

# Self Recuperation of Former Drug Users: A Phenomenological Study

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## ABSTRACT

The research study explored the lived experiences of former drug users from drug use who recovered from drug use without government intervention, specifically to determine their live experiences, challenges encountered by the former drug user, coping strategy, factors that influenced the former drug user to quit drug use, realization of the former drug user in using drugs. Qualitative research using a phenomenological study with five participants in Solsona, Marcos, and Batac City, Ilocos Norte was used. The interview guide, recording device, and interview were the data gathering tools. Thematic analysis was used in this study.

The themes derived from the lived experiences of former drug users from drug use who recovered from drug use without government intervention include external influences and internal influences which is the factors influences the former drug users to use drugs, health issue, financial distress, stigma, provisional solution a coping strategy during drug use phase, holistic transformation coping strategy during recovery phase, fervent wish to change and negative effect which are the factors that influences the former drug user to quit drugs, and repercussions from drug use which is the realizations. Despite these challenges, former drug users from drug use who recovered from drug use without government intervention cope through holistic transformation, focusing on achieving goals, and positive development and habit. They demonstrate resilience in regaining a sense of normalcy. Researchers found that former drug users change is possible through avoiding negative habits and diverting it to positive acts like staying active in sports and keeping their selves busy through employment and maintaining livelihood, despite the challenges, as they must find ways to escape this loophole of negative effects of drug use without any intervention of the government.

The study highlights the challenges faced by the drug user in their journey to recovery without any government assistance. The Local Government Unit may provide health services and coordinate support and intervention for the former drug users, families and community health workers by ensuring access to counseling, safe spaces for self-expression, and early intervention programs.

The study also highlights the factors that influences the former drug user to quit drugs. The Department of Health and Department of social welfare development may offer behavioral health support and therapy to the former drug users by developing peer support networks, provide access to group therapy, and encouraging community reintegration programs to build resilience.

**Keywords:** *Lived Experiences of Former Drug user, Recovery without Government Assistance, Holistic Transformation, Avoiding Negative Habits, Realizations of Former Drug user, Factors Influences Drug user to Quit Drugs.*

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### ➤ *The Problem and its Setting*

Drugs are substances that change a person's mental or physical state. They can be legal or illegal, and have different effects and methods of use (Department of Health and Aged Care [DHAC], 2019). Some individuals misinterpret the term drug to indicate merely a substance that causes a pleasurable experience. Throughout recorded history, excessive and prolonged use of mind-altering chemicals has coexisted with acceptable medical use of pharmaceuticals. Some medications in this category serve valid medical objectives, while others do not (Merck & Co., 2024). Illegal drugs, often known as illicit drugs, are highly addictive substances that are illegal to sell, manufacture, or use. These medications are not intended for medical use and are unlawful to use in these circumstances. These medicines are highly addictive and have significant adverse effects that can lead to long-term health implications (Hill, 2024). As a person continues to use drugs, the brain adapts by reducing the capacity of cells in the reward circuit to respond to them. This reduces the person's high relative to the high they had when they first took the medication, a phenomenon known as tolerance. Illegal drug usage includes taking anabolic steroids, club drugs, cocaine, heroin, inhalants, marijuana, and methamphetamines. Drug usage is harmful; it can cause lifelong damage to the brain and body. Drug use can result in addiction (National Library of Medicine, 2023).

There are three reasons why drugs is a problem to society. First, public health issues - The most visible consequences of drug misuse concern health. 165 million Americans aged 12 and up are currently abusing drugs, which include alcohol and tobacco. 10.6% of Americans have an alcohol use disorder, 25.4% have a drug use disorder, and nearly 24.7% have an opioid disorder. Second, there is a link between drug addiction and crime; many of the country's most serious social issues are caused or exacerbated by drug consumption. At least half of those arrested for significant crimes were under the influence of illicit narcotics at the time of arrest. Drug offenses result in the detention of about 400,000 people. In 2017, somebody was detained every 20 seconds for drug-related crimes.. Third, the impact on families and children - Children of drug users are frequently abused and neglected. Approximately 50-80% of all child abuse and neglect cases involved parents who used drugs. They are twice as likely to develop addictions to drugs and alcohol later in life. In addition, families dealing with drug usage are more likely to battle with food insecurity, greater rates of homelessness, and emotional and mental illnesses (Nick, 2023).

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (2024), recovery is a transformational process in which people improve their health and fitness, lead self-directed lives, and try to attain their full potential. Even those with severe and chronic substance use disorders can, with assistance, overcome their sickness and regain health and social function. This process is known as remission. Recovery occurs when positive changes and values become a voluntary part of one's lifestyle. While many people in recovery believe that abstaining from all substances is a necessary component of a recovery lifestyle, others claim that dealing with bad emotions without using substances and leading a productive life are more significant aspects of their recovery.

The main aim of this study was to know the lived experience of former drug users within Ilocos Norte who recovered without the intervention of government. With this, the researchers could understand the problem deeper, help in giving awareness to other people, and provide solution to the problem, specially, in this context, to provide solution to the problem of the respondents.

#### ➤ *Background of the Study*

The Right Step Treatment Center released a post titled "Common Challenges After a Successful Recovery" on July 27, 2017. It has been suggested that it is natural to feel unsure and overwhelmed after a good recovery. Many persons who have recovered face a range of issues, including social hurdles that need them to surround themselves with non-drug users in order to preserve their sobriety and form connections with those who appreciate and support them when they are tempted to relapse. The financial crisis is a challenge for recovering addicts and may lead to relapse. Even after good therapy, there remains a risk of recurrence. Overdose is one of the most significant threats they face, since many relapse users misuse drugs and overdose because their bodies are no longer used to big doses. This results in either a coma or death. (Lama & Patel, 2022).

In the Philippines, drug abuse and usage are becoming more widespread problems. One of the nations in Southeast Asia where drug trafficking is on the rise is the Philippines. According to the International Narcotics Control Board (2023), an international drug monitoring organization, drug misuse and usage are social and health issues in the Philippines, and one of the causes of some people's poor habits is poverty.

Their study contributes to the expanding recovery literature by providing insights into how people with drug addiction experience recovery over time. Because their sample is highly heterogeneous and recruited from a variety of settings, their findings provide recovery experiences that supersede those of studies performed in a particular treatment setting. They discovered that healing is a complex, long-term process that includes identity change as well as common or universal life experiences. This means that policy and clinical practices should be geared toward achieving long-term, individualized recovery goals. Disseminating first-hand recovery experiences may also serve to lessen stigmatization and othering and operate as useful and hopeful sources of information for those in early recovery, those wishing to initiate recovery, or their families, partners, and friends (Martinelli et al., 2023).

In the context of Ilocos Norte about the recovery of drug users, as to the statistical analysis of 2022 (Dangerous Drug Boards[DDB], 2022), compared to the previous year's cases, there was a forty-three percent rise in admissions, despite some facilities reporting no admissions. The increase in admissions can be attributed to the resumption of operation by the various rehabilitation centers and the apparent willingness of the Persons Who Use Drugs (PWUDs) to undergo treatment and rehabilitation, as evidenced by nearly forty-one percent of voluntary submission and twenty-nine percent of cases who availed of plea bargaining. Even if the admissions were arising in the rehabilitation facilities, from the statistics alone, we can see that there is still a percentage of drug users that did not undergo rehabilitation programs from the government and there are still undocumented drug users who recovered without the help of government intervention (DDB, 2022).

While extensive research exists on drug recovery programs facilitated by government agencies and professional facilities, there is a gap in the related literature and studies concerning individuals who undergo drug recovery without the assistance of governmental support or formal treatment facilities. This gap raises questions about the potential efficacy of alternative methods or self-guided approaches to drug recovery, highlighting the need for further investigation into this underexplored area. Much of the current work and studies only focus on rehabilitation of former drug users with intervention of government assistance, thus the gap arises in comparing our studies to other studies, which could help to improve this study. Furthermore, there is a notable gap in investigating the specific factors and strategies that facilitated the recovery process for former drug users without government assistance. This could involve examining personal motivations, social support networks, access to alternative treatments or therapies, and unique challenges faced during the recovery journey.

The specific objective of this study is to know the lived experiences of former drug users who recovered without the help of any programs of the government by determining the underlying factors, challenges, coping mechanisms, and their realizations in using drugs, in order to fully understand the problem.

#### ➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The main aim of this study is to explore the lived experiences of former drug users in Ilocos Norte who recovered from drug use without the government intervention.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

- What are the factors that influence former drug users to use drugs?
- What are the challenges encountered by the former drug users, in terms of:

- ✓ Drug use phase; and
- ✓ Recovery phase?

- What are the coping strategies applied by the former drug users?
- What are the factors that influenced the former drug users to quit drug use?
- What are the realizations of the former drug users in using drugs?

#### ➤ *Theoretical Framework*

This part of the study introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research problem is under study. These theories are formulated to challenge and extend existing knowledge, within the limits of the proponents' assumptions. All these theories are considered related to the research study.

#### ➤ *Social Learning Theory*

Albert Bandura created Social Learning Theory, which claims that learning takes place through observation, imitation, and modeling and is influenced by factors such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions. The theory emphasizes the significance of observational learning, in which people gain information, skills, attitudes, and beliefs by witnessing the actions and consequences of others, which leads to the modeling and adoption of observed behaviors.

Social Learning Theory connects to drug usage by explaining how individuals can learn to use drugs through the observation and imitation of others, the perceived rewards associated with drug use, the influence of role models, the normalization of drug use within social groups, and cognitive processes that shape attitudes and beliefs about drugs. Social learning in addiction therapy involves exposing patients to positive actions and experiences throughout treatment. With this exposure to favorable results, it is believed that the adult in recovery would emulate similar behaviors.

#### ➤ *Social Control Theory*

According to Social Control Theory, the strength and duration of a person's relationships or commitments to traditional society prevent social deviation. (Hirschi, 1969 & Simpson, 1976).

Social Control Theory provides critical data that explains many of the typical trends observed in substance misuse cases. When applied to the common issue of substance misuse, the theory can explicitly demonstrate how behavior and behaviors surrounding substance abuse are constructed. According to some, Social Control Theory has resulted in a substantial amount of empirical research to determine causation (Wong, 2024).

#### ➤ *Differential Association Theory*

According to Sutherland's Differential Association Theory, criminal behavior is learnt in the same manner that any other behavior does: through interpersonal communication and social contact in small, intimate groups (Renzetti, 2008).

Differential Association Theory explains how drug use is learned behavior acquired through interactions with others who use drugs. Peer influence is a significant factor in differential association theory. Adolescents and young adults, in particular, are highly influenced by their peers. If their peer group engages in drug use, they are more likely to do the same. Through their associations, individuals learn not only the attitudes but also the techniques and methods of drug use. This can include how to obtain drugs, how to use them, and how to avoid detection. The theory highlights the importance of the frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of these associations, as well as the balance of attitudes toward drug use that individuals are exposed to in their social environments.

#### ➤ *Conceptual Framework*

The conceptual framework of this study focused on the IPOO model, the input, process, output and its outcome. This served as a guide of the researchers which is in chronological order in conducting this study. IPOO models of group productivity postulate that group-level processes moderate the relationship between individual, group, and situational input variables and the subsequent performance results (American Psychological Association [APA], 2018).

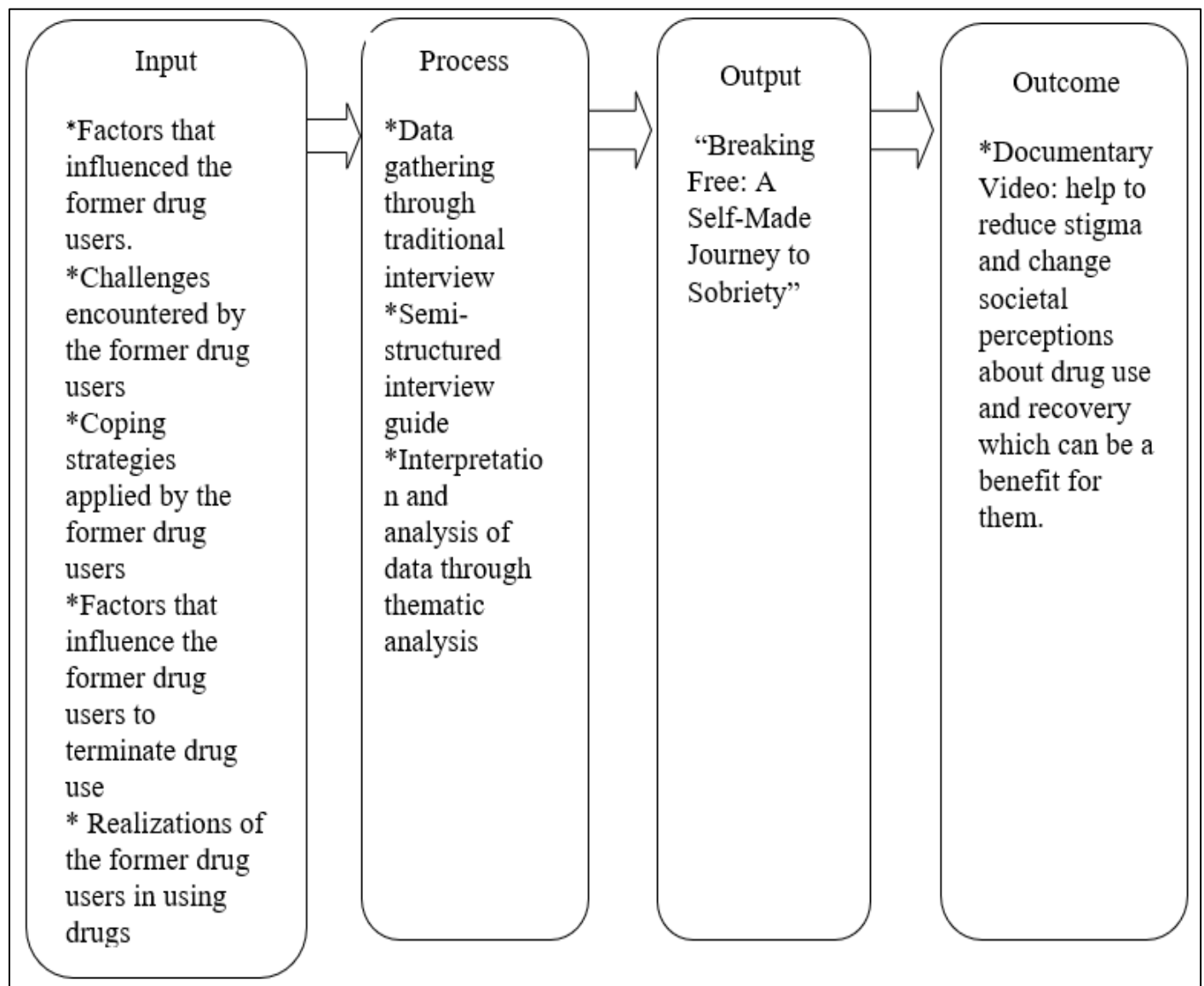


Fig 1 Paradigm of the Study

This study adopted the Input, Process, Output, Outcome (IPOO) model to explore the lived experiences of former drug users in Ilocos Norte who recovered from drug use without the intervention of government assistance. IPOO model is a visual representation of every component of a process. The process flow diagram comprises all necessary inputs, outputs, and outcomes, as well as the precise steps taken during the process and descriptions of all end products and byproducts based on the actual process.

