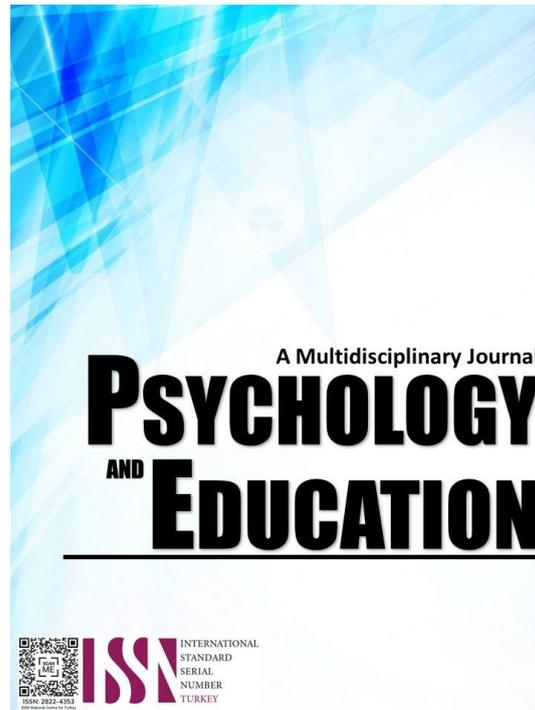


**CONTEXTUALIZING DRUG ADDICTION FROM
PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS PERSPECTIVE: AN
INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS**



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Contextualizing Drug Addiction from Psychological Needs Perspective: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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Abstract

Drug addiction is a worldwide phenomenon that specifically besets the global society a great deal such that the government waged war against it. While eradicating illicit drugs entirely is quite challenging, this study aims to look at it eruditely from the lens of psychology by investigating the associated "needs" that push people towards drug addiction. The study performed a series of focused-group discussions with 22 stakeholders of Mega Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center, one of the biggest in the country, consisting of ten Persons Who Use Drugs (PWUDs) and two of their close relatives, three reformed users, one psychologist, two psychometricians, two nurses, and two social workers. Data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Trustworthiness was secured through triangulation methods ("member checking," "peer debriefing," "audit trailing," and literature review). Results yielded 35 various themes grouped accordingly to 16 subordinate themes and finally, three superordinate themes. Overall, the data showed that drug addiction might be best viewed in terms of psychologically-oriented needs themed into three dynamics: *intrapersonal* – those factors that originated from within the PWUDs, *interpersonal* – those factors that relate to the PWUDs' interaction (or lack thereof) with others, and *milieu-related* – those factors that refer to the PWUDs' macro-level socio-economic situations that affect their efforts against, predisposes them to, and perpetuate the illicit drug use. In conclusion, the nature of drug addiction, even from the psychological viewpoint, considerably has multi-layered and -faceted underpinnings. Pertinent recommendations as to how these data can be used for further practice were elucidated.

Keywords: *substance use disorder, interpretative phenomenological analysis, drug addiction, psychological needs, persons who use drugs*

Introduction

Illicit drug use is one of the global issues that afflict nations and people. It is especially true here in the country, as reflected through the present administration's efforts to eradicate illegal drugs. Illegal drugs have been one of the biggest concerns in Philippine society. Through the expanded provisions of the Republic Act 9165, which is otherwise known as an act instituting the comprehensive dangerous drugs act of 2002, the apprehended users of illegal drugs are now subjected to a plea bargain with their respective trial courts to undergo treatment and rehabilitation programs in a residential government facility to a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 1 year as a provisional dismissal. Subsequently, aftercare services by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) of the Anti-Drug Abuse Council of their respective Local Government Unit provide aftercare services for 18 months. Failure to comply with these interim agreements will result in incarceration. Illicit drug use is hoped to be stamped out in these capacities, though it might still be arguably a long shot for a drug-free country. Nevertheless, the government's proactive action to help and hopefully provide treatment to those individuals who suffer from Substance Use Disorder

(SUD) requires academic scrutiny.

Literature Review

Per the context of the Philippines, based on the data of NEDA as of 2017, President Rodrigo Duterte's all-out war against illegal drugs netted around 800,000 surrenderers and around 2% of whom require in-patient treatment. However, only 44 public and private DOH-accredited DATRCs in the country can accommodate a total of 10,000 in-patients (Villar, 2017). As a response, an inter-agency task force led by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) was created through President's Executive No. 4 to establish more rehabilitation centers nationwide. By this executive order, the Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (DATRC), the largest drug rehabilitation center in the country, was constructed in Palayan City, Nueva Ecija.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) reported in 2016 that 11,503 of the 42,605 barangays of the entire country are affected by illicit drug use. In the National Capital Region (NC) alone, 1,587 of the 1,706 barangays are infested with drugs. However, by 2018, this has not shown any improvement based on the Dangerous Drugs Board's (DDB) data, as 24,424

of the said barangays were still infected with illicit drug use. Of these data and the agency's classification system, 62.6% were "slightly affected," 37.2% were "moderately affected," and 0.18% were "seriously affected." Further, DDB's Integrated Drug Abuse Data and Information Network report in 2016, the top seven most abused substances in the country were shabu (91.23%), marijuana (35.77%), inhalants (1.68%), benzodiazepines (1.64%), cocaine (1.16%), nalbuphine hydrochloride (0.77%), and MDMA or ecstasy (0.75%).

