



## COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS' TAKE ON THE PHILIPPINE DRUG WAR: INPUTS ON INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

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### ABSTRACT

*In every country, substances are well-known game-changers of any person. Like caffeine, nicotine, or even alcohol, some notables are highly used and are known to be legally available for consumption. However, it is not an unknown reality that illegal substances are available in the streets of any country, even in the Philippines. They are kept from public use and are mostly abused, while some become dependent on them. This observed fact led the government in its war against drugs and other programs that aim to eradicate illegal drugs and offer a cure and developmental program for those who are abused and dependent on them. With the different existing platforms, the stakeholder's knowledge, attitude on the various effects of the substances, such as their abuse and dependence, and governing policies, should be checked. To understand the said situations, the study used an embedded design and acquired qualitative data through an open-ended semi-structured interview with Barangay Officials, students, and teachers as its participants. Similarly, the quantitative data was gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire as exploratory factor analysis. Through joint display analysis, the study was able to put an understanding that the phenomena can be summed up into CARE: Compliance to Government-given responsibilities, acknowledging that success requires support, Resolute and unyielding in helping the dependent and the abused, and Engagement of the whole family and the Community.*

*Keywords: Substance Abuse, Policies, Drug War, Community Intervention Program*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest assets of Filipinos is its values and historical heritage of being one of the most hard-working individuals globally. As they tire themselves working through the hardships and personal difficulties, they never cease to smile, regardless of their ethnicity, race, or gender orientation (Belleza, 2018). Generally, workers in the Philippines have the culture that working overtime means more productivity. In addition, this has been one of the most significant reputations and known stellar work ethics of the Filipino diaspora. However, one of the huge drawbacks of

the Filipino work ethic is the tendency to wear themselves out. In this regard, Filipinos have shunted themselves to becoming heavy coffee drinkers, increasing dopamine production through caffeine, keeping them active in their daily work. Similarly, a twenty-eight percent (28%) increase in tobacco usage was surveyed by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), shown in the results of the 2009 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS). Compared to the 2009 data, GATS noted a dramatic increase of 33% in usage in 2015. Though one of the observations of GATS was a



decrease in tobacco advertisements, Filipinos were found to be high-level users of tobacco (GATS, 2015; WHO, 2015).

Another substance that Filipinos were discerned to be using is treated to be one of the worse substances that a man can highly be dependent on, illegal drugs. Demographically, the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) was able to account for eighty-nine percent (89.02%) males, ten percent (0.52%) of LGBT admission in drug treatment facilities (DDB, 2019). Also, noting the most commonly abused drugs, precisely, Methamphetamine Hydrochloride, cannabis, and contact cement, to name a few.

As Filipinos continue to use the substances mentioned above, their continuous use is highly likely to become abused without knowing it. With the person's likelihood of becoming substance-dependent, its effects on the usual quantity of use decrease. Hence, increasing the amount to provide the same feeling is needed, making the person abuse the substance and somehow become dependent on it.

Substance use disorders (SUDs) have the nature of being both a medical and a social issue contributing to a person's depressive and anxious mild to severe conditions, contributing to the dysfunctionality of both the person and his family (Salisbury-Afshar, 2017). One reason these substances are highly addictive is explained by Pickard, Ahmed, and Foddy (2015) in their theories of addictive behavior. The ideas are divided into two principal reasons: addictive behavior is considered a moral failure wherein the person using the substance is believed to have ethically failed and have become drug dependent. On the other hand, the second model views addiction as a neurobiological disability, wherein the user has no complete control or choice in their excessive usage of the substance. The overuse and dependency result in various short- and long-term disorders and behavioral problems, specifically paranoia, aggressiveness, hallucinations, addiction, impaired judgment, impulsiveness, and loss of self-control.

To swiftly find out the possible leader of an individual's addiction, different stages of drug use according to its nature and intake frequency specifies that many users, especially young

people, are experimenting and are taken over by their curiosity. They are seeking the sheer high of what effects they will experience. Most of them are pressured by their friends to try it out merely for recreational use, which in the long term becomes a longing to satisfy their cravings.