The input of this research is about the experience of a former drug user who recovered from drug use without the intervention of the government. Moreover, the factors that influence the former drug users to use drugs, challenges encountered by the former drug users in terms of drug use and recovery phase, the coping strategies applied by the former drug users, the factors that influenced the drug users to quit drug use and the realizations of the former drug users after using drugs. As to the process, it includes the data gathering through traditional interviews of the participants with the use of semi-structured interview guides. The treatment, analysis and interpretation of data were done with the use of thematic analysis. The main output is the documentary video entitled “Breaking Free: A Self-Made Journey to Sobriety”. The outcome can help to reduce stigma and change societal perceptions about drug use and recovery which can be beneficial for them.

#### ➤ *Significance of Study*

The findings of this research can provide valuable insights and benefits to the following groups of people and to the main beneficiaries, the former drug users, who recovered without the intervention of government assistance:

- **Drug users.** Knowing and understanding the experiences of others who have battled drug addiction can help present users grow from their mistakes and make better decisions regarding their own substance use.
- **Participants.** Studying the participants’ experiences will provide an in-depth solution to the problem wherein current drug users and an individual who wants to try illegal drugs could learn from this study.
- **Academe.** This study can benefit the academe by providing knowledge on the signs and symptoms of drug use. For teachers, this knowledge could empower them to identify and assist children who may be struggling with substance addiction issues. For students, it emphasizes that all drugs, whether legal or illegal, have the potential to be harmful. It also highlights how a person’s experience with drugs is influenced by various factors, including the substance itself, the individuals, and their environment.
- **Community.** It will support efforts to increase public knowledge of drug use, including the harmful consequences it may have on potential users, and assist people who are having difficulty overcoming these kinds of issues.
- **Government.** This study could help the government in putting these potential remedies into practice to prevent and stop drug use in the community.
- **Researchers.** This study may serve as a valuable resource for researchers conducting their research on lived experiences of former drug users. Researchers can enhance the quality and relevance of their research in the field of career development and gain more knowledge about different experiences of the respondents.
- **Future Researchers.** This research could assist future researchers in developing new theories or hypotheses and expanding on current understanding about the experiences of a former drug user.

#### ➤ *Scope and Delimitation*

In this study, the main concerns are the lived experiences of former drug users who recovered from using illegal drugs without the intervention of government assistance. This includes factors that influence the former drug users to use drugs, the challenges they encountered during phase of drug use and in the phase of recovery, the coping strategies applied by the former drug users, the factors that influence the former drug users to terminate drug use, and their realizations in using drugs. The participants/respondents were the drug users in Ilocos Norte who did not undergo rehabilitation.

This study was limited to five participants who were drug users and did not undergo rehabilitation within Ilocos Norte. The study was carried out during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024 and the first semester of the academic year 2024-2025.

#### ➤ *Definition of Terms*

For purposes of clarity and better understanding, the following terms are defined as to how they are used in the study.

- **Coping strategy.** In this study, it refers to a technique used to manage or handle a challenging situation.
- **Drugs.** They are chemical compounds with a recognized structure that, when supplied to a living creature, generate a biological impact, but are neither nutrients or required dietary ingredients. They are chemical compounds of known structure, other than a nutrient or necessary food item, that, when administered to a living thing, have a biological influence. (Ritter et al., 2020).
- **Drug use.** In this study, it is defined as an act of using an illegal drug.
- **Drug use phase.** This refers to the stage or progression where a person typically goes through when using drugs.
- **Drug user.** In this study, this refers to the person who is using illegal drugs.
- **Former Drug User.** Refers to someone who previously used drugs but has since stopped using them.
- **Recovered without Government Intervention.** In this study, this refers to those former drug users who recovered without the assistance from any government agencies.
- **Recovered.** In this study, it is a condition in which a person has changed his behavior or lifestyle for the better or improvement.

- **Recovery Phase.** Refers to the process through which an individual works to overcome the physical, psychological, and social impacts of drug dependency and strives to rebuild a healthier, drug-free life.
- **Recuperation.** Refers to the process by which an individual recovers from the physical, mental, and emotional effects of substance use or addiction.
- **Self-Recuperation.** Refers to a condition where the drug user applies his personal effort and initiative to recover from the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of substance abuse without relying heavily on professional rehabilitation programs.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES AND STUDIES

This chapter presents a summary of the associated studies and literature related to the study of the issue. The purpose of the discussion contained in this chapter is to serve as a framework for the present study to be performed, present similarities and differences with previous studies conducted.

➤ *Challenges Faced and Coping Strategies Adopted by Injecting Drug Users during COVID-19 Lockdown—A Qualitative Study*

During the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, India implemented a nationwide lockdown on March 24, 2020, which was later prolonged until May 31, 2020. During the initial phase, movement was strictly prohibited, with the exception of those performing necessary tasks. The work of TI-NGO was not considered a "essential service," and people residing in the containment zone were not allowed to leave. Due to limited movement during the lockdown, IDUs had difficulty accessing harm reduction treatments such as OST. Restrictions on physical travel impacted the supply chain and logistics of drug trafficking in Canada and Europe, resulting in altered drug and alcohol usage patterns. In Vietnam, the travel prohibition resulted in an increase in contaminated and poisonous replacements sold on the streets at lower prices by IDUs, as well as a price increase for illegally obtained street drugs. In the United States, the loss of daily routine, money, and social support during lockdown exacerbated mental health issues, resulting in increased drug consumption.

A qualitative study was undertaken at Targeted Intervention Non-Governmental Organizations that serve IDUs in Delhi and the Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The study included four focus group discussions with 41 IDUs as well as seven key informant interviews with NGO workers. The Hindi recordings were coded, and the data analysis was carried out manually using a grounded theory approach.

In conclusion, they discovered that the lockdown had negative impact on the lives of the majority of IDUs, making it impossible for them to seek harm reduction treatments. To cope with this, many IDUs began using alternative methods to support their drug habits. The reuse of needles and syringes has increased significantly. The lockout during COVID-19, as well as the issues that ensued, had a negative influence on the IDUs' physical and mental health. They recommend that in any comparable future scenario, travel passes may be provided to IDUs and TI-NGO personnel (Vashisht et al. 2023).

➤ *Understanding the Process of Drug Addiction Recovery Through First-Hand Experiences: A Qualitative Study in the Netherlands Using Lifeline Interviews*

According to Martinelli et al. (2023), in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) literature or research on how recovery might be obtained and sustained, it is often synonymous with minimizing or abstaining from substance use. (Helm, 2019; Kelly & Hoepfner, 2015; Laudet, 2008; Roy et al., 2022). However, an exact and widely agreed-upon definition of addiction recovery is still lacking (Best & Hennessy, 2022). As a result, in order to contribute to existing research, this study sought to gain a better understanding of how people in various phases of recovery deal with drug addiction in the Netherlands.

The researchers selected 30 persons from the Netherlands in recovery from illicit drug addiction—who self-identified as either "in recovery," "had a drug addiction but not anymore," or "have resolved a drug use problem"—and interviewed each of them once in depth. The interview focused on persons with a history of illicit substance addiction because research on this area is limited in comparison to studies on alcohol addiction. Participants completed two previous evaluations from the REC-PATH cohort project (published in 858 Qualitative Health Research 33(10) (Best et al., 2018), which attempted to map recovery pathways from the perspective of people in recovery. To cover a diverse sample, they recruited a subsample with an equal distribution of gender (15 men and 15 women) and self-attributed recovery stage (3 months to 1 year, n = 10; 1 to 5 years, n = 10; more than 5 years, n = 10), as well as maximum variation in terms of age (mean of 38 years, range 19 to 59 years old) and treatment history. They divided the participants into groups based on important demographics. The sample also included people with various socioeconomic statuses (for example, some owned homes, while others lived in assisted care facilities or were in debt restructuring). The interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. The researchers logged 973 pages of transcripts into NVivo for coding.

The studies revealed four major themes that define how individuals viewed their recovery. Participants recounted how they learned that their addiction was linked to all parts of their lives, not only their drug usage (Martinelli et al. 859). While recovering, individuals began to reevaluate their identities and see their addiction experiences in a new perspective. It became obvious that various stages of personal or social growth related to healing could take several years. Finally, participants highlighted recovery experiences that are similar or universal to anybody, regardless of drug addiction, and they discovered no significant differences in the topic between men and women. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify and characterize different stages in their lives. This allowed participants to reflect on their recovery from a long-term perspective and discuss how earlier events affected subsequent ones.

➤ *How Many Recovery Attempts does it take to Successfully Resolve an Alcohol or Drug Problem? Estimates and Correlates from a National Study of Recovering U.S. Adults*

According to MacKillop (2019), Drug addiction is most commonly defined as a chronic illness characterized by relapse. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) describes addiction as "a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences" (NIDA, 2019). These definitions imply that once the illness has formed, it will need long-term or permanent therapeutic treatment, and that it is intrinsically and continuously marked by setbacks in the form of excessive drug use.

In this study, a nationally representative sample of US adults was used to identify over 2000 people who reported successfully resolving a serious alcohol or other drug (AOD) issue. These patients were evaluated for a variety of clinical factors related to their recovery, which revealed a strikingly low frequency of successful recovery efforts. Individuals reported an average of five attempts, which appeared to overstate many individuals' experiences, the median was two or three (depending on the analytical technique). In other words, in a large sample of persons who recovered from drug addiction, the great majority required five or less serious attempts, with one being the most common. These are substantially lower values than would be expected for a chronic relapsing illness. The study was cross-sectional and retrospective, and some key criteria were open to interpretation by participants.

Addiction can be a chronic relapsing disorder in some situations, but it is much more than that. In many other cases, it is a condition that necessitates treatment and, once administered, is successfully treated to full remission. The vast majority of people who recover do so without the need for dozens or hundreds of treatment sessions. Other people's addiction recovery may not require official therapy at all, as in the case of maturing out or natural recovery. Consistent with this, Kelly et al.'s data revealed that a significant proportion of participants reported requiring zero substantial therapy attempts to attain success, indicating a spontaneous recovery process. Nonetheless, these findings contribute to the growing body of research demonstrating that addiction is not invariably a chronic relapsing illness. Furthermore, according to NESARC data, the life-time cumulative likelihood of remission exceeded 80% for nicotine and was at or above 90% for alcohol, cannabis, and cocaine (Lopez-Quintero et al., 2011).

➤ *Global Statistics on Alcohol, Tobacco and Illicit Drug Use: 2017 Status Report*

Alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use pose major global hazards of disability and premature mortality. Their health burden has significant economic costs, including health-care and law-enforcement expenses, lost productivity, and other direct and indirect costs, such as harm to others. This study is part of an ongoing series with two goals: (i) to compile contemporary estimates of the prevalence of use, dependency, mortality, and illness burden related with alcohol, tobacco, and illegal substances at the national, regional, and global levels; and (ii) to provide feedback on the availability and quality of existing data sets, as well as to highlight obstacles in estimating and comparing drug use and related burden across geography and time. For the purposes of this review, illicit drug usage was defined as the intake of a substance that is forbidden under international drug control treaties, save for medical reasons.

Through web searches and e-mail conversations with substance use epidemiology experts, the authors discovered online data sources on alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use, dependence, and the related burden of disease and mortality. This review focused on global data sets that disaggregate estimates at the country and/or regional levels. The World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC), and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluations' (IHME) Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Study 2015 are the primary institutions that host these collections.

In 2015, alcohol and tobacco usage cost the global population more than a quarter of a billion disability-adjusted life years, with illicit narcotics responsible for tens of millions more. Europeans suffered more proportionally, but in absolute terms, mortality rates were higher in low- and middle-income countries with large populations and less trustworthy statistics. Adults' estimated prevalence of heavy episodic alcohol use (within the last 30 days) was 18.4%; 15.2% for daily tobacco smoking; and 3.8, 0.77, 0.37, and 0.35% for cannabis, amphetamine, opioid, and cocaine use in the preceding year, respectively. The European areas had the greatest rates of heavy episodic alcohol and daily tobacco use. Cannabis, opioid, amphetamine, and cocaine dependency rates were 259.3, 220.4, 86.0, and 52.5 per 100,000 individuals, respectively. High-income North America has some of the highest rates of cannabis, opiate, and cocaine addiction. Tobacco usage resulted in the greatest disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) (170.9 million), followed by alcohol (85.0 million) and illicit substances (27.8 million). Alcohol and illegal substances caused 33.0 and 6.9 fatalities per 100,000 individuals, respectively (Peacock et al., 2018).