In 2017, a year after the "war on drugs" had been waged, 4,045 admissions were registered by the DDB. Out of this figure, 3,256 were new cases, 633 were relapsed patients or readmission cases, 156 were outpatients. In terms of its socio-demographic profiles, 31 years of age is the average with a gender ratio of 10 males is to 1 female; 54% were single, 46% were unemployed, 27% were in high school level, and 43% were from NCR, and the average duration of illicit drug use was six years. In addition, PDEA (2017) had reported that there were three transnational drug syndicates that perpetrates drug operations in the country: the Chinese, African, and Mexican-Sinaloa Drug Cartels.

Illicit drug use has already been a global issue since 1961, as identified during the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (Mendoza, Baysic, & Lalic, 2016). However, Mendoza et al. further noted that since the said convention in 1961, no internationally recognized evidence showed that punitive approaches like decriminalization decrease illicit drug use. They argued that this could be because "people who use illicit drugs and other substances are a heterogeneous population who may experience multiple and complex difficulties."

Drawing from these data, this study aimed to understand and identify the psychologically-oriented needs of the "Persons Who Use Drugs" (PWUDs) based on the diverse viewpoints of the stakeholders of a Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (DATRC). The term "PWUDs" in the context of this study pertains explicitly to the "residents" in the Mega DATRC who have SUD and were found to have violated RA 9165 and are under plea bargaining agreement with their respective trial courts. For such, they have to undergo drug treatment and rehabilitation in Mega DATRC in exchange for incarceration. Similarly, this study uses this terminology to describe "drug addicts," "drug users," and "drug dependents" interchangeably.

These assessed and identified needs are hoped to shed light on psychologically informed means and ways to better help the PWUDs regarding their drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation. Furthermore, the findings of this study yielded nationally relevant data that could both compliment and complement the treatment and rehabilitation of PWUDs in the country. Therefore, the study supplies data regarding the government's efforts to eradicate drug abuse in the country regarding treatment and rehabilitation.

Methodology

Research Design

This study is a qualitative research design that heavily relied on data obtained by the researcher from first-hand information from the respondents through interviews and focused-group discussions conducted in a drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation center setting.

Participants

Stakeholders of the Mega Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (Mega DATRC) served as the respondents of this study. Specifically: A total of ten PWUDs were interviewed about their psychological vulnerabilities for befalling victims of illicit drugs, which hinted at their relevant rehabilitation-related needs and their perceptions of the effects of the drugs on their overall psychological well-being. Unanimous of them serve the conditions of their plea-bargaining agreements with their respective trial courts with an experienced drug addiction that ranges from 2 months to 15 years. Further, selected by the program staff, all of them are already in the "transition phase" of their rehabilitation program.

A total of three volunteers in the Mega DATRC who completed the rehabilitation program of the center and are now in the recovery phase participated in the needs analysis interview. They did not have plea bargaining with any courts and had all the reasons to go back to their families and communities but instead choose to give back to the center that helped them tremendously by volunteering in it. Two of them already entered rehabilitation centers multiple times, one of which equates to 18 times a fold with over 40 years of fight against drug addiction. The other one voluntarily entered rehab to get better. Together, they provided fruitful data about their experiences of drug abuse and how to go through it, including how a more helpful program should be based on their perspectives.

The Chief Psychologist of the Mega DATRC who also serves as the Director of Research and Chief Admin Officer of the center since its institution. He has over 40 years of professional experience in nursing, teaching, and psychological counseling. The psychologist refused the audio-recording of the interview and instead instructed me to jot down notes during the interview.

Two pioneering Registered Psychometricians of the Mega DATRC who also serve as Case Managers were interviewed for this study.

Two Registered Nurses participated in the interview, both of whom were pioneering nurses in the Mega DATRC from its maiden operation in October 2016. Two Registered Social Workers were also interviewed as respondents of this study. Similar to all the professional respondents, they are pioneering employees of the Mega DATRC.

Two family members of PWUDs were interviewed about their perceived vulnerabilities and the rehabilitative needs of their relatives based on their experiences dealing with them. One of them was the wife of a drug reformist, and they have been married for twelve years already with three children but refused to have the interview audio-recorded. The otherkin were a close cousin and childhood friend of a drug reformist who had started substance use at the tender age of nine.

Instrument

An unstructured interview guide was utilized to gather data from the respondents, as mentioned above. It is an open-ended interview guide consisting of two major questions that were customized-fit for the various stakeholders of Mega DATRC designed to extract information about the psychologically relevant needs of the PWUDs.

Data Gathering Procedures

The following steps were observed and followed during the conduct of this study:

Seeking permission and defining goals, objectives, and expectations. It involved defining perspectives on how the study was conducted. It also establishes common expectations as to the roles of the researcher in the process. Included in this step is the solicitation of consent from all research participants.

Focused group discussion and interview proper.

The actual conduct of the needs assessment of the participants. The interview and FGDs were conducted inside the vicinity of Mega DATRC. Time per group and individual participants vary depending on their urgent situation and convenience.

Closure. It is the termination of the data gathering procedures to the entire research participants by providing necessary tokens as a gesture of appreciation.