Notwithstanding, the Philippines, ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in Asia's illegal drug source in 2011, has gained its notoriety in the unlawful origin of drugs, as mentioned by the then Vice-President Jejomar Binay (Clapano, 2011). Also, different drug couriers were widely recorded in that year, making the country one of the point sources of illegal drugs in Asia. With this at hand, various initiatives were made by the government to help in the awareness of substance use. Some of the listed government projects and initiatives were led by the Philippines Drug Enforcement Agency or PDEA. Specifically, PDEA has tapped the youth in its projects having anti-drug advocacy programs that focus on Extensive Anti-Drug Preventive Education (DDB, 2019). Apart from the youth program, PDEA also initiated another project known as SK STEP -UP; consisting of three phases: Youth Camp, Trainer's Training for the Youth Leaders, and Ground Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation; STEP-UP aims to treat the root cause of substance use from the youth's perspective (DDB, 2019).

Though different programs are being initiated and various individuals are being empowered to lessen the abuse of substances somehow; the United Nations Organizations on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC, 2014) suggested that treatments like that of the community-based treatment programs follow vital principles such as minimal disruption of support, care inclusivity, evidence-based interventions, service providers tolerance and appropriateness of mechanism based on the culture. Therefore, these fundamental principles will recognize any difficulty in substance use and involve the patient's family and community to ensure long-term results.

In different authored journals, it was noted that community-based drug rehabilitation programs in the Philippines are far from successful. There is a lack of psychiatrists and psychologists for every 100,000 Filipinos, more so in urban areas. Furthermore, the standing stigma for the different drug users causes a great deal of inability



to look for a cure (Hechanova & Waelde, 2017; Tuliao et al., 2016). Additionally, the lack of support and knowledge of the community hinders the recovery of the individuals. As such different support system is a critical factor for the faster healing of the users, which is composed of four major facilities: (a) the knowledge of the choices and capability to decide on healthy choices and upkeep their physical and emotional well-being; (b) a family that gives them a safer place to live; (c) a purpose that allows them to cultivate independence in terms of income and resources in participating in the society; and lastly (d) the community involvement, wherein relationships and social linkages help in the individual's complete recuperation (SAMHSA, 2019).

As relatively new, Community-Based Drug Rehabilitation (CBDR) is treated as one of the best treatments that give the users a fighting chance to correct their lives. However, due to the continuous stigma that drug addicts are a danger to the Community, CBDR creates an assumption that it may not work because of the community's lack of knowledge and misguided attitude on substance abuse and dependency. Since there is a missing ingredient in the complete recuperation of the said individuals, their families play a huge role in creating a more profound and healthier relationship and communication that focus on openness and flexibility to problems and not with merely maintaining the goodwill of the family (Abulon, Pandan, 2017).

Moreover, Mangaoil (2020) expressed that contributing factors for their recovery involve self-motivation, shifting to a higher power, detachment, family support, support groups, and assistance. Hence, a change in attitude and increase in the community's knowledge about substance abuse and dependency should focus on these contributing factors.

With the different literature presenting the possible problems that the country faces, evidence shows that the other communities lack knowledge on substance use, abuse, and dependence. Similarly, different laws and policies are widely unknown to the community. Top it off with the stigma of the community that drug addicts are a danger to everyone; programs focused on recovery will face a tough road ahead. Hence, this

study sought to investigate the knowledge and attitude of the community towards substance abuse, dependency, and the different policies. Once explored, the gathered data may be used as a basis in creating intervention programs.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Substance use and dependency have been one of the concerns of the Philippines, especially in treating those who are already considered as abused. In this light, a community-based approach is vital in the recovery of each individual. Though there are promising programs conducted by both the government and non-government sectors, the following study objectives are integral to promoting substantial and practical considerations for the recovery of the users and dependents. It sought to ascertain the (1) knowledge of the respondents on substance use, disorder, and its policies; (2) attitude of the stakeholders towards the problem on drug abuse; and (3) level of awareness and extent of implementation of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 on local ordinances addressing the problem on drug abuse.