➤ *Factors Influencing Early Withdrawal from a Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program and Client Perceptions of Successful Recovery and Employment: A Qualitative Study*

The National Drug Strategy (2017) alcohol, cannabis, and methamphetamine are among the most often used drugs. Improvements in drug and alcohol (DA) treatment programs help to address these difficulties, particularly through demand reduction, peer-education networks, social competence training, and improved community participation. Low program completion rates, ranging from 9 to 56%, remain a serious impediment to successful and long-term DA treatment. However, there are significant variations in the literature. Harley et al. discovered that amphetamine use was a negative predictor of program completion (Harley M, Pit SW, Rees T, Thomas S: Completion rates and psychosocial intervention effectiveness in an Australian substance abuse therapeutic community, submitted), whereas Darke et al. discovered no link with primary drug use. Furthermore, while the study

focused on a residential treatment population, the treatment facilities did not employ the 'community as a method' approach that is common in TCs. Stevens et al.'s research is further hampered by its generalizability beyond cocaine users.

In this study, a qualitative method enables the analysis of the complex relationships between client characteristics, treatment retention, and reintegration into society from the clients' perspective. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with 13 former participants in a long-term TC program at a community-based rehabilitation organization in outback Australia. Thematic analysis revealed a complex combination of variables leading to early TC withdrawal, as well as attitudes about effective recovery based on lived experience, and how these were impacted by work and volunteering. A total of eleven themes were identified. Three are on the reasons for joining the program, and the fourth is about the eventual exit from the program. Three causes for early withdrawal: program characteristics, relationships throughout the program, and planning for future employment. Five factors influence perceptions of effective recovery: better knowledge of their addiction, less substance use, better physical and psychological health, relationship success, and job success.

Perceived success is more than just obtaining and sustaining sober; it also involves better relationships, psychological and physical well-being, information about addiction and work, and studying or volunteering. Self-esteem and the ability to contribute to society through job, education, and volunteerism were deemed critical components of effective rehabilitation (Prangley et al., 2018).

#### ➤ *Quality of Life among People who use Drugs Living in Poor Urban Communities in the Philippines*

According to the International Journal of Drug Policy, the quality of life (QOL) and mental health of drug users (PWUD) in the Philippines, particularly those living in impoverished urban areas, are extremely concerning due to the circumstances surrounding drug use and the country's ongoing strict antidrug policies. The goal of this study was to examine the quality of life and mental health of PWUD, compare them to a control group of persons who had never used drugs, and identify factors associated with QOL among Filipino PWUD. Coincidentally, the government is making ongoing efforts, particularly in local jurisdictions, to establish public health and welfare initiatives that may enhance QOL among PWUD, albeit the objective is to reduce drug use rather than promote QOL. More holistic approaches are also promoted by certain local governments, one of which aims to improve income generation among PWUD (Dangerous Drugs Board, 2010, 2016b). This study focuses on PWUD from disadvantaged urban populations, since they are the most vulnerable group under antidrug policy. In 2018, a cross-sectional research was conducted in Muntinlupa with participants from a community-based rehabilitation program and underserved urban populations. QOL was measured using the WHOQOL-BREF, while psychological distress and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-6) and the Primary Care PTSD Screen for DSM-5, respectively.

A total of 272 PWUD and 402 comparison participants were recruited. The majority of PWUD (53%) were current drug users, with methamphetamine making up 70%. PWUD had a greater prevalence of moderate to severe psychological distress (70%) and possibly PTSD (28%), compared to the comparison group. PWUD performed worse on all four QOL domains (physical, psychological, social, and environmental) than the comparator group. Individual income, household resources, participation in social activities, and use of drug treatment programs were all linked to improved QOL among PWUD. Stratified and interaction analyses revealed that PWUD were more sensitive to changes in individual income than the reference group. A comprehensive intervention targeting psychological distress reduction, economic empowerment, and social inclusion—in addition to abstinence-oriented programs—may enhance the well-being of Filipino PWUD (Yamada et al., 2022).

#### ➤ *The Manila Declaration on the Drug Problem in the Philippines*

According to the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) (the government agency mandated to formulate policies on illegal drugs in the Philippines), The Philippines has 1.8 million active drug users, while 4.8 million Filipinos claim having used illicit drugs at least once in their life. More over three-quarters of drug users are adults (91%), men (87%), and high school graduates (80%). More than two-thirds (67%) are employed. The most widely used drug in the Philippines is shabu, popularly known as "poor man's cocaine." According to a 2012 United Nations study, the Philippines has the highest prevalence of methamphetamine consumption among East Asian nations; roughly 2.2% of Filipinos aged 16 to 64 use methamphetamines.

According to government estimates, at over 7,000 persons accused of drug trafficking or use were killed in the Philippines during Duterte's first six months in power, including legal police and vigilante operations. Almost 2,555 people have been killed in gunfights with police during anti-drug operations, accounting for little more than one-third of those suspected of drug trafficking. Community groups believe the death toll has grown to 13,000 people. The police killings are commonly suspected of being staged in order to qualify for financial prizes offered to officers who kill suspected drug dealers.

The declaration of insights and affirmations on the drug problem in the Philippines is easily relevant to other Asian nations where drug abuse is commonly dealt with aggressively, violently, and punitively. Contrary to the government's approach, which sees the difficulties as a matter of criminality and lawlessness, the drug problem must be tackled holistically and rights-based, necessitating the mobilization and participation of all stakeholders. This is the message and challenge that we, as members of the Association of Pacific Rim Universities, want to relay to the region's leaders, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and human rights advocates. We must all work together to protect and promote the health and well-being of all populations in our region (Simbulan et al., 2019).

➤ *Healing the Hurt amid the Drug War: Narratives of Young Urban Poor Filipinos in Recovering Families with Parental Drug use*

According to national data in the Philippines, the prevalence of drug use is 1.8%. This suggests that there are around 1.8 million Filipino drug users in the country (Gavilan, 2016). When Rodrigo Duterte assumed office as President of the Republic of the Philippines in July 2016, he launched an anti-illegal drugs campaign (sometimes known as a drug war) with the assistance of the Philippine National Police (PNP). The PNP went door-to-door to "persuade suspected illegal drug personalities to stop their illegal drug activities" (National Police Commission, 2016, p. 3). According to the PNP's goal, drug users and sellers whose names were obtained via a drug watch list were instructed to report to their local police station. (i.e., 'surrender') as a first step toward ending their criminal operations (Iyengar, 2016; Sadongdong, 2018). This resulted in about 1,171,433 drug surrenders (Bueza, 2017). Previous studies on the psychological consequences of drug use in families and children (e.g., Luthar, Cushing, Merikangas, & Rounsaville, 1998; Gruber & Taylor, 2006) have often used a rationalist approach to diagnosing drug-related issues and delivering substance use therapy. Young individuals in households where one or both parents use drugs are sometimes portrayed as excessively 'passive', 'helpless', and in need of professional assistance. While there are scenarios in which young people are prone to abuse and child maltreatment (e.g., Lobato, Sanderman, Pizarro, & Hagedoorn, 2016; Pihkala, Dimova-Bränström, & Sandlund, 2017), the majority of these research do not address how young people exercise agency in risk contexts. Using ideas from Rhodes' work on risk contexts (2002, 2009). The researchers use a narrative approach to examine how young adolescents enact agency when living with a recovered family member who has surrendered and completed a community-based drug recovery program.

The Philippine government has implemented mandatory residential treatment to address illegal drug use issues (Vuong et al., 2017). Participants describe their journey through their parents' drug use, surrender, and recovery as a difficult yet transformational experience. Overall, the findings strengthened and expanded our knowledge of how young family members describe how their parents' drug use has emotionally impacted the entire family (Lander, Howsare, & Byrne, 2013; Mattoo, Nebhinani, Kumar, Basu, & Kulhara, 2013).

This study aimed to analyze the issues raised by young Filipino family members about their parents' drug use, surrender, and recovery. The data also present a more nuanced understanding of drug use in high-risk regions, such as urban poverty communities. In this study, narrative work can function as an exercise of agency in the re-telling of tragic experiences by young people as they struggle with everyday discursive and economic material contexts of oppression and marginalization (Yusay & Canoy, 2019).

➤ *The Lived Experiences of Recovering Filipino Persons who use Drugs (PWUDs) without Family Support*

Families, while vital in avoiding substance abuse and providing incentive for recovery, can also provide challenges, such as inadequate, inconsistent, or withdrawal of social support. In this regard, it is important to investigate the unique experiences of recovering Filipino PWUDs who lack perceived family support in the context of a recovery program and intervention that emphasizes active family participation. They seek to learn about the lived experiences of recovering Filipino PWUDs in CBDR who are participating in a community-based drug recovery program but do not have close family members present or actively involved.

Participants were identified through Katatagan Kontra Droga sa Komunidad (KKDK), a 15-week evidence-based CBDR program for PWDs and their families designed to develop resilience by incorporating techniques in substance use treatment such as cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, mindfulness, and family systems therapy (Hechanova et al., 2018). Snowball sampling was used to identify a mixed group of nine male and one female adult PWUDs that participated. A recorder was also utilized for documentation, with all recordings and transcribed interviews saved on a flash drive. Data established four higher order themes, namely: (1) Experiences of Loss and Longing while in Recovery (feelings of regret, feelings of loneliness, feelings of surrender); (2) Experiences of Coping (joining programs/having hobbies, gaining strength from religiosity, use of other substances); (3) Experiences of Self-Improvement (intrinsically motivated, extrinsically motivated, gaining a new sense of self, developing resilience through challenges); and finally (4) Experience of Rekindling.

The absence of family support has a multifaceted impact on a person's rehabilitation process, affecting themselves, their family, and the greater community. While the absence of perceived family support generates strong emotions such as loneliness due to their personal circumstances (Evans, 2010; Weiss, 1973), the findings provide a new dimension to the cultural context of family support in drug rehabilitation. Most drug rehabilitation programs believe that family support is the most crucial support system for recovering drug users (Sanders, 2000; Velleman et al., 2005). However, the findings indicated a more nuanced interpretation by evaluating the lived experiences of Filipino recovering PWUDs and how they deconstruct familial support and broaden the concept of family beyond one's biological relatives (Co, Canoy, 2020) (Velleman et al., 2005).

➤ *Addiction, Rehabilitation, and Recovery of Filipino Substance Abusers: A Phenomenological Inquiry*

Addiction is a disease that is not only highly stigmatized, but has also a very low recovery rate (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2018). Many people dabble with drugs and alcohol, and some do so later in age while being quite healthy and productive members of society. However, for many people, this practice leads to a life-altering, severely debilitating, and sometimes deadly sickness (Cleveland Clinic Medical Professional, 2020). The general public perceives someone suffering from addiction as a

criminal rather than a sick person. Their views and opinions are dismissed, their reality is created, and their voices are routinely silenced (Hogart, 2018). These people understand the trials and tribulations of addiction, as well as the rewards of achievement, better than anyone else. They possess information that might help others break free from the confines of addiction. The "experts" can say anything they want, and they may be correct, but it appears that no one knows addiction rehabilitation better than someone who has experienced it firsthand. These are the true specialists. "Clearly, service users have a thorough grasp and knowledge of their own health state, psychosocial difficulties, personal resources, support needs, and aspirations" (Neale et al., 2015).

This study employed a qualitative approach, especially descriptive phenomenology, to analyze the addiction, rehabilitation, and recovery experiences of Filipino drug abusers. Spielberg (1982) distinguished three stages of descriptive phenomenology: intuiting (pondering), analyzing, and describing (describing the phenomenon) experiences. This study sought to evaluate Filipino drug abusers' lived experiences with addiction, rehabilitation, and recovery. The emerging lotus model in this study provides evidence-based information for developing better rehabilitation programs that include services even after rehabilitation, such as appropriate resiliency sessions and programs that help clients overcome events or situations that would otherwise cause them to relapse into their addiction.

This study offers rehabilitation institutions with a clear road map for developing appropriate activities to support resilience programs for drug abusers. Furthermore, this study improves awareness of drug addiction, rehabilitation, and recovery by allowing participants to share and convey their concerns about their experiences. They benefited from this research because their experiences strengthened their resilience, self-efficacy, and capacity for a restorative and transformational way of life.

➤ *A Qualitative Study Exploring How Young People Perceive and Experience Substance use Services in British Columbia, Canada*

Substance use among young individuals (ages 12-24) is alarming since it increases the chance of damage. Furthermore, drug use programs are frequently underutilized among young people, with the majority seeking assistance only when they are in crisis. To fill this gap, this study investigated how young people perceive and use drug use services in British Columbia (BC), Canada. Adolescents and young adults are most prone to begin using drugs. High rates of drug abuse among young individuals are troubling, given the overwhelming evidence linking early initiation to an increased risk of developing a substance use disorder (SUD) and associated mental health and behavioral issues.

The focus groups and interviews were audio-recorded, verbatim transcribed, and thematically analyzed with NVivo (version 12), following Braun and Clarke's six-step approach. The research coordinator reviewed the analysis and attended regular debriefings with the author, KM, who has extensive experience conducting qualitative health research on drug use. Participants were young people aged 12 to 24 who had a history of drug use (including alcohol, cannabis, and/or illegal substance use) and lived in British Columbia. Youth under the age of 16 needed permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate, while those aged 16 to 24 consented on their own behalf.

The researchers interviewed a total of thirty young individuals. The participants' median age was 21, and they identified mostly as women (55.6%) and white/Caucasian (66.7%). Most youth had used a variety of substances in their lifetime and within the previous year, with alcohol being the most common, followed by marijuana/cannabis, psychedelics, amphetamines (e.g., MDMA, ecstasy) and other stimulants, non-prescription or illegal opioids, depressants, and inhalants. More over half (55.6%) had some postsecondary education, and almost all (94.4%) were attending school or working. Seventy-five percent of the respondents had utilized substance-use services. Youth confront various challenges when trying to access existing drug use services in British Columbia. Participants in this study discussed their attitudes toward substance use and their experiences navigating resources, as well as the multi-level hurdles to receiving information and help. During these sessions, youth described how the crisis-oriented status of the present healthcare system leaves many of their needs unfulfilled, asking for a more youth-centered and driven preventative and early intervention approach for different youth across British Columbia (Turuba et al., 2022).