Ethical Considerations. Each participant signed a consent form and a letter of participation as a standard ethical procedure. Similarly, the recording of the interviews will also be subjected to the participant's approval.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used in classifying narrative information into meaningful categories. Specifically, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to categorize and analyze the extracted themes.

Further, the *trustworthiness* of the data was established through (1) *member checking* by validating the extracted themes by the researcher to some selected random participants, (2) *audit trailing* where the actual statements of the stakeholders of Mega DATRC can be traced point-by-point in its specific transcription per page and line numbers, (3) survey of the reviewed related literature, and lastly, (2) *peer debriefing* with three experts in the field of psychology and mental health where extracted and interpreted data were subjected to further evaluation by three professional researchers-practitioners.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 below presents a total of 15 themes that were identified using the IPA method. They were referred to as the subordinate themes. The researcher further grouped them to fall under the three main themes referred to as the superordinate themes.

Table 1. Summary of themes based on the results of the needs assessment.

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Cross-referenced Literature
Intrapersonal Dynamics	Blind Conformity to Friends	Jordan, D. (2014)
	The Sense of Hope	Peterson & Seligman (2004), Magura et al., (2013)
	The Need for Self-acceptance as a Product of Realization	Niemiec (2017)
	Assertiveness	Garland & Howard, (2018)
	Low and Diminished Self-esteem	Froh & Parks, 2013
	The Need for Self and Emotion Regulation	Tang Hölzel & Posner (2015)
	Openness to Change	Watkins et al. (2019)
	Increasing the Level of Motivation	Köpetz et al. (2015)
	Improving Personal Strengths	Goud (2015), Woodard & Pury (2017)
	Patience in the Process	Dyslin, 2018
Interpersonal Dynamics	Poor sense of belongingness	Heinz and colleagues (2010)
	Family Problems and Impaired Relationships	
Milieu-Related Dynamics	Recreational and Occupational Activities	Routledge (2017), Long, et al., (2017)
	Depressed Socio-economic Opportunities	

Intrapersonal Dynamics

It consisted of 11 subordinate themes, namely: blind conformity to friends, the sense, presence, and absence of hope, the need for self-acceptance as a product of realization, assertiveness, low and diminished self-esteem, the need for self and emotion regulation, openness to change, increasing the level of motivation; improving personal strengths, patience in the process, and sadness as a driving force in illicit drug use.

Blind Conformity to Friends. All the 10 ten PWUDs admitted that they were influenced by their *barkada* (peer group) and were too weak to control themselves or avoid illicit drug use. However, they argued that it just started as part of their regular socialization, and participation in the said activity means being in the group.

"*natutukso ako eh...nadadala lang sa katuwaan. jhanggang sa napagamit ka...parang gusto ko na rin kasi lahat po kaming barkada nagkayayaan po*" (I got tempted...we're just going with the fun, until we tried to use it..until I already liked it because all of us were doing it already)

The Sense of Hope. The stakeholders recognize the value of hope in the fight against substance use, but more than the hope in themselves, hope and expectations other people have for them are two things they consider important in their overall treatment, rehabilitation, and even recovery

"*malaking tulong (na may naniniwala sa akin)...mas maganda Sir kung mas marami eh kesa iisa..the better.. marami kang mahihingan na ano (tulong)..["it helps to a lot (that someone if believing in me)... it is better to have more than just one...you have more people to seek (help) from"]*."

Most importantly, even though some hopes were lost before, they still hope from the love of their families to them

"*lahat naman sir ng nagmamahal sa'min eh... kahit nandito ako, hindi naman nila ako pinapabayaang, tuloy ang suporta nila sakin 'pag sinabi kong pahingi ako ng ganun..tsaka hinihintay talaga nila (pamilya) ko paglabas ko. [all of those who loves us.. even though I am here, they never fail to take care of me. their support is continuous...they (family members) are really waiting for my release]*"

Six months of treatment and rehabilitation and 18 months more of recovery is very challenging. Nevertheless, the hope that they can change can help them go through the battle.

"*...patotoong buhay (ako) na kayang mag-bago, walang imposible na mag-bago dapat lang eh embrace mo yung changes and embrace mo na nagkamali ka, embrace mo na may pag-asa pa ahh embrace mo si Lord God papasukin mo ulit sa buhay mo kasi Siya lang naman yung ano natin eh (REFRMD.10:319-322) [(I'm) a living testimony that change is possible, nothing is impossible, juts embrace the changes and embrace that you changed, embrace that there is hope, embrace Lord God and let Him enter your life because he is our...]"*

The need for self-acceptance as a product of

realization. The PWUDs considered that self-acceptance of the wrong they did in their lives would facilitate recovery from drug abuse. It is the initial step towards treatment, rehabilitation, recovery, and healing,

“...kumbaga natanggap mo na sa sarili mo na dapat mo pala na mabago yung dati mong ginagawa [pagdu-droga] (REF2.13:361-361)... [“...you need to accept to yourself that you need to change what you were doing [illicit drug use] Yun po yung iaapply ko sa pag-labas ah tanggapin ang pagkakamali at baguhin ang aking sarili (REF3.3.94-95) [... that’s what I will apply when I get out of here and to accept that I have done wrong and the need to change myself]”.