## METHODOLOGY

Looking into the three studies mentioned earlier, data from qualitative and quantitative approaches are crucial to understanding the phenomenon thoroughly. A mixed method approach, specifically the second model proposed by Steckler and his colleagues in 1992, is utilized. In this model, most of the study is composed of quantitative data; and the qualitative results are used to assist in interpreting and analyzing the quantitative findings (Steckler et al., 1992). Furthermore, as synonymous with the embedded design, it provides an opportunity to explore the phenomenon further using additional data gathering techniques (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

As guided by the different models and theories, namely: Attachment Theory as used by Lander, Howsare, and Byrne (2013) in their study describes the idea as proposed by John Bowlby



(1988) as a template wherein an individual creates a deep relationship with his family throughout his life. Consequently, the lack of suitable familial attachment makes the individual more vulnerable to different stress and more susceptible to anxiety, trauma, depression, and other mental illnesses. Another theory that contributes to the guidance in the analysis of the findings, the Multisystematic Family Systems Therapy (MST) model, explains that an individual’s recovery is highly dependent on the community’s understanding of how the individual functions inside his own family; as such the absence of critical understanding will yield a low rate of recovery for any individual (Lander, Howsare & Byrne, 2013).

As the Attachment Theory and MST guide the process of data interpretation, the different qualitative data are gathered anonymously. All interview transcripts are coded and analyzed through joint analysis. Similarly, exploratory factor analysis using MPlus Software was conducted to identify the groupings of the participants responses. This is done to explore the participant’s knowledge, attitude, and level of awareness regarding the policies of the current drug program conducted by the country, using a categorical binomial questionnaire and a Likert Scale type questionnaire.

The study gathered data from different places in the Philippines and asked the consent of 84 Barangay Officials, 293 parents, 275 teachers, and 25 students, with 877 respondents to become part of the study. To elicit a truthful response from the respondents no positive reward was given to them before and after the interview.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

A joint display analysis of qualitative and quantitative data in exploring the study objectives is summarized in Table 1, as seen below. The table enumerates the four different themes generated from the other patterns observed in the qualitative investigation of the study; similarly, the table discusses the specific quantitative results of the investigation.

**Table 1**  
Summary of Themes and Quantitative Results of the Study

Theme	Qualitative Investigations	Quantitative Investigations
		65.22% of the survey respondents are classified to be moderately knowledgeable on substance use disorder and its corresponding policies.
Compliance to government-given responsibilities	We do our best to implement the programs of the government as compliance to the directives given by the Department of Interior and Local Government.	EFA grouped two factors together. Having a Fit Statistics: CFI = 0.911 TLI = 0.846 RMSEA = 0.063 SRMR = 0.039 *Factor Loading > 0.3
Engagement of the whole family and the community	After the program they go back to the community, they are included in different activities like bible studies and TESDA trainings.	
Acknowledging that success requires support	In this community the schools, families, and churches are involved in the program.	EFA grouped two factors together. Having a Fit Statistics: CFI = 0.936 TLI = 0.924 RMSEA = 0.071 SRMR = 0.028 *Factor Loading > 0.3
Resolute and unyielding in helping the dependent and the abused	With the different programs that we implement, we are hopeful that BADAC program will be implemented well; and we hope that there will be better programs for the drug addicts in our area.	

\*Significant at 5% Level (Yong, A.G. & Pearce. S., 2013)

### 1. Knowledge of the respondents on substance use, disorder, and its policies

The respondents’ knowledge on substance use, disorder, and the different policies that rule over it was evaluated using a multiple-response instrument. Figure 1 describes the results of the respondent’s collated answers as to be low (1-3 correct answers), moderate (4-7 correct answers), and high (8-10 correct answers).