➤ *A Qualitative Study of Drug Treatment Conformity Behavior among Young Drug users who are in Recovery in China*

According to Li (2022), drug addiction is a criminal act that has serious consequences for the person, family, and society. The Chinese government has prioritized drug prevention and rehabilitation initiatives for young people. In China, there are three forms of drug treatment: voluntary, compulsory isolation, and community-based. Since the passage of the Chinese anti-drug law in 2008, community-based drug rehabilitation has developed as a new form of anti-drug treatment strategy, allowing drug users to gradually accomplish rehabilitation in their own family and community contexts while staying linked to society. The goal of this study was to undertake a qualitative analysis of the many types of drug treatment compliance behaviors and the mechanisms by which they emerge in this group.

In this study, 21 young drug users under the age of 35 were chosen for in-depth interviews to look into the factors that influence their drug treatment adherence. The participants were drug users who had received community-based drug treatment in mainland China under the Drug Treatment Regulations, which require drug users to be treated and supervised in their homes. A "purposive sampling" technique was utilized to ensure the sample's representativeness, and a high level of heterogeneity was chosen within the intended age range (18-35 years). The sample included people who were mentally and cognitively normal, had a history of drug use, had completed drug rehabilitation, and had returned to society. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to gather

research data. A basic interview framework was utilized to define the interview direction and to better understand the respondents' drug rehabilitation process. Face-to-face interviews were done, with participants advised of research confidentiality. The interviewers took notes on crucial issues and taped the interviews using a voice recorder.

Based on the social conformity theory framework, the researchers picked three theoretical conceptions of cognitive, emotional, and utilitarian dimensions to lead their search for important evidence on reasons for drug treatment compliance. Young drug users' conformity behaviors may be classified into three categories based on the incentive driving the behavior: abidance, compliance, and obedience. Young drug users encounter a wide range of objects, from the micro to the macro level, encompassing a whole social-ecological system of persons, organizations, society, and the environment: the individual's past experiences, family members, peer groups, schools, businesses, communities, social policies, laws and regulations, and cultural settings. It is clear that identification of abidance is predominantly motivated by internal impulses, whereas compliance and obedience are mostly motivated by external influences.

➤ *How People with Lived Experiences of Substance use Understand and Experience User Involvement in Substance use Care: A Synthesis of Qualitative Studies*

According to Bee et al. (n.d.), people with drug use histories have a different perspective on important topics linked to user engagement than researchers and health professionals. A rigorous evidence synthesis of 117 research found that user engagement fails because the patient's frame of reference varies from the provider's. While service users prioritize interpersonal components, health experts prefer to define user engagement in terms of quantitative outcomes. The researchers argue that enthusiasm for user satisfaction surveys should be reduced, and that a more participatory approach to program assessment is necessary to alter patient satisfaction surveys. They point out that the rich and nuanced experiences of service consumers can be better captured by qualitative approaches that use more generic, open-ended questions articulated in terms of service user experiences.

This study makes use of Malterud's modified meta-ethnography analysis method, which is a step-by-step approach for synthesizing data from qualitative investigations. The approach is divided into seven steps: (1) getting started; (2) identifying what is significant; (3) reading the studies; (4) deciding how the studies are connected; (5) translating the studies into each other; (6) synthesizing translations; and (7) expressing the synthesis. This study looked at the following electronic databases: CINAHL (EBSCO), Embase, MEDLINE, PsycINFO (ProQuest), Scopus, SocINDEX, and Web of Science. The searches used a range of terms to focus on five key concepts: service user views, substance use problems, user engagement, substance use services, and qualitative research.

The findings of this meta-synthesis paint a coherent picture of three diverse interpretations of user engagement. These data show that, while the term "user involvement" is commonly employed, it is a broad and ambiguous notion. Understandings of the idea impact expectations of user engagement, practices, and priority areas, hence these findings are important for enhancing user involvement research and future clinical practice. Because the phrase is vague, the analysis underlines the importance of frequently examining how user participation is defined, as well as taking into account service users' viewpoints while researching and defining user involvement. Furthermore, the study covers key practices that emerged from user engagement. The meta-synthesis underlines that there are significant faults connected with the implementation of user engagement, and the findings recommend a focus on relational and contextual variables such as stigma, power, and fatalism to encourage user participation. (Selseng, Follevåg, & Aaslund, 2021).

➤ *Experience of Drug Abusers Participating in Community-Based Drug Rehabilitation Services Provided by the Counselling Centers for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs) in Hong Kong*

The problem of drug addiction in Hong Kong persists, despite the fact that the overall number of reported drug abusers in official data has decreased over the last four years. What lies underneath the official data is a history of clandestine drug usage and the resulting long-term drug addiction problems. Recovery from drug addiction is a complex and time-consuming process that is prone to relapse. The fundamental notion is that community members who are battling with drug addiction or have previously ceased using drugs have significant demands and obstacles in their everyday lives and may be unable to function independently. As a result, they seek assistance from the community. To suit their individual requirements, 11 Counselling Centres for Psychotropic Substance Abusers (CCPSAs) in various areas of Hong Kong play an essential role in aiding drug abusers. Furthermore, there is almost little discussion about the quality of CCPSA services. The goal of this study is to look at the experiences of drug abusers who participate in community-based drug rehabilitation programs offered by CCPSAs, including their impressions of the services and their impact.

The research design is a descriptive qualitative study. The qualitative study aims to uncover and grasp the experiences of individuals who use drug rehabilitation services provided by CCPSAs. Purposive sampling was utilized, in which the researchers selected and identified information-rich subjects that satisfied predetermined criteria for relevance. The target population 1) had prior drug abuse experiences on single or multiple drugs, regardless of drug type or length of abuse experience; 2) participated in drug treatment and rehabilitative services provided by any CCPSA for more than two months, which is 78 days in view of the median length of stay for outpatient treatment, as reported by the Treatment Episode Dataset. Five participants were recruited for the research. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted between 2019 and 2020. Each face-to-face interview included

one interviewer and one observer. The interviews lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. To ensure participants' privacy and avoid interruption, interviews were held in a private section of the CCPSAs. All of the interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim. To be as close to the actual events as feasible, the transcript might contain the voice and tone of speech.

This study produced five themes: 1) receiving supportive counseling services in CCPSAs, 2) revealing variation in non-mandatory services in CCPSAs, 3) encountering intrapersonal conflicts while participating in CCPSAs, 4) expanding social network through participation in group activities, and 5) wishing to be a companion to other drug abusers. The findings offer insight on the attitudes and outcomes of CCPSA-provided drug rehabilitation services. Motivation appears to be a common factor in rehabilitation programs throughout cultures. According to the study, drug users respect motivation and feel it is strongly related to the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. Reference also revealed a positive correlation between motivation facilitation and abstinence result, showing that it is more effective than compulsion in a recovery program. This view is congruent with current research, which demonstrates that drive is a common component that drug users feel is beneficial to rehabilitation. Increased motivation has been connected to drug abusers' self-efficacy and sense of control, leading to change-related behaviors such as discarding drug-use tools or seeking for job. The social workers' commitment to drug abstinence fortifies their determination. Counselling helps service users relate past events to their current life difficulties, resulting in increased self-acceptance, self-worth, personal value, and self-esteem (Tiu et al., 2020)

➤ *Intrinsic Motivation and Psychological Connectedness to Drug Abuse and Rehabilitation: The Perspective of Self-Determination*

Drug addiction is defined as the abusive, maladaptive dependence on drugs that results in severe impairment or discomfort. This study uses the Self-Determination Theory to examine the psychological experiences of drug users and their decisions to use drugs or not, with a focus on the idea of relatedness. The consequence is that significant others can form unconditionally warm, caring, and sympathetic supporting connections with drug users, so improving their psychological well-being and lowering the chance of relapse.

This qualitative research comprised 103 drug users. The participants were drug abusers who had been detained and treated in four government-run treatment centers in Hong Kong or under community supervision under the Drug Addiction Treatment Center Ordinance. Purposive sampling was used to ensure a fair distribution of convicts, supervisees (those under post-release community supervision), and recalled (those returned to in-center treatment after relapsing under post-release community supervision) throughout the four institutions. Individual interviews and focus groups were conducted by a team comprising a researcher and research assistant. A one-on-one, semi-structured interview spanning 30 minutes to an hour was conducted with 67 participants. In addition, six 1.5-hour focus groups with six inmates each were conducted, for a total of 36 participants.

The 103 competitors were split 50/50 between men and women. Participants' ages varied from 11 to 70 years old, with the biggest age group being 21-30 (N = 41, 40.2%) and the smallest being 51+ (N = 6, 5.9%). Over half of the subjects (N = 66, 65.3%) took drugs at least six times each week. Participants might indicate more than one type of drug taken; crystal methamphetamine (nicknamed 'ice' or 'meth') was the most popular (67%). The majority of respondents (77.8%) first used drugs between the ages of 11 and 20. The majority of respondents (N=49, 49%) had been taking drugs for more than 10 years and attributed their use to peer influence.

Extrinsic incentive (for example, parental forceful discipline and control) was found to be ineffectual for participants and may even lead to deviant conduct such as drug usage. Participants are driven to avoid drugs by their significant others (guanxi), a new lifestyle that includes work, defined goals, and religious beliefs. The warmth, care, love, and comfort that participants receive from significant others, as well as life objectives, help people feel peace, happiness, and security in order to fill a psychological void and gain strength during tough times. This helps foster their psychological needs and enhances their natural drive to direct towards beneficial, adaptive behavioral patterns (Chan et al., 2019).

➤ *Ex-Drug Users' and Health Professionals' Perspectives about School-Based Drug Use Prevention Programs: A Qualitative Study*

Adolescent drug use has been a major issue in Indonesia. Adolescents are at a critical period in the progression of drug abuse. When a youngster separates from his or her parents and begins attending school, the likelihood of drug abuse rises. The greatest risk arises when a teenager reaches high school. During this time, the adolescent's social condition changes substantially since he or she will face a variety of social, psychological, and academic challenges. Between the ages of 15 and 18, adolescents develop parental faith in their abilities to manage themselves, and as a result, they are permitted to participate in social activities with peers outside of their homes. Drug prevention programs should start at an early age, such as 11 or 12 years old. During this period, children are introduced to drugs, which they often begin using in high school. This study was conducted in a collaborative manner to elicit varied perspectives from relevant stakeholders. The study was preliminary research designed to discover an effective school-based drug prevention program for teenagers.

This qualitative study used Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to get feedback from ex-drug users (EDUs) and health professionals (HPs) on an effective and acceptable drug prevention program for adolescents in schools. Two focus group discussions were undertaken, one for EDUs and one for HPs. Each FGD included eight participants. Two sets of participants were selected as

samples: eight EDUs who had previously served as addiction consultants at one of the Provincial National Narcotics Boards, and eight HPs. Purposive sampling was used to choose participants who had sufficient knowledge and capacity to offer information relevant to the study's objectives. Participants in each FGD were asked semi-structured open-ended interview questions about the implementation of school-based drug prevention programs for adolescents, such as the program's significance, appropriate format, program participants, and use of religious elements. The data was examined using qualitative content analysis. The majority of research participants were male (68.75%), above the age of 35 (56.25%), married (81.25%), and held a diploma or higher (56.25%).

Overall, EDUs and HPs have identical views on the adoption of school-based drug addiction prevention programs. The study aimed to discover effective strategies for school-based drug prevention programs from the perspectives of educators and health experts. When questioned about the significance of drug prevention programs in schools, both EDUs and HPs agreed that drugs had a detrimental influence on adolescent growth and development. They lacked empathy, were difficult to manage, were very emotional, and loved breaking and committing crimes, resulting in numerous legal troubles during their adolescent addiction period. As a result, their lives fell apart, leaving them with no prospects for the future. Furthermore, the HPs discovered that teenage drug users were usually alone and had strained ties with their family and social circles. The problem arose because these addicts required a big number of money to buy narcotics, therefore they frequently committed theft and other crimes. Furthermore, many adolescent addicts suffered from chronic ailments and dropped out of school owing to disobedience and the inability to adjust academically (Tahlil & Ayub, 2021).

#### ➤ *Telling Stories of Recovery: A Narrative Evaluation of a Community-Based Drug Treatment Program*

Community-Based Drug Treatment (CBDT) is a drug misuse treatment approach that takes use of existing community resources. However, just a few research have reported its usefulness based on the subjects. They evaluated Katatagan Kontra Droga sa Komunidad (KKDK), a 12-module CBDT program designed for low- to moderate-risk users, using a narrative approach to demonstrate how this sort of assessment may increase our knowledge of program success. This paper contributes to our understanding and evaluation of CBDT in three ways. First, it gives a complete understanding of how the treatment works in a real-world setting. Second, it provides personal stories of change, which program developers may use to drive treatment design, implementation, and assessment. Finally, it suggests a conceptual framework for drug rehabilitation that is more reconstructive than punitive.

Seven recovered drug addicts who completed the program accepted the invitation to interviews. They were classed as low or mild users based on two assessment tools: the World Health Organization's Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Inventory Screening Test (WHO-ASSIST) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Substance Use Disorders (DSM-SUD). They used Murray's (2000) technique to analyze the data, creating a matrix that captured the narratives at the three levels of change analysis used in this study. At the personal level, we looked for themes in the stories that indicated personal growth as a result of participation in KKDK. At the positional level, we looked for themes in the narratives that reflected how the participants regarded themselves, the local government unit, the police officers, and the facilitators during their rehabilitation. Finally, at the ideological level, they looked for themes in the tales that reflected the participants' perspectives on the program.

The narrative analysis findings were presented in line with the research question at each of Murray's (2000) three levels of analysis. At the personal level, they asked, "What personal changes do participants attribute to their participation in KKDK?" And at the positional level, what roles do participants assign to themselves, facilitators, LGUs, and the PNP in terms of effective program delivery? Finally, what ideologies emerge from the participants' transformation narratives when they characterize KKDK? The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of Katatagan Kontra Droga sa Komunidad using a narrative approach. They utilized Murray's (2000) narrative analysis to look into the numerous ways the program improved the participants' lives. They selected three areas in which they believe KKDK's strongest features make it an effective community-based drug treatment program. These are the program's ideological approach to therapy, collaboration with community members built by participants to be change agents, and the use of cultural resources that assist recovery and transformation (Bautista. & Calleja, 2021)

#### ➤ *Addicted People's Experiences of the Consequences of Substance Abuse on their Lives: A Phenomenology Study*

Addiction, with natural catastrophes, epidemics, illnesses, and war, is one of the world's four most significant threats today. Addiction or drug dependency, sometimes known as substance-related illnesses in psychiatric terms, is the second most frequent mental disorder. Addiction is a chronic neurological condition involving genetic, mental, social, and environmental factors influencing its development and symptoms. Drug addiction is destructive to the user, their relatives, and the society in which they live. It goes without saying that the World Health Organization has identified drug addiction as a threat to society's safety and public health, and has labeled it a major risk to all communities worldwide. Nowadays, drug abuse is a serious ailment that affects people's behavior, self-esteem, nutrition, career, and social life; it also causes social, economic, health-related, and legal problems. Substance abuse may ruin a person's life by affecting his or her thoughts, moods, personality, and conduct.