Assertiveness. Learning to say no is an essential skill that PWUDs recognize as helpful in their all-out battle against the use of illegal drugs. This assertive skill applies especially to their peers who influenced them to use, or maintain the usage of, illicit drugs:

“Oo kailangan, talagang baguhin yun [pakikipag-barkada] sir kasi nung lumabas ako, sinundo ako ng kapatid ko, so meron pang pumupunta sakín na sa totoo eh umuudyok pa, so dun ako nag-decide..nag-disisyon na kailangan kong bumalik dito para mag-volunteer, para maiwasan ko tuloy-tuloy yung mga ganun na bagay (REFRMD.5:138-142) [Yes, it is needed to change that [blind conformity with peers] because when I got out, my brother fetch me, someone came to me and provoke me to use again, that’s when I decided to go back here to volunteer, so I can avoid that again]”.

Low and diminished self-esteem. The stakeholders believe that drug addiction changes the way PWUDs view themselves. They hate themselves and found them generally evil.

“...hindi na masaya ang loob ko... (REF1.9:235) [my self is no longer happy...]”.

“naging masama na ang tingin ko sa sarili... naging masama yung isip ko sa sarili ko na...tapos hindi ko napapansin yung mga anak ko (REF1.7:215-216) [“I have seen myself as bad already... my thoughts about myself have become bad too...then I never notice my children anymore]”

“nawalan ng respeto sa sarili (REF2:16:444) [I lost self-respect]”.

The need for self and emotion regulation. The PWUDs recognized that proper regulation of their desires and cravings for drugs is crucial in their treatment and rehabilitation “kahit na mayaya ako sa mga barkada ko talagang mapanindigan ko sa kanilang ayoko na n’yang bisyong ‘yan (REF1.1:52-53)” [even though I am happy with my peers, I need to be firm that I don’t want to use anymore]. Another one mentioned proper decision making “yung mga desisyon ko na pabigla-bigla kailangan ko rin siguro munang pag-isipan (REF1.2:49-50) [I need to think first of my decisions that are impulsive]”.

According to the reformed drug users, one specific factor that aggravated their addiction was their inability to control their cravings for drugs. While drug addiction is considered a brain disease, the reformed substance users believed that one still can decide over its usage only that self-control over triggers to said illicit drug use is an essential skill that needs to be learned and developed.

“May nagsabi sa ‘kin pala balik tayo sa drugs kung yes nga ako ng yes eh di oo gamit tayo.... yun yung pinag-aaralan ko yung.. magsalita ng “hindi” sa kapwa mo, kahit minsan kaya mo eh, hindi na muna.. hindi na muna kasi hindi rin nakatulong sakín eh kumbaga ipifilter mo rin yung mga hindi mo dapat gawin... (REFRMD.19:610-614) [someone told me to go back to illicit drug use and if I just said yes then...that’s what I am thinking about – how to say “no” to them and never to use again because you have to filter out too the things you should never do again]”.

Part of controlling oneself over cravings for drugs is the capacity to control one’s emotions, especially the bad ones like sadness.

... nabroken-hearted ako parang ganun ang nangyari tapos ehh.. ayun yung that time na ... parang feeling ko walang maitulong yung pamilya ko sakín kumbaga nag-hanap ako ng ano someone to lean on parang.. ayoko na kasing makinig sa kanila at ayoko na ring maniwala, kasi masyadong sarado na yung utak ko nung mga panahon na yun kase, feeling ko kasi that time ehh, “anong nagawa ko bat kailangan mangyari sa buhay ko ‘tong ganito?”, and then yun nag-rely ako sa drugs dahil nga natikman ko na siya eh... (REFRMD.6:173-179) [I got broken hearted in the past, that’s the time I felt like my family is unable to help me and I looked for sometime to lean on. I don’t

want to listen nor to believe in them anymore. What did I do to deserve this in my life? Then, I relied on using drugs because I have tasted it...]"

Further, according to psychometricians, regulating oneself against further substance use is another vital skill that must be developed among PWUDs. As they explained:

... dito sa center especially sa labas walang ibang tutulong sa mga sarili nila kundi ang sarili din nila, so kami ahm.. mga staff dito, tayo including you Sir we are just a guide, guiding them towards the pa'no sila mag-babago (RPM.10:314-317) [Here in the center especially outside, no one will help you but yourself, so we are just a guide, guiding them towards how they would change]"

They emphasized that after the PWUDs' program inside the center, they will be exposed to the outside world and once again be confronted with stimuli that could trigger them back to substance use. Having the ability to control oneself over such cravings is a very responsive and helpful skill for PWUDs. In addition, the PWUDs were perceived by their relatives as lacking sufficient self-control against illicit drug use despite their efforts to help them stop it. Even after being rehabilitated, they still revert to illicit drug use with just a simple provocation by their peers who also use illicit drugs. One of the relatives pointed out "kasi

meron din sir na iba na matagal na huminto pero yung kabarkada inalok s'ya... tumuloy na naman...natukso na naman (REL.11:295-296,298,301)[there are others who already stopped a long time ago but because of their peers, they continued... they got tempted again]"

They have observed that this still happens even though they have provided love for them. One of the relatives asserted that perhaps, it is the rehabilitation process that was lacking at first, but after multiple rehabilitation attempts, they recognized that it is the lack of self-control.

Openness to change. This theme refers to one's attitude of being receptive to new experiences that could open up doors to healing over substance use. They have to start with a confession to make unless done the program is hard to go through. As they explained, becoming open to changes while trying to recover from substance use is a helpful attitude that could make one's treatment and rehabilitation more bearable than those with close minds. Likewise, they see this as part of the initial steps in a successful recovery.