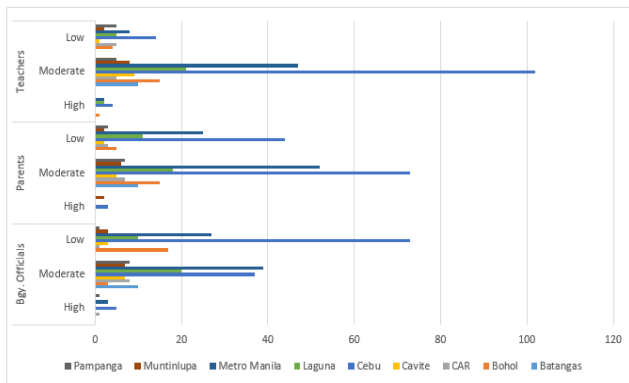


Figure 1: Knowledge of the Respondents on Substance Use, Disorder, and its Policies

Thus, it is evident that among all respondents, barangay officials have the widest understanding of the use, disorder, and policies on substances, followed by the teachers and parents. However, the respondents’ knowledge of the said factors is classified only to be “Moderately” (65.22%) and “Low” (32.04%). Digging deeper into the data, the location of the respondents is also considered as to its knowledge. It was found out that some areas like Muntinlupa, Laguna, Cavite, Batangas, Bohol, CAR, and Metro Manila have zero respondents who are classified to have “High” knowledge. Overall, the respondent’s knowledge can be deduced to be as “Moderate” (66.67%), “Low” (31.14%), and “High” (2.19%).

Further with the generated data of the study, it was observed that there is a lack of ample knowledge from the different stakeholders in charge of the initiation of the programs. In addition to this, success will depend on putting emphasis on the understanding and awareness on the effects of drugs, it’s possible harm to the users, its families and the community should be placed in one of the

topmost priority (Alagabia Jr. & Cawi, 2019; Dulin & Guadamor, 2017; Hechanova et al., 2018).

### 2. Attitude of the Stakeholders towards the Problem of Drug Abuse

The attitude of the stakeholders towards the problem of drug abuse exhibits two factors loading together after running the exploratory factor analysis. The fit statistics shows that CFI=0.911, TLI=0.846, RMSEA=0.063, and SRMR=0.039. With all factors loadings reaching the acceptable range of greater than 0.3.

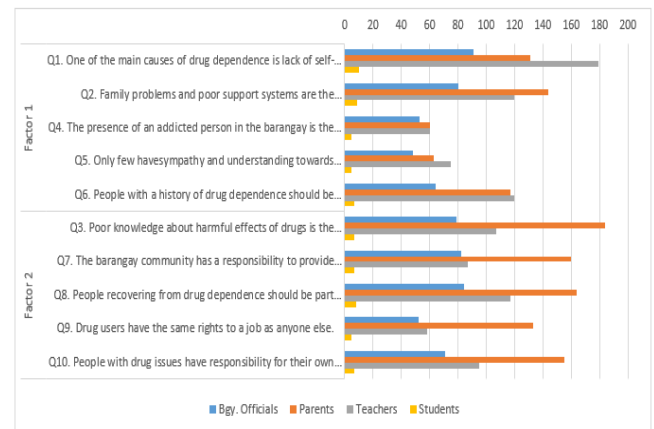


Figure 2. Percentages of the stakeholder’s attitude towards the problem of drug abuse

Figure 2 describes the distribution and loading of the questions into two factors. Factor 1 “individualistic reasons”, looks into the respondents’ perception that in agreement; due to the lack of self-discipline and willpower of individual substance dependence is probable. In this case, it is believed that if an individual is led to dependency and usage of the substance, their presence in the community is the main reason for an increase in other users. Furthermore, the lack of family support system and sympathy that the users and dependents are experiencing gives further reason to use illegal substances. On the other hand, Factor 2 “communal responsibility”, conveys that the barangay community is responsible for taking care of the drug dependents. The respondents also believe that those who have issues with illegal

substances should have full accountability in their situation. Once recovering and recovered, it is highly recognizable that community services should be implemented, especially in addressing the perception that the increase of users is highly equated with the poor knowledge of the community on the substance's harmful effects.