For the current study, the researcher chose a phenomenological qualitative approach above other types of qualitative techniques. Phenomenology studies allow researchers to access and comprehend individuals' genuine experiences. The research aims to look at the consequences of drug abuse on the lives of women and men throughout recovery. They gathered data through semi-structured interviews. Interviews were performed with 40 individuals (20 men and 20 women) undergoing treatment for drug addiction at

various facilities around Kerman, Iran. The data for this study was collected using a voice recorder. After all of the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed and examined. Before recording their voice, however, participants were informed about the aims of the study and were assured of the secrecy of their information.

During the data analysis, 149 codes were discovered, from which 16 subthemes were created. Some consequences are experienced by both men and women, while others are only reported by one gender. Individual consequences of substance misuse were as follows: - When questioned about the effects of addiction on their life, people suggested eight distinct outcomes. One of them was losing confidence. Some of the participants had lost faith in their families since the onset of their addiction. Others had lost trust in both their family and their neighbors. The participants' responses revealed that substance abuse has a wide variety of negative consequences for both the person and society. One of the most significant consequences was a loss of dignity and respect for people and their families in the sight of others. Another study, which examined dependent women in Iran in 2012, discovered that humiliation and familial ostracism were among the most prevalent difficulties stated by addicts. Several of these people had lost their respect, dignity, and confidence in others, while several female participants had lost the support of their families. Other interviewees expressed intense animosity as a result of utilizing certain drugs (crack) or postponing the use of addictive substances. Furthermore, multiple studies have revealed that drug usage raises the likelihood of violence, and as addiction progresses and drug consumption increases, people lose control over their aggressive behavior. Divorce was another devastating outcome of addiction. In this study, females reported more divorces than males. In other words, their husbands, particularly those who were not addicts, filed for divorce after learning that their wives were addicted to opioids, especially after attempting but failing to help them quit. In the case of males, their wives filed for divorce because their husbands were uninterested in them or did not value the family. Previous study confirms this result, since some divorced spouses stated that drug use led to the demise of their marriages (Rahmati, Herfeh, & Hosseini, 2019).

➤ *Engaging the Family in Recovery: Outcome of a Community-based Family Intervention*

According to Hosseinbor, Bakhshani, & Shakiba (2012), Studies on drug use and family features showed that families coping with drug use typically have complex dynamics, and the link between drug and family dynamics appears to be bidirectional (Hosseinbor, Bakhshani, & Shakiba, 2012). According to research, parenting styles impact the onset and advancement of drug use in children (Gruber and Taylor, 2006). Drug-abusing parents influenced their children's fate. Similarly, inattentive or inconsistent parenting produces lower outcomes for children, especially those reared in households with substance use disorders (SUD) (Lander, Howsare, & Byrne, 2013). Family is a crucial factor in drug rehabilitation and intervention (Coleman & Davis, 1978; Stanton & Shadish, 1997; Velleman, Templeton, & Copello, 2005). According to research, programs that incorporate the family are more likely to succeed than interventions that do not address family problems (Stanton & Shadish, 1997). Family support is a crucial contributor to drug rehabilitation, to the point that persons without it are at a disadvantage in official drug use therapy (Clark, 2001).

This study employed a mixed method approach to gain a better understanding of how the program impacted the participants and their families. This triangulation technique uses quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to augment one sort of evidence with the other, giving in a more full understanding of the evolving experiences of participating families. Seven communities from two Metro Manila cities were selected for the study. The sample consists of a random mix of males, women, and LGBTQ persons. Many people have previously engaged in community-based treatments that focused on the livelihood (BANAT) and spirituality (SIPAG and Sanlakbay) components of addiction rehabilitation. BANAT offers job prospects, but SIPAG and Sanlakbay are programs that emphasize prayer and spiritual development in the rehabilitation process. Of the 19 participants, nine were children of participants (four daughters and two sons), eight were wives, one sister, and one mother. Their ages ranged from 16 to 75 years.

Four weeks after the KKDK program concluded, family members were asked about the changes they had noticed, and three themes emerged: responsibility, stating opinions and feelings, and asking forgiveness/reconciliation. They were seen to be more responsible, articulating their thoughts and feelings and begging forgiveness for previous transgressions. These gains appear to be consistent with the qualitative changes observed by family members in both individuals and households. Family support, in particular, appears to be effective in lowering SUD symptoms. The findings indicated changes in both the individual and the family. Family members saw improvements in the KKDK participant after they completed the individual and family modules, particularly in terms of accountability, voicing thoughts and feelings, and asking forgiveness. Changes in the family were also seen, such as stronger family bonds, involvement in religious ceremonies, and spending more time together. This is consistent with the literature that indicated better outcomes when engaging in family therapy for drug and alcohol use disorders (Copello, Velleman, & Templeton, 2005; Stanton & Shadish, 1997).

➤ *Lived Experiences of Stigma among Filipino Former Drug Dependents: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.*

According to Corrigan (2004), Stigma is one of the most major hurdles to drug users' rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Stigma comprises societal biases, injustices, and negative perceptions. Substance users are given more serious consideration than persons suffering from severe mental illnesses (Kulesza et al., 2014). Substance users encounter more discrimination than persons with leprosy, obesity, depression, or schizophrenia (Ronzani, Higgins-Biddle, & Furtado, 2009), including judgment, mocking, inappropriate statements, overprotection, and angry stares (Mora-Ríos et al. 2017). They are also perceived by the public as "lazy," "losers," and having "no future" (Blendon & Young, 1998). Even while seeking treatment for their condition, drug users

experience severe stigma (Luoma et al., 2007). Stigma can exist both externally and internally (Kulesza, Larimer, & Rao, 2013; Link & Phelan, 2001; Livingston and Boyd, 2010). Individuals who are stigmatized expect discrimination and may resort to social isolation and retreat. Pachankis (2007) stated in his model of concealed stigma that when stigmatized people become aware of the salience of their stigma, their cognitive and affective well-being diminishes, ultimately leading to behavioral and self-evaluative repercussions. Individuals who have experienced stigma on several times are forced to accept the unfavorable views placed on them (Quinn & Earnshaw, 2011). Substance users are more likely to experience despair, low self-esteem, hopelessness, and self-isolation (Luoma et al., 2007; Luoma, Kohlenberg, Hayes, Bunting, & Rye, 2008).

This study is a qualitative phenomenological examination of the experiences of stigmatized Filipino ex-drug users. Seven semi-structured interviews were conducted and assessed using interpretive phenomenological analysis. The study sample consisted of seven people, five men and two females, ranging in age from 21 to 52 years (mean = 34.9). To be eligible for the research, individuals must be Filipino and have a history of drug addiction, preferably with illegal narcotics. Snowball sampling was also used, with some individuals' close relationships being solicited. Furthermore, each participant was assigned a pseudonym to safeguard their identity and anonymity. Prior to each interview, a Filipino-translated version of the Stigma Scale (King, Dinios, & Shaw, 2007) was used as a screening tool to determine whether the participant had experienced stigma. A score higher than the mean of all participants' combined scores indicated that the individual had faced stigma.

**Discrimination After Discovery.** The first topic outlines how people were handled when they were found to be drug addicts. It discusses the participants' external experiences with the stigma during and after drug use, with an emphasis on negative reactions from personal relationships, job discrimination, and building a bad reputation. The individuals were extremely distressed by their loved ones' unpleasant treatment since they had expected to get their assistance. One participant revealed how his wife threatened to take their child away and leave him after learning he was a drug user. The findings describe the participants' experiences with prejudice after being discovered to be using drugs, as well as other effects, how they dealt with the stigma and grew to transcend it in order to find a sense of purpose. The study's findings suggest that the process of experiencing and overcoming stigma is characterized by the interplay of social, structural, and personal processes, as well as a desire to improve oneself (Cunanan & Yabut, 2019).

This study synthesizes that addiction towards drugs is a major global risk factor that affects human kind. This notion aligns with the findings that strengthening motivation is related to the drug abuser's self-efficacy and sense of control, which subsequently leads to action of change. Drug abuse inflicts a whole gamut of adversities but many end up recovering and realizing the goodness of life without drugs.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides details on the means and method employed by the researcher in the conduct of their study, which includes the research design, population of the study, the research instrument and its development, data gathering procedures and treatment of data.

#### ➤ *Research Design and Method*

The qualitative method of research was applied in this study exploring the lived experiences of former drug users in Ilocos Norte who recovered from drug use without the government intervention. Qualitative research is a sort of research approach that focuses on examining and understanding people's ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences by collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (Hassan, 2024). The basic goal of phenomenological research is to obtain insight into a specific audience's sensations and sentiments regarding the topic under investigation. In the viewpoint of the audience, these narratives represent reality (Dovetail, 2023).

#### ➤ *Population and Locale of the Study*

The participants that were chosen in this study involved those former drug users who recovered from drug use without the intervention of the government in Ilocos Norte. The researchers selected five (5) participants: one (1) participant is from Brgy. Elizabeth, Marcos, 68 years old, married, mother of 2; two (2) are from Brgy. Colo Batac City, 33 and 30 years old, both male; one (1) is from Brgy. Maananteng, Solsona, 33 years old, male; and one (1) from San Julian Solsona, 38 years old, male. The selected participants had been fully recovered from drug use within the span of 5- 10 years or more and they did not undergo government programs.

The researchers employed deliberate sampling to collect in-depth knowledge and comprehensive information from the five (5) selected individuals in order to understand about their lived experiences as former drug users who recovered without government assistance. This sampling technique relies on the researcher's judgment in identifying and selecting the persons, instances, and events that can give the most information to achieve the study's objectives (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

#### ➤ *Data Gathering Tool*

The data gathering tools that were used were an interview guide, a recording device, and an interview. The semi-structured interview guide was supplemented by a phone recorder to record the responses of the respondents for follow-up questions.

The researchers constructed an interview guide composed of a series of questions about the lived experiences of former drug users who recovered from drug use without government intervention which includes the factors that influence the former drug users to use drugs, challenges encountered by the former drug users in phase of drug use and recovery, coping strategies applied by the former drug users, factors that influence the former drug users to terminate drug use, and the realization of the former drug user in using drugs.

A semi-structured interview guide is a list of questions that an interviewer uses to cover a range of topics during a formal interview. The guide should help the conversation flows naturally and includes an introduction, middle, and end (George, 2022).

This was validated through conducting pilot testing to the three (3) participants from Marcos, Batac, and Solsona in this Province. Thereafter, data gathering through a one-on-one interview immediately proceeded. Personal interviews were made convenient for the participants; hence the researchers were the ones who reached out. After the interview of the participants, the researchers analyzed and interpreted the gathered data with the support of related studies and theories.

#### ➤ *Data Gathering Procedure*

The following procedures were undertaken in gathering the actual data of the study after establishing the validity and reliability of the instruments through tests.

Upon the approval of the research instrument, the researchers submitted the written consent letter to the adviser for checking and approval. With the approval of the request and written consent letters, these were given to the participants. After the request was granted by the selected participants, the researchers conducted the actual data gathering through a one-on-one interview. Personal interviews were made convenient for the participants' availability. The confidentiality of the data that were gathered was discussed. After the participants answered all the questions, the researchers transcribed the answers of the participants. After transcribing, the researchers analyzed and interpreted the gathered data with the support of related studies and theories.

#### ➤ *Treatment of Data*

The researchers utilized theme analysis, which required data saturation during data collecting. The researchers continued to recruit fresh volunteers until the data collected was saturated. Thematic analysis is a way of analyzing qualitative data. It often

refers to a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. The researcher carefully examines the data to identify common themes, which are subjects, concepts, and patterns of meaning that recur again. Thematic analysis is an effective technique in research that aims to discover anything about people's ideas, views, knowledge, experiences, or values from a set of qualitative data Caulfield (2019).

**Data Familiarization.** The researchers transcribed and familiarized themselves. utilizing the data received from the participants via interviews and recording devices were distributed to persons who recovered from drug usage without government assistance.

**Data Quotation.** The researchers recognized and tagged significant data in replies from participants that were relevant or possibly intriguing. **Coding.** The researchers created first codes that summarized the salient components of the subject's experiences. **Theme Identification.** The researchers evaluated the data that were coded, Overarching themes emerged that indicate the data's patterns and relevance. **Interpretation.** The scholars interpreted the themes, and developed and presented the findings utilizing theory and literature.

#### ➤ *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical issues are a set of notions that guide research design and methodology. When collecting data from individuals, scientists and researchers must always adhere to a certain code of behavior (Bhandari, 2021).

To protect the participants from harm, the researchers created an informed consent form as part of the study's conduct. The consent copy was given to each participant by the researchers. The participants were also oriented that taking part in the study was within their discretion. At any point during the interview, they had the authority and right to decline to answer any questions.

As to confidentiality, the researchers ensured that the personal information and responses of the participants as well as the recorded audio of the interview were kept confidential and properly set to archive.

The researchers also used an anonymization technique by not indicating the names of the participants in the transcripts of the study. Respecting these ethical considerations fosters a safe and trusting research environment, encouraging participants to share their experiences honestly and openly, ultimately contributing to the research conducted.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION, AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter presents, interprets, and analyzes the data gathered about the factors that influence the former drug users to use drugs, the challenges encountered by the former drug users in the phase of drug use and recovery, the coping strategies applied, the factors that influence the former drug users to terminate drug use, and the realizations of the former drug users in using drugs.