"Oo, kinakailangan talaga yon (being open) tsaka napaka-hirap yung kasi dito binabasag yung pagkita mo hangga't di ka nag-sasabi ng totoo hindi nila mauunawaan yung sarili mo ...layunin nga dito hangga't di kami-- sila nagtatapat ng sarili...tumatakbo lang sila sa katotohanan, kinakailangan lagi nasa isip nila mahal nila yung programa (REFRMD.22:713-717) [yes, that is needed (being open) because it is very difficult here because your self is being shattered until you tell the truth so they can better understand you... the goal here is that not until we become honest and real to ourselves –you are just running from the truth, you should put in your mind that you love the program]"

Increasing the level of motivation. As a direct and proactive mechanism to improve the PWUDs' battle against substance use, an increased meaning and higher purpose in life are highly important. *Inisip nila parang wala nang pag-asa kasi... paulit-ulit nalang nag-rerehab. I-increase talaga yung motivation*

...marami talagang nag-re-relapse (REF.1:27-30,32-33) [they think that hope is lost... they go through rehab over and over again. Need to increase motivation... they are plenty who relapse]"

Hence, helping the PWUDs develop a more profound and higher purpose during their treatment and rehabilitation program is a viable option for program activities based on the professional judgment of their case managers.

Improving Personal Strengths. Helping the PWUDs develop who they are, what their strengths are will help them recover.:

"Tatanungin mo sila bakit ka na-hook dun? kasi mahina yung sarili nila. Kapag sumagot sasabihin 'hindi ko naman talaga alam'... una hindi ko alam na ganun ang epekto, pangalawa, hindi ko alam na ang pinapasa ko ay ganun pala, pangatlo, hindi ko alam na ganto pala ang kalalabasan, nung time na ganun na ako Sir, hindi a ako maka-wala (replying to his answer as though it's the PWUDs who are answering) So kung titingnan ko yun, kung meron lang sapat na information I mean merong like nung ginagawa namin talaga na advocacy, kung merong sapat na information lang na nanggagaling male-lesser siguro, hindi naman mawawala lahat eh, mas talagang kokonti yung mga gagamit (RPM.12:368-369,371-376,378) [You will ask them

why they got hook? Because their self is weak. When they answer 'I really do not know...first, I didn't know that it has that effect, secondly, I didn't know that it was what I am getting myself into, thirdly, I didn't know it will result to something like this. I cannot get out anymore'. In my opinion, if there are only enough information advocacy for them, there could be less of them –they cannot be completely eradicated but at least they will be lessened]”.

Hence, strategies and tools that can help PWUDs understand themselves and their battle against the SUD are beneficial.

Patience in the process. Perhaps due to the lack of understanding and appreciation of the program objectives, PWUDs' impatience, and low frustration tolerance, relapse prevention is part of the program. Although some have already braved long enough in the program, knowing that they will be provisionally released, they are back to their old ways; they are again observed to be impatient and even discourteous. Just because they unwittingly learned that they would complete the program very soon.

Kapag nalaman nila yan at alam nila na nasa listahan na sila ng mag-sesend off, yan nga yung parang lumalaki ang ulo ganyan na.. kampante na sila--kampante na sila na kasi lalabas na sila... na para bang 'gagawin na namin yung gusto namin.. oo, wala na kayong magagawa kasi.. kasi naghihintay nalang kami ng ano eh ng sagot sa korte eh (RN.10:278-282,284,286,288) [When they learned that they are already in the send-off list, they head tends to turn big. They become complacent because they are already going out... like they will do anything they like already because they are already waiting for their release they would tell the court]”.

Dealing with these tendencies is what the nurses deemed an area in need of more psychological intervention.

Sadness as a Driving Force in Illicit Drug Use. A deep sense of sadness among PWUDs is another factor that their relatives observed. However, substance use enabled them to escape the sadness they felt even though they might deny that they indeed felt sad:

Sila kasi sir pag-ganito, 'pag malungkot inom, 'pag malungkot drugs ganun sila sir eh yung thinking nila parang naadapt din nila sa environment nila... (REL.13:353-354) kasi yung barkada ko malungkot

kami mag-iinum kami pare-parehas kami ng nararanasan kung di man pare-parehas kahit papano magkakatulad, magkaka-ugnay parang ganun sir (REL.16:423-425) [Their way is that when they're sad, they'd drink, when sad they'd use drugs. They adapted their way of thinking in their environment...when me and my pal are sad, we drink together, we have the same experiences, we are all related in our circumstances]”.

Efficiently dealing with their sadness can help PWUDs become more robust in their fight against substance use. It could mean increasing more positive feelings than delving into the negative ones.

Superordinate Theme: Interpersonal Dynamics

It consisted of those themes or overarching interpersonal factors – arising from PWUDs' interaction (or lack thereof) with others. In addition, it consisted of two subordinate themes: poor sense of belongingness, and family problems and impaired relationships.