With the factor loadings, participants of the study tend to think differently as they are focused more on their communal responsibilities to care for the users and dependents present in their community. One of the participants mentioned that in their level as barangay officials, they "implement programs according to the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) directives." They have expounded that OPLAN SAGIP and Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC) are the primary programs of the government led by the barangay officials. In addition to these, they have added that as officials and leaders of the community, they "support the drug clearing operations of the Philippine National Police. They do assign us in different tasks to eradicate drug use in our community." As a whole, Factor 1 and the considered codes explain the participants' outlook into compliance to the government-given responsibilities.

Additionally, putting a motivating hand on the community and its members is more likely to benefit the concerned individuals. The teachers mentioned that "counselors can help educate the people in the community to help them understand what addiction, treatment, and history is." Moreover, the participants emphasized that the support inside is critical in a man's control over their decisions, explaining "if the family of these individuals gave them a visible care and support, they might have made better decisions." The codes and Factor 2 expound that the responsibility is not merely on the shoulders of those in charge of the government, but there should be a broad engagement of the family and the community.

Similar programs have noted not only individual participant changes, but also evident changes from their family; namely: responsibility and communication (Bunagan et al., 2019; Co & Canoy, 2020; Seid & Dolatyari, 2015). In the absence of this prime concern of the family direct involvement, hinders the drug use recovery of the

individuals involved. Since it is a fact that not all individuals experience family support there are mental constraints that are depicted in its absence; like family longing, lack of social confidence, lack of determination in coping against the issue, and inability to self-improve (Co & Canoy, 2020). As such CBDR may only have a peak of success if there will be enhanced educational and awareness of the stakeholders, and an all-out involvement of the community more so the family.

### 3. Level of Awareness and Extent of Implementation of Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 and Local Ordinances Addressing the Problem on Drug Abuse

About the final objective of the study, after EFA, the questions were loaded into two factors. Its fit statistics indicates the following values: CFI= 0.936, TLI= 0.846, RMSEA= 0.071, and SRMR= 0.028. All factors loaded greater than the acceptable range of 0.3.

Figure 3 describes the groupings and loading of the respondents' survey questions, grouped up into two factors. Factor 1 "self and program awareness", represents the respondents' awareness and the implementation of the program in the community. While Factor 2 "support systems", describes the corroboration of the different organizations and individuals in the community and the other programs implemented by various government agencies (I.e., PDEA, PNP, DILG, DSWD).

The respondents' responses for Factor 1 sum up the understanding that there is an existing unyielding effort of the community to care for the users and the dependents. The data shows that the respondents generally agree that the programs, laws, and policies, specifically, Awareness campaigns on RA 9165, its violations and dealings, BADAC, and other medical and non-medical health staff, are highly implemented in their different locales. The participants' responses positively support this: "we make it a point that when the police give us different tasks, we support it and make sure that it is completed." The implementation is also conducted via phases "the



barangay officials help the PNP. We support them by making a list of our constituents and residents in our barangay. We meet them with the PNP and conduct awareness seminars regarding substance abuse.”

Moreover, Factor 1 emphasizes the BADAC’s role in tapping the family’s and surrounding schools; “As part of the council, we undergo training, for us to know what we will do. We make sure that the programs we suggest like wellness programs, parental skills program, and tapping the schools are implemented well.” Moreover, the community partnership is evident with the presence of volunteers; “even the tricycle drivers are asked to help eradicate the use of drugs in our community. We have our pastors, our counselors, youth leaders; all are helping out in the drug war.” Hence, it could be assimilated that unceasingly the members of the community not only give focus to the present programs either to be conducted or presently implemented, aiming to decrease the users; but they also look into the possibility that those who are victimized by these substances are well taken care of.

Factor 2 focuses on BADAC as one of the critical programs being conducted in the community. With the council being present in the community, families in one community will have strengthened parental care that will allow them to provide guidance in preventing their children from using illegal substances. As the barangay presents different strategies, it is contrary to the responses of the participants that even with the presence of the BADAC, they wish to have better programs that serve as a guide for them as they point out, “We are hopeful that BADAC will be able to lead us to stop the increase of drug addiction here in our community. We hope that their programs will help us.” This stresses out that “support should start in the family that has existing problems with drugs.” As the barangay officials made clear that schools are stand alone in the war against drugs, treatment centers, on the other hand, needed support from the community. The data showed a well-implemented program as perceived by the stakeholders. Hence, this only shows that there is a wide visibility of the program implementers giving enough information to its conduction. In this effect it has shown that there is a good sign of implementation, it is contrary to the first gathered data. With the end in view a thorough analysis of the contradictory data should be further explored as they are critical point in consideration of different intervention programs like CBDR. As it is one of the treatment programs that holistically approach the recovery of its participants (Allado et al., 2019; Antonio et al., 2018).