➤ *Factors that Influence the Former Drug users to use Drugs*

This section of the study presents the formulated themes relevant to the factors that influence the drug users in using drugs.

➤ *External Influences*

External influences refer to factors outside of an individual, group, or organization that impact their decisions, behavior, or outcomes. These factors can include economic conditions, cultural norms, technological advancements, government regulations, and competitive forces in the market (Smith, 2023).

In this study, external influences are defined as influences coming from peers and family problems which pushed the drug users to use drugs.

The code peers and persuading are supported by the statements of Participant 1 who had recovered from drugs for 15 years now. She stated that:

***“Maysa nga rason barkada  
ken tay maallukoy ka.”***

(One of the reasons was my set of peers, and I was persuaded.)

Participant 2 who had recovered from drug use without government assistance for 6 years now, further supports the code peers, family problems and persuading as he claimed:

***“Ti talaga rason na no apay nga nagusar  
nak ti illegal nga droga gapo kadagidyay  
barkadak kin mesa gapo ta awisen dak, kin  
adu nga problema, problema ti balay kasdyay”.***

(The true reason why I used illegal drugs was because of my peers and they tied to convince me and also the many problems I faced, just like family problems.)

Participant 3 who had recovered from drug use for 5 years now also supplements the codes peers and family problems as he asserted:

***“Napabarkada nak, mesa pay nagkaroon nakmet  
ti makunkuna nga family problem.”***

(I was influenced by my peers, and I also had family problems)

Participant 4 who had recovered from drug use without government assistance for 11 years from now also aided the codes peers, curiosity, and persuading as he asserted:

***“Inawis dak dagiti barkadak na curious  
nak met ti feeling na no kasanu ti agusar  
ti droga, kunkunada gamin kanyak  
mayat ti epekto.”***

(My peers persuaded me and I was curious on what it feels like to use drugs because they said that their effect is good.)

Participant 5 who had recovered from drug use without government assistance for 7 years from now also aided the codes peers and persuading as he asserted:

***“Maysa idta tay barkada no dadduma  
kin tay maallukoy ka.”***

(One of the reasons was my peers and I was persuaded by them.)

According to Croat (2009), substance abuse can lead to not just the adoption of comparable conduct, but also the adoption of other forms of risky, criminal, or delinquent behavior. According to the literature, peer influence is the most common reason for drug use. According to the findings, extrinsic motivation is not beneficial to individuals and may potentially encourage them to participate in deviant behaviors such as drug usage. (Chan et al., 2019).

#### ➤ *Internal Influences*

Internal influences refer to the personal characteristics, values, beliefs, emotions, and psychological factors within an individual or organization that shape their decisions, actions, and outcomes (Jones, 2022).

Internal influences referred to in this study are influences including curiosity and personal problems that pushed the drug users to use drugs.

The statement made by the Participant 1 supported the core idea of Internal Influences, who stated:

***“Syak idi ket curious nak no ana ti rikna na  
ti kasdyay met nu agusar nak, no dadduma  
adda dagiti probproblema.”***

(I was curious about what it feels like if I'm going to use it, also sometimes there were problems.)

Participant 2's statement also gives support to the main theme of Internal Influences.

***“Macurious nak met nu ana ti feeling na  
ti agusar kunkunada ngamin idi kinyak  
dagidyay barkadak iddi nga mayat ti epekto na.”***

(I was curious about what it feels like when using drugs, my peers would always say that the effect was great.)

The statement of Participant 3 also supports the theme that was developed.

***“Na curiousan nak dyay raman na.”***

(I got curious about the taste of it.)

Internal Influence can also find support in the statement of Participant 4, stating that:

***“Na curious nak met ti  
feeling na nukasanu ti agusar ti droga.”***

(I was curious about the feeling of using drugs.)

Further, the statement of Participant 5 also supports Internal Influences

***“Curious ka nu ana ti rikna na ti  
kasdyay met nu agusar ka.”***

(You become curious of how would it feel when you use drugs.)

Curiosity is a natural part of human nature. For many people, the desire to explore the unknown is hard to resist. This is especially true with drugs, where there's often a mix of fear and fascination. This type of curiosity can be overwhelming, especially if individuals feel like they are missing out on an experience or if they are drawn to the idea of escaping their current reality, even temporarily. On the other hand, personal problems can create a deep, emotional need for relief or distraction, making drugs feel like an appealing option. When someone is struggling with stress, anxiety, depression, or even feeling of loneliness, he or she might turn to substances as a way of coping up. It is not always a conscious decision—sometimes it is just a desperate attempt to feel something different or better than what she or he is feeling at the moment. These internal battles highlight the importance of addressing the root causes, like mental health struggles or unmet emotional needs, instead of just focusing on the behavior itself.

Both personal and environmental factors have a direct impact on the risk of drug use. Furthermore, all three of these elements

mutually influence each other, resulting in constantly shifting functional linkages that both directly and indirectly influence drug usage (Smith, 2021). Curiosity plays into the framework of Rational Choice Theory by Adam Smith, which posits that individuals weigh the potential costs and benefits of their actions. When someone decides to use drugs out of curiosity, he or she may perceive the potential benefits (e.g., pleasure, escape, or satisfaction of curiosity) as outweighing the risks (e.g., legal trouble, health consequences). This decision-making process, though influenced by internal struggles, shows how individuals rationalize their choices based on what they believe will bring immediate relief or satisfaction.

➤ *Challenges Encountered by the Former Drug Users*

Former drug users faced numerous challenges both during their time of drug use and in their journey toward recovery. These challenges may include physical and mental health issues, strained relationships with family and friends, social stigma, financial difficulties, and the struggle to break free from addiction.

➤ *Drug Use Phase*

The following present the themes formulated based on the challenges encountered by former drug users during the phase of their drug use. Exploring the reasons behind their drug use, the circumstances that influenced their behavior, and the impact it had on their physical health, mental state, relationships, and overall quality of life.

➤ *Health Issue*

Health issues in drug use refers to the physical, mental, or emotional harm caused by the consumption of substances, including both short-term and long-term effects. These issues can range from addiction, organ damage, and weakened immune systems to mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and psychosis (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020).

Health issue is defined in this study as lack of sleep and loss of appetite due to drug usage that affects the overall health of the user.

This is supported by the statement of Participant 1. He stated that:

***“Madiak nga matmaturugen,  
madi makapangan payen.”***

(I’m always sleep deprived, also losing appetite to eat.)

Participant 2 further supports the theme Health Issue, as he stated:

***“Narigat nak makaturog, dyak makapangpangan  
idi kasla dyak mabisbisinan kasla kanayun nak  
latta nabsog idi.”***

(I can’t sleep well, I cannot eat, I lose my appetite, I always feel like I’m full.)

Health Issue was greatly supported by Participant 3, stating that:

***“Medyo haan nak makaturturog.”***

(I cannot sleep really well.)

Moreover, Health Issue was also supported by the statement provided by Participant 4, who stated that:

***“Narigat nga alak ti turog ko,  
haan nak makapangan kasdyay.”***

(I’m having a hard time going to sleep, I cannot eat properly.)

Participant 5 further supports the theme Health Issue, as he stated that:

***“Madi ka makaturog, madi ka makapangan,  
nu ngamin makausar ka dika makaturog,  
dika makapangan.”***

(I cannot sleep, I cannot eat, because if you use drugs it is hard to get to sleep, you can’t eat properly.)

When someone loses appetite, he or she is less likely to get the nutrients the body needs to stay healthy. Over time, this can lead to severe weight loss, weakness, and a weakened immune system, making it harder for the body to fight off infections. It is not just about physical health, though—poor nutrition also affects the brain, worsening mental health issues like anxiety and depression. For someone already struggling with drug use, this creates a cycle that's incredibly hard to break. Sleep is essential for both physical recovery and mental stability, and without it, the body and mind start to break down. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to memory problems, poor decision-making, and heightened emotional instability, all of which make it even harder for a person to cope with life or consider quitting drug use. A lack of proper nutrition from loss of appetite combined with sleep deprivation creates a vicious cycle that weakens the body and mind further, trapping the user in a deteriorating state.

The overwhelming evidence leads to chronic sleep disturbances as a result of chronic addictive substance use, which may be distinct from some or all of the acute effects. Surprisingly, the effects of prolonged usage on sleep are comparable for both CNS stimulants and depressants. Chronic use of alcohol, cocaine, cannabis, and opiates appears to be associated with reduced sleep time, increased sleep latency and wake time following sleep start, and a lack of slow-wave sleep production (Angarita et al., 2016). In the short term, opiates produce anorexia, decreased food consumption, and impaired gastrointestinal motility, all leading to malnutrition and a higher risk of infections in the long run (Mahboub, 2020).

#### ➤ *Financial Distress*

Financial distress is a circumstance in which a firm or individual cannot create adequate sales or income, leaving them unable to fulfill or pay their financial commitments (Hayes, 2021).

Financial Distress is defined in this study as a state where individuals experience significant financial hardship due to their efforts to sustain a drug habit.

This is supported by the statement of Participant 1. He stated that:

***“Idi kapigsak nga agusar a ket maibusanak iti kwarta”***

(I ran out of money when I was using drugs heavily.)

Participant 2 further supports the theme Financial Distress, as he stated that:

***“Meysa nga problema nga naencounter ko idi kapigsak agusar ti droga ket kwarta,”***

(Money was one of my problems when I was using drugs.)

Moreover, Financial Distress was also supported by the statements provided by Participant 3, who stated that:

***“Ti problema nga naencounter ko ket maysa syempre nu agusar ka ket kasapulam ti kwarta tapnu adda maigatang mo”***

(When I used drugs, one of the problems I encountered was that, of course, purchasing drugs needs money.)

Participant 4 further supports the theme Financial Distress, as he stated that:

***“Ti na encounter ko idi napigsa nak agus usar ti droga ket kwarta, nu ayanno pagalaak ti kwarta”***

(One of the problems that I've encountered while doing drugs was money and where I can get it.)

Also, Participant 5 further supports the theme Financial Distress, as he stated that:

***“Maibusanak iti kwarta, awan maur urnong”***

(I would run out of money, nothing is left for my savings.)

One of the most significant challenges that drug users faced during the drug use phase is financial distress. It's something that can spiral out of control quickly and become one of the hardest aspects to manage. Drugs are expensive, and maintaining a habit often requires more and more money as time goes on. The body builds tolerance to substances, meaning the user needs higher doses or more frequent use to achieve the same effect. This increasing demand can drain finances rapidly. For someone who might already be struggling to make ends meet, this creates a financial burden that's nearly impossible to escape. They end up neglecting their responsibilities, like paying rent, utilities, or other bills, because their money is going toward feeding their addiction. Some might even lose their jobs due to poor performance, absenteeism, or health issues caused by drug use, which only adds to the financial strain. Without a stable income, it becomes harder to afford basic necessities, let alone the addiction. Understanding how deeply financial distress impacts someone in the drug use phase shows how addiction isn't just about the physical and emotional toll—it's about the financial and social fallout, too.

Financial distress during drug use is a significant challenge that can escalate quickly due to the high costs associated with sustaining a drug habit. As drug tolerance builds, users often need increasing amounts to achieve the same effects, leading to a rapid depletion of financial resources. This distress is compounded by additional expenses, such as medical costs for drug-related health issues and potential loss of income due to poor job performance or unemployment caused by addiction. Consequently, many individuals resort to borrowing, selling possessions, or even engaging in illegal activities to finance their drug use (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020).

➤ *Phase of Recovery*

The phase of recovery is a phase of a new life and changing for the better. However, there are still challenges that can be encountered during this phase because of past drug use. These former drug users suffer from different discrimination from society and psychological challenges for their withdrawal from drugs including withdrawal syndrome. It includes the theme stigma.

➤ *Stigma*

Stigma is defined as social prejudice, inequalities, and negative stereotypes. Stigma is one of the most important hindrances to the recovery and societal reintegration of persons who use drugs. Stigma can be experienced externally and internally. Stigmatized individuals anticipate discrimination and resort to social exclusion and withdrawal (Corrigan, 2004).

Stigma is defined in this study as bad perception to the drug user due to the previous drug use. It is accompanied by judgement and bad image from others.

This is supported by the statement of Participant 1. He stated that:

***“Sabali pinagkita ti tao kenkan, gapu ta sabali ti naggapu kadidyay nga bisyo syempre madi panagkitkita ti sabali nga tao kenka, aglalo dagitay assideg nga karrubam.”***

(People look at you differently, because of previous drug use they have bad perception about you, especially those near neighbors.)

Participant 2 further supports the theme Stigma, as he stated:

***“Ti problema nga naencounter ko after nak nakarecover ti pinagusar ko ti droga dyay pinagkita kinyak ti tao, narigat mo ikkaten kinyada nga nagbaliw kan ta tay kita da latta kinka ket kanayun ka latta agususaren, ijudge daka uray met haan ka nga agususaren.”***

(The problem that I encountered after I recovered from using drugs is the way people look at me, it is hard to change their minds that you are already a changed man, they will judge you even if you are not using anymore.)

Moreover, Stigma was also supported by the statements provided by Participant 3, saying that:

***“Nagkaroon nak ti bad image ti sabali nga customer ngem totally nga dida ammo nga kasta ngem didyay ngarud nga image***

***nabawasan ti customer ken kumapsut ti  
kita.”***

(I have a bad image to my customers, but they don't know totally about that, and consequently my customers are instantly decreasing and so my profit.)

Participant 4 further supports the theme Stigma, as he stated that:

***“Dyay panagkita da kanyak dagidyay tattao a  
ta narigat mo met ikkaten kanya da nu  
nagbaliw kan ta nu panagkita da kenka ket  
kanayun ka latta agus usar.”***

(The way people look at me, it is hard to change their mind about the fact that I am already a changed man, they will look at you as someone who is still using drugs.)

Finally, participant 5 further supports the theme Stigma, as he stated that:

***“Didyay kaslang sabali pinagkita ti tao kenka,  
gapu ta sabali naggapu kadidyay nga bisyo  
syempre madi panagkitkita ti sabali nga tao  
kenka, aglalo dagitay assideg nga karruba.”***

(People look at you differently, because of the previous drug use, of course people will look at you as a bad person, especially those near neighbors.)