Poor Sense of Belongingness. Another factor that the PWUDs' relatives observed about their substance use is their poor sense of belongingness. For example, one of the PWUDs' relatives explained that, as a person, his cousin has difficulty dealing with others, let alone establishing a lasting and meaningful relationship, but through substance use, his cousin seemed to feel more belonged to something. In this light, this sense of belongingness is not healthy:

Ahh sa tingin ko sir eh ano... parang yung belongingness din sir nila eh... (REL.15:415-416) kasi dun sila sir na-ano eh ng... belongingness kumbaga... yung kasama, yung parehas kayo ng pinagdadaanan siguro yun yung... gusto lang din nilang ma-attain sir (REL.16:418,420-421) [In my opinion, it's their belongingness too...they want to have companions with the same experiences, they wanna attain it]”.

Hence, improving the PWUDs' sense of genuine belongingness can help them improve themselves and become more resistant to further and future substance use.

Family Problems and Impaired Relationships. Problems that beset the family, like having a dysfunctional one, estranged family relationships, parental neglect, contribute to SUD development, but if they remain impaired after the PWUDs are provisionally dismissed, relapse may

occur. These, again, may lead them to engage in illicit drug use once more, defeating their plea bargaining agreement. For the social workers, the most critical determinant of the drug reformist's drug abuse problem is their ingrained family issues:

May problema sila within sa bahay nila, tapos ginagawa- ang gagawin nilang... resort nila para ano, barkada, so pero dun talaga s'ya sa family nanggagaling eh yung problema... nasa family, then yung 'di s'ya maka-cope dun (RSW.10:302-303,305-306,308) [they have problems within their homes, and they resorted to their peers but the cause of the problem is really within their families]".

To them, drug reformist's drug abuse can almost always be traced back to their futile attempt to run away from their problems within their family systems. Thus, they argued that helping them deal with their family issues is an essential technique in helping them get clean of drugs.

Further, one specific psychosocial factor that the psychologist noticed predisposed people to substance use was early parental neglect. As he explained, lack of parental guidance and supervision to children veered them away from healthy paths and eventually led to substance use, partly due to poverty. Thus, early exposure to the impoverished community with easy access to drugs exacerbated by parental neglect may inadvertently lead to substance use. Helping parents and communities with proper parenting thus is deemed to be a viable approach in lowering substance use across the country.

Similarly, both of the relatives agreed that the PWUDs' family disposition predisposed them to use the illegal drug as a form of escape and as a learned response to their overall family situation. As the cousin mentioned, *"siguro dahil sir nagkulang siguro sa gabay o masyadong maluwa yung parents...may problema sir sa parental guidance (REL.2:30-31,34) [probably because they lacked guidance of their parents were too lenient... they a problem in parental guidance]"*. From the younger years of the PWUDs, they have been misguided by their parents. Some were still young and not ready to assume responsibilities, and eventually got separated from their parents. These caused a higher degree of parental neglect along with several other family problems:

...nito lang sir nito nung nag-broke, nag-hiwalay yung pamilya nila neto lang lumala nung... kasi may

nangyaring issue sa kapatid n'yang babae, medyo maselan sir kasi between sa tatay n'ya... (REL.2:44-45,47-48) [just happened recently when his family broke, it worsened...there was a sensitive issue between his sister and their father]".

Hence, dealing with the family systems could serve as a buffer or even a preventive measure against substance use in their communities. Furthermore, difficulty interacting with others and maintaining a harmonious relationship with loved ones (i.e., family members, friends, and neighborhood) is one specific problem that led the PWUDs to use drugs. One of them explained *"tulad ng nasira kong mga pamilya... nagkahiwalay kami ng mga-- ng asawa't mga anak ko (REF1.3:62) [just like my broken family... we got separated from each other, me my wife and my children]"*. This impaired relationship with the people around them, coupled with their inability to say no to their substance user peers, made them more prone to using illicit drugs because it eases their need for good interpersonal relationships, especially during their pot session, even though they realized that these were only superficial. No one cared for them when they got incarcerated due to substance use *"yung mga kaibigan sa una lang sila, nand'ya-d'yan lang sila 'pag nand'yan yung bisyo pero sa oras na nandito ka sa bahay mabago ka sa kulungan, wala sila (REF2.4:109-111) [friends are just in the beginning...they are just around but when your home or incarcerated, they're gone]"*. Most importantly, they see that harnessing intra-familial relationships will be a very helpful buffer against possible substance use: *"unang-una po aayusin ko po yung nasira kong relasyon tungkol dun sa aking pamilya. Sa magulang ko at sa mga anak ko (REF2.1:13-14) [first and foremost I will fix my broken relationship with my family. With my parents and children]"*. Another one mentioned *"ayusin ang relasyon sa pamilya at humanap ng mabuting kaibigan (REF2.1:22) [fix the relationship with the family and find good friends]"*.

Lastly, according to the reformed drug users, due to their substance use, it was an inevitable effect, among many others, to break or even lose some good relationships with many people around them. Therefore, their treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery are some of their concrete steps towards repairing these relationships and rebuilding bridges towards their people:

"Dito (Mega DATRC) narealise ko lahat kung... kung

papano pagpahalagahan yung ginagawa ng pamilya, dito naisip ko na yung nararamdaman ko pala na sakit eh hindi ko inisip kung ano yung nararamdaman nung mga pamilya ko, nung ako sinisira ko yung buhay ko (REFRMD.8:247-250) [Here (at Mega DATRC) I realized the value of my family, here I realized that I have never considered how they feel about what I have been doing...that I am throwing a way my life]”.

