each with corresponding core-narratives. For Aid, the core-narratives are standing by and advise. For Self-capacity, the core-narratives are self-determination and intellect while for Motivation; the core-narratives are family worth and faith.

CONCLUSIONS

The study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of persons with illegal substance use disorder in their social capital. Specifically, it sought to understand the meaning-making of these experiences. It is believed that from the moment of pursuing the investigation with the narration of the experiences of the persons with illegal substance use disorder, certain events can be revealed which can be used in drafting a new approach for the rehabilitation of the participants. The study employed the Life Course Theory in examining the meaning-making of the persons with illegal substance use disorder in each of their events in their cause, conformity, and possible change. Based on the data analyzed and interpreted, the following conclusions were drawn.

- Drug addiction is a chronic illness characterized by drug using and utilization that is compulsive, which leads toward difficulty to control and despite harmful effects; illegal drug users often experience a variety of issues in family life. This addiction can have both immediate and indirect consequence for criminal behavior and violence that creates a lower.
- 2. Relatedness is an essential element that determines the drug users' choice to take or to quit drugs. It provides an important social capital which facilitates the recovery from drug use. Once this need is satisfied and internalized as intrinsic motivation, one will enjoy a high sense of well-being and be encouraged to engage in healthy behavioral patterns, as well as preserve positive growth and development, instead of resorting to drugs.
- 3. Drug users' family members feel supportive and motivated when they are able to talk and share drug problems with their immediate family members.
- 4. Drug users are their own managers in the process of recovery. Hence, their awareness of the underlying factors that facilitate the process of sustainable rehabilitation and recovery program can provide a good guidance in this regard.
- 5. Recovery encompasses more than remaining abstinent from drugs and that recovery is a life-long process.

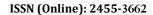
RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the following conclusions, the following recommendations are offered.

- The government agency, particularly the National Anti-Drug Agency and NGOs, must strengthen their effort in providing appropriate training related to coping strategies for drug users. This training is important in order to enhance their existing knowledge in implementing the coping strategies when dealing with drug abusers' family members.
- 2. Peer groups must be organized as drug users can likely find support, acceptance, and encouragement from peers who are former users. Former users might use their lived experiences to demonstrate how to cope with the challenges during recovery. Most significantly, significant others can try to be more supportive and understand better the needs and perspective of the drug users and give them more encouragement to help them withstand the difficulties experienced by doing drug withdrawal, rather than coercing to quit drugs or even avoiding them.
- Recovery assessment tools must be developed, preferably in collaboration with experts by experience, meaning there must be a need for innovative ways of evaluating recovery that takes into account individual differences, needs, and circumstances.
- 4. Consultation with family members to screen for psychological disorder and educating them through mass media and counseling sessions with the purpose of motivating the economic, psychological, and emotional support of the drug users must be done.
- 5. Since family and peers are human agencies that, if combined with personal control and faith, strong probability of change can be achieved, maintaining the bond and trust of the social capital of the illegal substance users must be firmly established. It is contributing to personal control and to bringing back to the victims of illegal substance the faith they have.
- 6. Community-based Drug Rehabilitation Program must be implemented in all communities and all primary health care facilities in communities must endeavor to provide community-based treatment and support for illegal drug users as an essential part of a continuum of care for them.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of the present study is on methodology. Like qualitative research, an exploratory study takes a minimal sample. It cannot be assumed that findings are applicable to a bigger population. Additionally, the samples are living only in one barangay. Therefore, the narration of the respondents is not a complete reflection of the whole population of the illegal drug users' lived experiences. This study would require further investigation and reflection on a more diverse sample of illegal drug users, including the whole city or a comparison of two cities. The social capital focused only on family, peers, and neighborhood. Since there are some other parts of the total influence for an individual to develop behavior, habit, and character, it is important to include the total composition of social capital such as family, peer, neighborhood, social media, school, and church.





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