People often stigmatized former drug users because of fear and misunderstanding. They see drug use as a personal failure or moral flaw, rather than understanding it as a complex issue influenced by various factors. There's a perception that former users might relapse or pose some kind of threat, which creates distrust. Society also tends to focus on the mistakes they made in the past rather than the progress they've achieved in recovery. Media and stereotypes don't help, as they usually highlight the negative aspects of addiction without showing stories of resilience or change. People also fear being associated with former drug users, as if the stigma might transfer to them. It feels like once someone is labeled, it's almost impossible for others to see him or her beyond that, which makes reintegration into society so much harder. The explanation aligns closely with Labeling Theory by Howard S. Becker, which emphasizes the impact of societal reactions and labels on individuals who have engaged in deviant behavior. According to Becker (1963), being labeled as deviant can lead to societal exclusion and a self-fulfilling prophecy, where individuals internalize the label and find it difficult to reintegrate. The stigma faced by former drug users reflects this dynamic, as they are often judged based on past actions rather than current efforts, reinforcing their marginalization. This focus on past deviance over progress highlights the lasting impact of labels in shaping societal perceptions and individual experiences.

According to Quinn and Earnshaw, (2011) individuals who are subjected to stigma on multiple times are forced to internalize the negative beliefs that have been placed on them. Substance users are more likely to experience despair, low self-esteem, hopelessness, and self-isolation. The process of experiencing and overcoming stigma consists in the interplay of social, structural, and personal processes, and it is supported by a desire to improve oneself (Cunanan & Yabut, 2019).

➤ ***The Coping Strategies Applied by the Former Drug Users***

There are some certain strategies that could change the whole life of a former drug user that can make him or her not to use drugs anymore. There are specific strategies that can make the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual well-being of a former drug user to detach himself or herself in a dark pit of the past.

➤ ***Coping Strategy Applied During Drug Use Phase***

The following presents the themes formulated based on the coping strategies applied by the former drug user during the drug use phase. This explores their challenges behind their drug use and on how they overcome the effect of drugs.

➤ ***Provisional Solution***

This refers to interim measures or strategies aimed at addressing issues related to substance use, pending the development of more comprehensive policies or interventions. This phase may involve experimental approaches to treatment, harm reduction, or prevention efforts. Such initiatives are vital in responding to the immediate risks associated with drug use while allowing for the collection of data to inform longer-term strategies (Hawk et al., 2017).

Provisional solution is defined in this study as immediate remedies to the existing problems which the drug user is facing in the phase of drug use such as drinking alcohol to make them go to sleep, eating soup to make them hungry, lying and stealing to

produce money for buying drugs.

The theme provisional solution is created under the coping strategies of drug user in the drug use phase.

This is supported by the statement of Participant 1. He stated that:

***“Agtakaw nak pay idi kenni mamang ko tapnu  
adda lang maigatang ko ti pagbisyon. Ibaga da  
uminom ti arak tapnu umawan dyay tama na isu  
didyay makaturog ka nga nasayaat.”***

(I would still from my mom the money I would use to buy drugs. They said that you need to drink alcohol so the effect of drug would be eliminated, hence you could now sleep well.)

This was also supported by Participant 2. As he stated that:

***“Tatnun makaparwarak ti financial nga igatang  
ko ket agulbodak kin mama nga kanayun maibos  
ti kwartak gapo ti kaado nga mabayadan dyay iskwela.  
Narigat nak makaturog sabsabayak nukwa uminom  
ti alcohol tapno la makaturog nak tapno makapangan  
nak ket agkaldo nak tapno kasla isu ti mangpabisin  
kinyak.”***

(In order for me to produce money for buying drugs, I would lie to my mother about my lack of allowance because of school fees. It is hard to get some sleep, so I would drink alcohol to get some sleep. For me to get hungry, I would eat soup first as it catalyzes hunger.)

Participant 3 further supports the theme Provisional Solution as he stated:

***“Dayuek agitay customer ko nukwa dagitay umay  
agpapaaramid ta patungak ti dakkel nga presyo nan  
... ibagada nga siyak tu latta mangibaga didyay  
presyo nan isu dyay dadduma nayunak nukwa  
tapos nu dadduma pay nu adda materiales da nga  
uray ideliver ilakok tay dadduma ta isu pangdelensya  
kon tapnu adda maigatang ko ti drugs.”***

(I would go to my customers, those who need my services and I would demand from them higher prices. When they say that it is up to me to determine the price, I grab this opportunity to give additional charges and would even sell some of the materials being delivered so that I can have something to use to buy drugs.)

Moreover, Provisional Solution was also supported by the statements provided by Participant 4, stating that:

***“Ti ubraek nukwa tapnu adda kwartak,  
agulbod nak nukwa ken mama. Uray narigat  
maala turog sabayak latta uminom ti arak  
uray kasanu piman nga narigat nga alan ti turog,  
ikarigatak latta nga maturog. Tapnu makapangan  
nak ket agkaldo tapnu haan nak mabisin aglalo  
ket mayat ti bagi nu agkaldo, nu kailangan  
kasapulan ti bagi.”***

(In order to produce money, I would lie to my mother. Even if it is hard to get some sleep, I will drink alcohol so I can sleep. For me to get hungry, I would eat soup first, especially since it is good for the body.)

Participant 5 further supports the theme Holistic Living, as he stated that:

***“Uminom ka ti arak ibaga da uminom ti arak  
tapnu umawan dyay tama na isu didyay makaturog  
ka nga nasayaat.”***

(Drink alcohol in order to remove the effect of drugs that causes disruption of sleep and because of that you will get some sleep.)

According to Roehrs and Roth (2001), a provisional solution to problems encountered in drug use, such as alcohol consumption for sleep induction, often involves implementing short-term interventions while addressing underlying causes. For instance, individuals may turn to alcohol as a sedative because of its initial depressant effects on the central nervous system. However, this practice can lead to disrupted sleep cycles, dependence, and other health issues.

Provisional solutions employed by the former drug users often address immediate challenges but are generally temporary and may have long-term drawbacks. Using alcohol to aid sleep can initially shorten sleep latency but often disrupts sleep patterns, causing dependency and poor rest quality. Resorting to lying and stealing to fund drug purchases undermines trust, increases legal risks, and perpetuates a harmful cycle. On the other hand, eating soup for appetite stimulation is a practical and beneficial approach, aiding nutritional recovery and stabilizing health during withdrawal and recovery phases. Adam Smith's rational choice theory assumes that the ordinary individual should make rational choices and decisions based on reasonable knowledge, which may lead to results that benefit the person or are consistent with their personal values. In most circumstances, the presumption is that the outcomes benefit the person making the decisions.

#### ➤ *Coping Strategy Applied During Recovery Phase*

The following presents the themes formulated based on the coping strategies applied by the former drug user during their recovery phase. Exploring their strategies on how to handle their behavior and what alternative they did to avoid drug use.

#### ➤ *Holistic Transformation*

Holistic transformation refers to a comprehensive change process that addresses multiple interconnected dimensions—such as physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects—aimed at fostering overall well-being and sustainable improvement. This approach recognizes the interconnectedness of systems, focusing on aligning personal, organizational, or societal elements to create meaningful and lasting change (Wilber, 2000).

Holistic transformation is defined in this study as doing something that is positive and can help former drug users not to engage in any usage of drugs. It includes employment, positive lifestyle and hobbies, and avoiding any temptation. The theme Holistic Transformation is a theme created under the coping strategies of a former drug user in recovery phase and as well as it was created under the adaptive strategies that they use.

This is supported by the statement of Participant 1. He stated that:

***“Syak idi adu inubrak ti immuna  
nagsarakak ti pag libangak , trabaho  
tumulong nak kenni inang ko idi ,... imbis nga  
ag bisyo idi ket innikan nak ni inang ko ti  
babbaboy nga alagaak idi. Inpakitak met nga  
naminpinsan nga nagbalbaliw nakon nga haan nga  
agbisbisyon, haan nga agsubli kadidyay nga bisyon.”***

(I used to do a lot of things like looking for a job and helping my mom... Instead of getting into vices, my mother gave me a pig to take care of. I showed them that I totally changed that I'm not using drugs anymore, and I'm not going back to that vice again.)

This was also supported by Participant 2. As he stated that:

***“Simrek nak ti trabaho iddi ta kayat ko  
nga agbaliw maminpinsanen uray narigat ko  
nga inikkat, isu didyay nagsapolak ti trabaho tapno  
mailiwliwak isu inot inot ko nga naikkat. Inpakitak nga  
nagbalbaliw nakun, haan nak nga kasla iddin  
nga nagbainen, kasla inyasideg ko ulit bagbagik ti community  
tapno agbaliw pinagkita da kinyak madi.”***

(I looked for a job back then because I wanted to change and start anew, even though it was hard for me to let go. Little by little, I managed to let go of drug use. I showed that I was changed. I was no longer the same as I was before. It was like I reconnected myself with the community so they could see the change in me in a positive way.)

Participant 3 further supports the theme Holistic Transformation, as he stated:

***“Ti inusar ko nga strategy sinabayak ti exercise, sapaek agdigus parbangon na, mangan nak ti sakto nga oras saak mapan trabahok tapos nu maka trabaho nak metten adeng ket alaek metten ti husto nga innanak tapnu ti kasta uray nabannog nak tapnu tay haan nak maguyuguy agaramid ti kasdyay.”***

(The strategy I made was doing exercise. I would wake up early in the morning to take a bath and eat on time before I go to work. After work, I would take a rest and even though I'm tired, this is the way to avoid that vice.)

Moreover, Holistic Transformation was also supported by the statements provided by Participant 4, stating that:

***“Napan nak nagsapul ti trabaho tapnon nu agbalbaliw, tapnu maminminsan uray narigat ko nga ikkaten nga droga. Inpakitak latta nga agbalbaliwakon kada haan nak nga kasla nga nagbain, inbengbeng ko latta rupak tapnun makisarita kanyada nga nasayaat, umasidegak lattan, iyas asideg ko latta dagitay bagik kanyada tapnun haan dak unay kabuteng.”***

(I looked for a job to start a new life even though it was difficult to get rid of drugs. I showed them that I've changed already and I need not to be shy anymore. And I tried to approach them the best way I can so that they will not be scared of me.)

Participant 5 further supports the theme Holistic Transformation, as he stated that:

***“Nagsarakak ti ubraek ken datay basketball met saggaminsan ta nu medyo maiyaw awan daydi didyay nga bisyo kase nu awan tilibangam sapul sapulem latta ngamin nukua. Inpakitak met nga naminpinsan nga nagbalbaliw nga haan nga agbisbisyon, haan nga agsubli kadidyay nga bisyon.”***

(I looked for a job and also I would play basketball sometimes in order to evade the temptation of using drugs. Because if I have no time for leisure, there's a possibility of temptation. I showed to them that I've already changed, that I'm not using drugs anymore, definitely not going back to that vice again.)

The transcribed coded data reveal that the former drug users' self-recovery journey was significantly influenced by several interrelated factors. Employment provided a vital structure and routine, fostering a sense of responsibility and purpose that likely countered the chaos of their previous lifestyle. This newfound stability was complemented by the physical activity associated with exercise, particularly through basketball, which not only improved their physical health but also facilitated the release of endorphins, enhancing mood and reducing stress. Attending church added another layer of support, offering spiritual nourishment and a sense of belonging within a community that promotes positive values and moral guidance. Together, these elements created a holistic recovery framework, where work, physical activity, social engagement, and spiritual involvement collectively reinforced the individual's resilience and commitment to recovery. Drug users often opt for self-recovery for several reasons. One significant factor is the stigma associated with seeking professional help, which can make individuals hesitant to reach out for support. They may fear judgment or discrimination from healthcare providers, family, or society. Additionally, financial constraints can limit access to rehabilitation programs, leaving self-recovery as the only viable option.

A holistic approach to recovery focuses on addressing physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, ensuring sustainable progress for individuals overcoming substance use disorders (SUDs). White et al. (2016) emphasized that addiction affects multiple aspects of life, and addressing these collectively enhances long-term recovery outcomes. Additionally, Gorski (2017) noted that individuals who adopt a comprehensive recovery strategy, including mindfulness, physical activity, and social connection, are significantly less likely to relapse compared to those who focus solely on clinical treatment.

#### ➤ *Factors that Influence the Former Drug user to Quit Drug use*

Former drug users often encounter turning points that motivate them to stop using drugs and pursue recovery. These factors can include personal realizations about the negative effects of drug use, the desire to rebuild relationships, concerns for their health, or the influence of supportive people in their lives.

➤ *Fervent Wish to Change*

Fervent wish to change refers to a strong, passionate desire for transformation of improvement in a particular area, often driven by deep emotions or convictions. This term encapsulates a sense of urgency and sincerity in the desire for change, reflecting intense feelings about the issue at hand (Collin, n.d.).

In this study, fervent wish to change refers to strong desire among individuals recovering from drug use to transform their life and overcome addiction. This wish often drives them to seek healthier lifestyles, improve relationships, and regain control over their choices.

The statement made by Participant 1 supported the core idea of fervent wish to change, who stated:

***“Ammok ti rigat nan ken ti epekto  
nan isu awan dik napapanunuten.”***

(I know how hard it is and the negative effect of it so I forget about it and would not think about it anymore.)

Participant 2's statement also supplied support to the main theme of Fervent Wish to Change.

***“Kayat ko talaga maminpinsan nga agbaliwen,  
tapno kasta mas mayat pay relasyon ko ti pamilyak adding.”***

(I really want to totally change, so that I would have a better relationship with my family.)

The statement of participant 4 additionally backed the theme that was developed.

***“Ammok ti mapala nan nu apay agusarak kayat ko  
agbaliwen, ditoy mindset kon haan ko kayat deta  
nga drogan...ammok ti rigat ti panagbiagen, didyay  
lang.”***

(I know what the outcome will be if I'm to use drugs, I want to change already, my mindset is I don't want drugs anymore... I know how hard life is, that's all.)

Struggles is also supported by the statements from Participant 5.