Because of program activities, they see the importance of developing skills to repair their old relationships and build new ones as an essential tool in their overall treatment and rehabilitation.

Superordinate Theme: Milieu-Related Dynamics

It consisted of those themes or overarching factors that are context-specific to the pressing situations of the PWUDs. In addition, it consisted of 2 subordinate themes, namely: recreational and occupational activities, and depressed socio-economic opportunities.

Recreational and Occupational Activities.

According to the center’s psychologist, throughout the PWUDs’ 6-month treatment and rehabilitation program, they might experience boredom during their free moments without program activities. This free time stresses them more than it should give them rest because their minds wondered over other things other than their recovery. It is where recreational and even occupational activities are proven helpful. Therefore, the psychologist emphasized a holistic approach to the PWUDs’ intervention program, including sports and livelihood education activities.

According to the nurses, introducing regular recreational activities among the PWUDs was a proactive way of dealing with their boredom. However, as they observed, when the PWUDs become bored out of their usual activities, they showed drug withdrawal symptoms. In addition, the nurses recognized the significant value of the psychological impact of recreational activities on them. As they explained:

“Ngayon kasi walang nag-aasikaso, yung mga nakaraang buwan walang nag-aasikaso n’yan (referring to recreational activities), so napansin namin siguro dahil sa boredom dun tumataas yung incidents na yun nga ulit nagiging negatibo yung mga residente, oo yun tapos na-assess namin na.. at yun nga nagkaron kami ah.. meron kaming bagong hired na empleyado naibabalik namin paunti-unti yung mga ganong activities, ah.. bumabalik na naman yung

buhay sa community (RN.14:382-387) [Right now no one is taking care of it for the past months (referring to recreational activities), so we noticed that maybe due to boredom, negative cases rise. We also observed that when we were able to hire someone who will take care of recreational activities, the life in the community came back]”.

Depressed Socio-economic Opportunities. The psychologist reckoned that this is the single most potent risk factor for any individual to become addicted to drugs. Based on his experiences dealing with various substance users, no pusher is exclusively pusher only. It is inadvertently due to poverty; an initial pusher could eventually become a user to get to know his or her products more and to escape from hunger at any given moment temporarily. To him, impoverished communities are inflicted with illicit drugs because they see easy money from them.

Due to poverty, the social workers explicated that people from economically depressed areas cling to the illegal drug trade, which almost always includes substance use. They have explained, *“andun naman lagi yung poverty... kadalasan sa mga depressed eh diba po...mga squatters... and'yan yung mga nag-dadrugs... kumbaga yung pinaka-root [ay poverty] nagkaka-sanga-sanga lang na iba-iba (RSW.12:365/13:369-371,373) [poverty is always there...majority of the time for those in depressed areas like the squatters...drugs are rampant... poverty is the root cause then it branches to other problems]”.* Furthermore, substance use also seems to aid the PWUDs during their trying times by providing temporary relief from hunger and a method of escape from reality; both situations reinforcing substance use. Hence, alleviating poverty situations may then mean curbing substance use at the community level.

As a factor, growing in an environment that tolerates misdeeds and justifies wrongdoings as a means of everyday survival contributed significantly to the reformists’ substance use, based on the accounts of the relatives of the PWUDs. It led to abuse and eventually addiction, as explained by one of their closest relatives. Further, he explained, *“yung problema nga, yun sir yung problema yung main na reason yung kahirapan... kasi nun sir hindi naman s’ya nagtutalak sir eh, user lang s’ya eh (REL.14:365-366,368) [the main problem is poverty...majority are not users, but rather pushers]”.* Changing then the environment they belong to can help the PWUDs win their fight against substance use.

The psychologist believed that unless the environment of the PWUDs has been changed, complete and total recovery from substance use will never be successful. Therefore, he coined the term "milieu therapy" to emphasize his point and the importance of changing the environment of PWUDs. To him, the main point of this change is to (1) provide them with a new surrounding that can serve as a source of new experiences for them where they can start anew and (2) be freed of influences that made them addicted to drugs in the very first place.

Rather than a mere cause, the Social Workers considered that lack of proper education might exacerbate substance use, especially among people in impoverished areas "*kasi meron din dahil di ka nakapag-tapos... (RSW.11:325) kakapit ka sa kung saan gusto mong kumapit may mai-provide ka lang sa family mo (RSW.10:329-330) [there were those who were not able to study... that is why you will do whatever it takes just to provide for your family]*". Hence, educating the PWUDs may help them deal better with the effects of drug abuse especially during their treatment, rehabilitation, and recovery. Additionally, they see that education may serve as a buffer against further substance use: "*kasi yung judgement nila sa mga bagay (ay importante) ...kahit po yung pag-intindi lang sa simpleng tanong... mababaw parang kailangan mo pa talagang I-elaborate (RWS.13:381,383-385) [their judgment to things (are important) even in simplest of questions... too shallow, one needs to elaborate further]*". For this reason, the center, through its efforts, offers training courses and TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Agency) initiated projects and other outsourced programs for PWUDs so they can be taught skills that they can use when they have completed their treatment and rehabilitation.