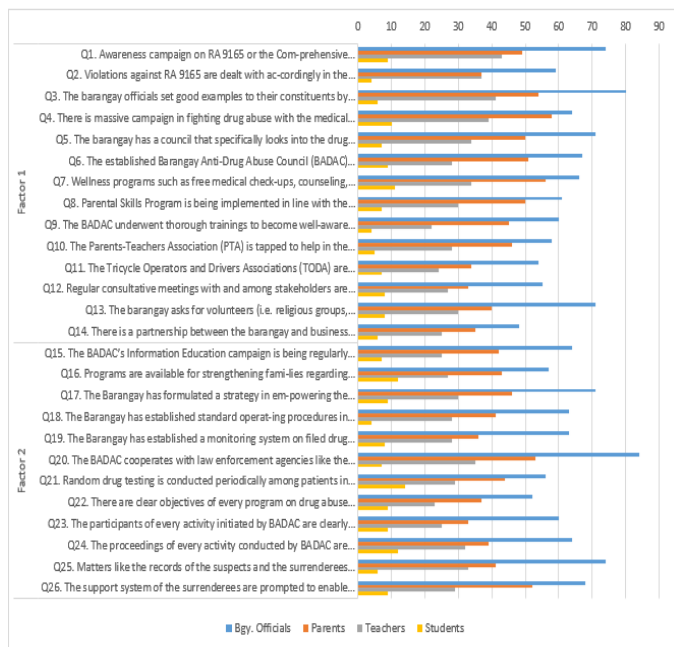


Figure 3: Percentages on the Level of Awareness and Extent of Implementation of CDDA (2002) and Local Ordinances Addressing the Problem on Drug Abuse

### CONCLUSIONS

The study unveils the different patterns that describe the commonality of the participants' responses compared to the collated responses from the multiple-response and survey instrument to measure its factors. The following are the identified inferences based on the analysis and result of the study.

1. It is inferred that respondents generally have “moderate” knowledge on substance use, disorder, and its policies. Areas identified to have “low” knowledge are Muntinlupa, Laguna, Cavite, Batangas, Bohol, CAR, and



Metro Manila. At the same time, the likely knowledgeable respondents are teachers, parents, students, and barangay officials, respectively.

2. Two factors have been identified to describe the stakeholders' attitudes towards the problem of drug abuse. The first factor explained the typical response to determining that an individual's lack of self-discipline and willpower is the root cause of the issues. The second factor infers those leaders who are responsible should exercise full accountability.
3. The different responses were gathered into two. The first factor was able to identify that the respondents are aware of the various programs and their state of implementation. At the same time, the second factor was able to identify the collaboration of different organizations and government agencies in implementing the programs.
4. The data generated four themes that can be summarized into CARE that stands for compliance to government-given responsibilities, acknowledging that success requires support, Resolute and unyielding in helping the dependent and the abused, and Engagement of the whole family and the Community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

About the study, the researchers propose the following to further the knowledge, attitude, and level of awareness of the community regarding substance disorder, use, and dependency.

1. Focus group discussions may be considered to be conducted in future endeavors of the research.
2. Future research undertakings may consider looking into the different factors and descriptors that are unique to the Filipino communities to explain the population's attitudes.
3. Different programs that may address the knowledge of the community with the substance use, abuse, disorder, and

dependency should be intensified and be placed into focus.

4. Enabling and allowing the recognition of the distinct roles of the stakeholders are critical points to consider as part of recovery programs.
5. Further support should be given to the possible revisions and contextualization of community recovery programs.

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