***“Dyay epekto na nga madi isu nga awanen, dyay  
epekto na talaga nga kayat ko agbalbaliw met nga  
maminpinsan.”***

(The negative effect, that's why I don't want it anymore, the bad effect of it, so I want to totally change.)

One of the most powerful motivators for change is the recognition of what's been lost. Drug use affects every aspect of life—health deteriorates, relationships break down, finances collapse, and a sense of purpose or stability disappears. When someone starts to see how much they've sacrificed and how much pain their choices have caused, not just to themselves but to those who care about them, it can spark a strong desire to turn things around. Another factor is the sheer exhaustion that comes with the lifestyle. The cycle of using, searching for the next fix, and dealing with the consequences is draining. Physically, the body starts to give out, and mentally, the emotional toll becomes unbearable. There's a moment when the user realizes that the temporary highs are no longer worth the overwhelming lows. This is often when the wish to change becomes a burning need. What makes this wish so intense is that it's usually tied to hope—hope for a better life, a healthier self, and the possibility of regaining control. It's the desire to escape the cycle of addiction and start fresh, free from the grip of drugs.

In the research "Lived Experiences of Stigma Among Filipino Former Drug Dependents: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis" (Cunanan and Yabut, 2019), the majority of the participants' newfound objective was to provide a good example for their children and family members. They wanted to spend more time with their family and demonstrate that they are capable of change. One remarked, "I was glad to be back [with my parents and siblings]." Another added, "I want them [his children] to see that even someone with a dark past can change." I did this for my wife and family. Because I used to seriously harm them, it felt like icy water was thrown on me. Finally, a participant stated, "I wanted my cousins to see that I could change—to be almost as good as they are."

### ➤ *Negative Effect*

Negative effects of drug use refer to the harmful consequences that result from the consumption of substances, impacting an individual's physical, mental, and social well-being. Physically, drug use can cause health problems such as organ damage, weakened immune function, and addiction. Mentally, it can lead to disorders such as anxiety, depression, and psychosis. Socially, drug use often disrupts relationships, reduces productivity, and contributes to criminal behavior (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020).

Negative effect is defined in this study as effects that are brought by using drugs which have a negative impact on their well-being. Such becomes the reason why the drug user wants to change for the better and quit drugs.

The statement made by Participant 1 supported the core idea of Negative Effect, who stated:

***“Ammok ti rigat nan ken ti epekto nan.”***

(I know now how hard it is and its effect.)

Participant 2's statement also supplied support to the main theme of Negative Effect.

***“Dyay epekto 1706an ga madi haan ko pulos kayat ti agaramaten.”***

(Because of the negative effect, I don't want to use it anymore.)

The statement of Participant 5 additionally backed the theme that was developed.

***“Dyay epekto 1706an ga madi.”***

(It is negative effect.)

The physical toll is one of the hardest things to ignore. Drugs can leave the body in ruins—constant fatigue, weight loss, illnesses, and even irreversible damage to vital organs. It's exhausting to wake up every day feeling worse than the day before. On top of that, the mental and emotional strain becomes unbearable. What might have started as a way to cope with stress or emotions only ends up making things worse, with anxiety, depression, and self-loathing becoming constant companions. Then there are the social consequences. Drug use damages relationships with family, friends, and loved ones. It isolates people, leaving them feeling alone and misunderstood. Financial struggles add even more pressure, and the shame of not being able to keep life together becomes a heavy burden. When someone looks around and sees how much his or her world has fallen apart, it's hard not to question if continuing down this path is worth it. This realization—that drug use no longer provides any benefit—is a turning point. It's not just about recognizing the harm; it's about feeling that deep desire to escape from it and rebuild something better. It's a moment of clarity, where the user can finally see how much she or he has lost and how much he or she stands to gain by quitting. This doesn't make the process of quitting easy, but it creates the motivation needed to take that first step toward recovery.

One of the most significant motivators for quitting drugs is the physical toll it takes on the body. Chronic drug use can lead to organ damage, weakened immunity, and life-threatening conditions such as cardiovascular diseases and liver failure (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020). For many users, the realization that their health is deteriorating beyond repair acts as a powerful wake-up call.

### ➤ *Realizations after Recovering from Using Drugs*

As former drug users navigate the challenges of overcoming addiction, many discover newfound perspectives that reshape their understanding of themselves and the world around them. Recovery is not merely about abstaining from drugs; it involves a holistic reevaluation of one's values, relationships, and aspirations. Individuals frequently report a greater appreciation for life's simple pleasures, enhanced emotional resilience, and a stronger sense of purpose.

### ➤ *The Repercussions from Drug Use*

Repercussions from drug use refer to the negative consequences that result from substance abuse, affecting an individual's physical health, mental well-being, and social relationships (Smith, 2020).

Repercussions from drug use are defined in this study as realizations of former drug users from previous drug use such as disruption of life and family relationship, negative effect on mental and physical health, and negative side effects.

This is supported by the statement of Participant 1. He stated that:

***“Madi unay deta droga idta bagbagik  
... haan la nga biag mo ti maperdi pati  
biag ti pamilyam.”***

(There is a negative effect of drugs on my body... it's not only your life that can be destroyed but also your family.)

Participant 2 further supports the theme Repercussions from Drug Use, as he stated:

***“Narealize ko nu kasano ti kinamadi  
nga epekto ti illegal nga droga, nu kasano na  
perdyen ti biyag mo... tun agangayen sikan tu  
metla madadael isu nga dakkel nga  
pinagbabawik nga nagaramat ti illegal nga  
droga.”***

(I realized how negative the effect of illegal drugs is, on how it will destroy your life...at the end I am the one that gets destroyed, that's why I'm having big regret in using illegal drugs.)

Furthermore, the theme Repercussions from Drug Use was greatly supported by Participant 3, stating that:

***“Na realize ko nga madi talaga ti epekto na ti  
agaramat ti makuna nga droga ta addu ti  
maperdi na ti personalidad mo tapos  
maapektuan pinagbiyag mo ken pamilyam.”***

(I realized the negative effect of using drugs because it destroyed myself and it affected my life and my family.)

Moreover, Repercussions from Drug Use was also supported by the statements provided by Participant 4, stating that:

***“Na realize ko ti kina madi ti epekto ti  
illegal a droga ket talaga nga perdiyen na  
panagbiag mo, perdiyen na pay panunut mo.”***

(I realized the negative effect of illegal drugs, it destroyed my life, and my peace of mind.)

The statement of Participant 5 also connects to the theme Repercussions from Drug Use, stating that;

***“Awan ti maitulong na nga nasayaat deta nga  
bisyo ken didyay epekto na madi, madi ti epekto na  
ti bagi, ibaba na ka deta nga bisyo.”***

(This vice doesn't have anything good in it, and it has a negative effect, it has a negative effect on the body, this vice can drag you down.)

The participants' responses demonstrated that substance misuse has a wide variety of negative implications for the person and society. One of the most serious repercussions was diminished dignity and respect for individuals and their families in the eyes of others. Some of these participants had lost their respect and dignity, and even worse, they had lost the trust of others. Other participants had displayed extreme hostility as a result of using certain drugs (crack) or delaying the use of addictive substances. In addition, several studies have found that drug usage increases the likelihood of violence, and as addiction continues and drug intake grows, people have less control over their aggressive conduct.

The individuals revealed a deep knowledge that their substance use not only impacted their physical and mental health, but also caused emotional distress in their families. Furthermore, the stress and worry connected with drug use had a negative impact on their mental health, leading to feelings of hopelessness and depression. This knowledge frequently functioned as a catalyst for change, inspiring people to seek recovery not just for their personal health, but also to restore harmony and stability in their families.

- “Breaking Free : A Self-Made Journey to Sobriety”
- (RESEARCH OUTPUT)

➤ *Documentary Video: What a Journey it has been*

- *Rationale*

The effects of drugs are common, and often quite troublesome. Drugs can give us relaxation, improved sleep, and control over negative emotions. However, drug use increases your risk of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, and for worst chronic diseases and problems (NIDA, 2020). Interactions with peers influence the attitudes and behaviors of those individuals who seek peer approval and acceptance, which may bring them to engage in such illegal substances (Stewart et al., 2016).

The central point of the documentary video titled “ Breaking Free: A Self-made Journey to Sobriety” concerns with the life experiences of former drug users and how they manage to survive and rebuild themselves, raising awareness of the negative effects of using illegal drugs. It is expected that this documentary video can shed light on the life experiences of those former drug users that could bring significant changes to the lives of every individual who is currently using illegal drugs and those who may attempt to use illegal substances.

This documentary video provides insights regarding the lived experiences of former drug users. Possible interventions may be formulated, and the transition will be less traumatizing for the affected individuals, promoting stories of empowerment rather than trauma.

- *Objectives*

Provide insight to ordinary and common people regarding the life experiences of former drug users to create possible interventions, leading to a transition that is less hard for those who are using illegal drugs.

To encourage those former drug users who recovered by themselves to share their life experiences when it comes to having engaged in illegal drugs and to promote stories of empowerment to inspire and uplift the spirits of others.

- *Strategy*

Coordinate with the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Philippine National Police to post the documentary video online.

- *Research output*

In local settings, there is inadequate research and statistics on the number of drug users in the Philippines. Although various attempts are being made to prevent and stop those into drugs, there is still a need for increased awareness and support for this vulnerable demographic (Reynolds, 2016).

Through creating a documentary video titled “Breaking Free: A Self-Made Journey to Sobriety” concerning the lived experiences of former drug users, it could shed light on and give significance to such an undesirable life event. The experience they went through was documented to understand the side of the former drug users, to give significance, and not to invalidate what they had gone through. What a journey it has been refers to the unheard journey, experiences, and struggle of being one of the victims of such illegal substances and sharing it toward the people that surround them. These are the silent battles that the former drug users have gone through throughout the wrong pathways that they took. Their situation was too sensitive for them to share with other people and maintain a level of secrecy to manage these challenges. However, those participants, the unseen victims, were able to share their thoughts and experiences about having been involved in illegal drugs. This kind of situation does exist, and it affects the life of every individual with the same journey and situation. The documentary video was made to raise awareness about the effects of using illegal drugs.

The target audience of this documentary video includes both ordinary and common people. This could give essential information, and people will get something from it that can help them formulate possible interventions to address the effects and prevent individuals from using illegal drugs. The transition will be less traumatizing for every individual, promoting stories of empowerment rather than trauma.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes all the results and findings of the study, formulates conclusions, and offers recommendations based on the data gathered and analyzed.

#### A. Summary of the Findings

To provide insights into the lived experiences of former drug users. The researchers asked the participants their life experiences during and after using illegal drugs. In this study, the researchers discovered the factors that influence the drug users to use illegal drugs and the theme that emerged is **External Influences**. The participants' friends and peers are most of the reasons for them to engage in illegal drug use. Moreover, it was also found that there are other factors that influence the drug users to use illegal drugs, and the theme that emerged is **Internal Influences**. The participant's curiosity was identified also as reason for them to engage in illegal drug use.

Furthermore, the problems encountered during the drug use phase were also discovered, and the theme formulated is **Health Issue**. The participants experienced lack of sleep and loss of appetite that affected their health. Moreover, as to another problem encountered during the drug use phase, the theme formulated is **Financial Distress**. The participants struggled with financial support on using illegal drugs. Moreover, it was also found that in the phase of recovery, the theme that emerged is **Stigma**. It is hard for them to reintegrate in the community because of judgement they are getting from other people's perspective. However, these life experiences did not hinder them from regaining a sense of normalcy.

The researchers learned how these former drug users cope given all the challenges they have encountered, and the themes are: **1) Provisional Solution (drug use phase) and 2) Holistic Transformation (drug recovery phase)**. They showcased great resilience in that they chose to focus on rebuilding themselves, playing to divert attention, forming codependent friendships, and reenacting family relationships instead of staying or thinking about the undesirable situation they experienced. Moreover, when they were asked about the factors that influence them to terminate drug use, the researchers found that it was through **Fervent wish to change**.

Finally, when asked about their realization after recovering from illegal drugs, the researchers found that it was through **Repercussions from drug use**. Given the circumstance that it was very hard to recover from drug use, they were able to pass it through because of their perseverance to totally change for the better.

#### B. Conclusions

Based on the statements provided by the participants, it can be concluded that there was a transition in their lives as a result of using illegal drugs. There were factors that pushed them to use drugs, and these factors could serve as catalysis in drug use.

Former drug users often faced physical, emotional, and mental challenges that they encountered. These struggles led them to seek temporary solutions that provide short-term relief.

Recovering drug users faced challenges during their recovery, including stigma from others, which made reintegration into the community difficult. They often tried to prove their change by demonstrating how much better their lives are now compared to when they were using drugs.

Former drug users redirected their focus to move past their difficult experiences. Despite these challenges, they showed resilience by taking action and refusing to remain stuck in their situation.

Former drug users realized the harm drugs caused to their lives and the struggles they could bring. This motivated them to choose a better path, terminating the one that caused them too much struggles.

Finally, the participants shared that drug use caused negative side effects, disrupted their lives and family relationships, and harmed their mental and physical health. They believe that these experiences should be shared to raise awareness and prevent drug use. That these realizations helped them to move forward.

#### C. Recommendations

From the aforementioned findings and conclusions, the following are hereby recommended:

- The **Department of Health** may conduct public awareness campaigns on the harmful effects of drug use for the former drug users, families and community by implementing educational programs and skill building workshops to address triggers like peer pressure, unemployment, and mental health issues.

- The **Local Government Unit** may provide health services and coordinate support and intervention for the former drug users, families and community health workers by ensuring access to counseling, safe spaces for self-expression, and early intervention programs.
- The **Rehabilitation Centers (operated by DOH and private entities) and DOLE** may offer detoxification, therapy services and employment programs for recovering individuals and their families by creating structured rehabilitation programs focusing on mental, social, and economic reintegration.
- The **Department of Health and Department of Social Welfare and Development** may offer behavioral health support and therapy to the former drug users by developing peer support networks, providing access to group therapy, and encouraging community reintegration programs to build resilience.
- The **NGOs and advocacy groups** may conduct empowerment sessions to the former drug users and communities by promoting programs that focus on self-reflection, emotional expression, and public sharing of recovery journeys as part of community-building efforts.

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