Further, the relatives of the PWUDs agreed that having very little knowledge and understanding about drugs and their effects makes a significant factor in the PWUDs' vulnerability to substance use. This lack of proper education makes the PWUDs resistant to explanation against their substance use and would even instead resort to all kinds of fallacious reasons just to justify their behaviors. Therefore, a psychoeducational campaign about substance use can be a proactive weapon against it, as apparent to this account:

"Suggestion din naming pamilya, ituloy n'ya pag-aaral n'ya sana para yung... yun may pagka-abalahan tapos yung syempre kung nag-aaral ka natututo ka sir

na mas alam mo yung tama sir parang ganun... Nae-expose sa school parang yung environment ng school, iba kung- iba kumpara dun sa.. sa street... parang nae-expose s'ya sa mas magandang environment mas ma-adapt n'ya yung ibang environment na ganun sir (REL.10:263-264,266,270-271,273-274,276-277) [We as family suggested to let him continue his studies so that he will be busy about something and learn more about what is right...the school environment is different and that's what we want him to adapt]".

Overall, substance use among PWUDs circles around their failed attempt to self-regulate, a sense of being overwhelmed by personal troubles, and to some degree by social pressure. Similarly, their emotional states contribute to their vulnerability towards substance use, and their behavioral reactions led to an increased usage due to its euphoriant solid effects. However, some PWUDs still believed that it was their personal decision to use and maintain substance use because it is their 'choice' that served as the core process governing their overall behavior.

Variety of factors about their experience of illicit drug used surfaced. These factors can be categorized into three overarching factors: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental themes (see table 1). Hence, it can be surmised that even though these factors can be comprehended from a biophysiological viewpoint, in a larger and more complete perspective, illicit drug use is best understood from the dynamics explained by this study. Therefore, treatment and rehabilitation must also center on these factors.

Based on the overall qualitative data gathered from various Mega DATRC, 15 *subordinate themes* and three *superordinate themes* were extracted, as shown in Table 1. The subordinate themes were the themed data from the raw answers of the respondents, and the superordinate themes were the major clustered themes, namely: intrapersonal dynamics, interpersonal dynamics, and milieu. *Intrapersonal dynamics* refer to those factors that originated from within the PWUDs' psychological system. In this study, these are the factors extracted from the psychologically-driven needs of the PWUDs themselves. On the other hand, *interpersonal dynamics* refer to those factors related to the PWUDs' interaction (or lack thereof) with others around them. Finally, the *milieu-related dynamics* are those factors that refer to the PWUDs' socio-economic environment; this refers to the social and economic situation that beset the PWUDs' efforts to combat (or that predisposes them to) illicit drug use.

The effects of substance use can be categorized into affective, behavioral, and cognitive domains. The identified emotional effects of illicit drug use observed in this study agreed with the established literature. These include irritability, short and hot temper that drove them beyond controlling more productive emotions (Szalavitz, 2016), and relief to highly emotional stresses (Rosenfeld, 2017). Behavioral effects of substance use that the PWUDs reported were consistent with those identified in the DSM 5 (2013), which included, but were not limited to, increased alertness and weakened body after the drug wears off restlessness, and getting into trouble due to uncontrolled behavior. Finally, cognitive effects of substance use as experienced by the respondents were impaired overall executive function (Madoz, & Ochoa, 2012), which included memory and decision making (Bausela, 2018), skills, beliefs, and attitudes (Vilchez, 2018).

Lastly, the themes that were extracted from the respondents, which serve as the benchmark for a psychological intervention program, yielded data that may be emboldened by positive psychological concepts which have been found out to be helpful among addicts, though only to a limited degree since the application of positive psychology in drug treatment and rehabilitation is still relatively scarce. It included promoting happiness (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2015), increasing motivated behaviors in general (Köpetz, Lejuez, Wiers, and Kruglanski, 2015), harnessing curiosity (Loewenstein, 2014), spirituality (Heinz et al., 2010), hope (Magura et al., 2013), and self-regulation (1999).

Conclusion

In light of the significant meanings and implications of the qualitative data gathered, the study herein conclusively purports the following:

1. Drug addiction can be best viewed in this study's context through various factors that can be construed as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and milieu-related. It means that at least on a psychological level, the nature of drug addiction has multi-layered and faceted underpinnings: those that arise from within the individual's dynamics, their overall psychosocial functioning, and the circumstances in their surroundings.
2. Drug addiction cannot be simply attributed as a "personal weakness" of PWUDs but rather a perseverant attempt toward satisfaction of psychologically relevant needs, albeit ineffectively.

Hence, the gratification of these needs can be considered as a possible avenue in dealing with drug control and prevention.

3. These identified psychological needs of the PWUDs can be taken positively and be used to harness their related virtues and character strengths towards achieving psychological good life.
4. Looking at the psychologically relevant needs of PWUDs provides a wider and deeper understanding of the factors that are germane in their experiences of illicit drug use and thus might make them susceptible to drug addiction.

Drawing from the results of the study and its implications, the following recommendations are strongly endorsed:

1. Use these qualitative data as benchmarks to create a comprehensive psychological intervention program for PWUDs.
2. Devise tools that can effectively measure the progress of PWUDs in the context of drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation in terms of the satisfaction of these psychologically relevant needs.
3. A pilot study must be conducted for the designed program that can be created from these needs to provide a better assessment of its utility and implementation.
4. Validate the said developed program for usefulness and effectiveness.

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