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*Special Issue on Substance Use Prevention  
and Recovery*

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# PHILIPPINE JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY

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## Introduction to the Special Issue on Substance Use Prevention and Recovery

Drugs have been used for medication for most of human history. Homer's *Odyssey* cites the use of opium in the 9th century BC. Helen of Troy was reported to have received a gift from an Egyptian Queen that she used to dull the pain of her soldiers and make them forget the pain. Genesis talks about Noah coming down from the Ark and planting a vineyard, drinking wine and becoming drunk. Aristotle in 323 BC recorded the effects of alcohol withdrawal.

The nature of substances has evolved in time from natural psychoactive substances such as plants to today's man-made drugs. Concomitantly, the perspective on drug use and its treatment has also evolved. In the 16th century, the Oxford Dictionary defined the word "addict" to mean someone who is attached by one's own inclination. Today, the term addict is defined in the same dictionary as, "a person who is unable to stop taking harmful drugs."

As the understanding of drug use has evolved, so has its practice. From locking people in cages, to sending them to asylums, putting people in medically-induced comas, frontal lobotomies, electroshock treatment to aversion therapy, current humane and evidence-based treatments have evolved based on new understanding of why people use drugs and how to best treat them. More importantly, the focus is not only on the person using drugs but also the environment of the user.

Like other countries, the problem of illegal drugs in the Philippines is long-standing. Unfortunately, the science on substance use prevention and treatment is at its infancy. This issue is one of the

# Sulong Kabataan: Design, Pilot Implementation, and Evaluation of a Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Program

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Substance abuse prevention is especially important during adolescence given the propensity of young people to take risks during this period. Although prevention programs have been developed and widely evaluated in other countries, they are costly and have not been adapted to the Filipino context. We developed *Sulong Kabataan* as a community-based life skills program for substance abuse prevention among urban Filipino youth. We discuss the program design process, pilot implementation, and evaluation among 53 adolescents aged 12 to 17 from a low-resource community. The evaluation of the pilot implementation demonstrates the feasibility of the program, especially with close community partnerships. Preliminary evidence for positive impact was shown in participants' life skills and confidence to refuse alcohol. The strengths of the program include the interactive delivery and positive learning climate, as well as facilitators' warmth and competence informed by knowledge of adolescent development. Future directions are discussed for improving the program design and evaluation, and developing training programs for facilitators.

*Keywords:* adolescence, substance abuse prevention, life skills training, youth prevention programs, refusal skills

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# A Narrative Analysis of the Experiences of Barangay Officials Involved in Community-Based Drug Rehabilitation

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The purpose of the study is to understand the phenomenon of community-based drug rehabilitation (CBDR) in the Philippine context from the perspective of barangay officials involved in CBDR. The research investigated the narratives of officials, both treatment facilitators and program overseers, regarding their experiences in implementing CBDR programs. The research used Murray's (2000) framework and elicited data on three levels: ideological, positional, and personal. The findings revealed ideological narratives of CBDR as an alternative response to the government's approach, CBDR as effective solution to treating drug use, and as part of a holistic approach to drug recovery. The positional narratives complement the ideological narratives as they described their roles as protectors, facilitators of growth, and partners. Similarly, their personal narratives revealed experiences of frustration, fulfillment, and commitment and personal growth. Implications of the findings regarding the implementation of CBDR and the promotion of restorative justice are discussed.

*Keywords:* narrative, community-based drug rehabilitation, barangay officials

The Philippine government's war on drugs began upon the assumption of office of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte who claimed that the drug menace was transforming the Philippines into a narcotic

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# Evaluation of the Training and Pilot Implementation of Katatagan Kontra Droga sa Komunidad

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This study evaluated the training of facilitators and pilot implementation of the Katatagan Kontra Droga sa Komunidad (KKDK), a community-based drug recovery program. Paired samples t-test of pre and posttest scores of 111 community facilitators who underwent training revealed significant changes in their perceived competence, motivation, and commitment. The program was pilot-tested among 46 mild-risk drug users. Pre and posttest results revealed moderate effects in substance use dependence symptoms and life skills, and large effects in drug recovery skills and psychological well-being. Correlational analysis of posttest scores revealed a negative relation between life skills and SUD symptoms and a positive relation between recovery skills and psychological well-being. Post-program focus group discussions with participants and interviews with facilitators highlighted the value of building recovery and life skills in enabling change in the participants and their families. However, field observations revealed a number of enablers and challenges in implementation.

*Keywords:* substance use, drug prevention, drug recovery, community-based interventions

In July 2016, the government launched its campaign against illegal drugs dubbed as *Oplan Tokhang*. As part of this, community officials and the local police went to the homes of known drug users and asked

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# The Recovery Experience: Stress, Recovery Capital, and Personal Views on Addiction and Recovery in Posttreatment Addiction Recovery

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The study explored the experiences of individuals in posttreatment addiction recovery. More specifically, the research examined their experiences of stress, their recovery capital, as well as their personal views on addiction and recovery. Existing literature suggests that individuals with addiction require a substantial quality of recovery capital to overcome stress and challenges in all stages of recovery. The research adopted a case study design and interviewed eight participants on their experiences of posttreatment addiction recovery. Interview responses were analyzed through categorizing codes and themes and then submitting these for external audit. Results showed that the recovery experience in posttreatment addiction recovery included dealing with stress during reintegration to the mainstream environment, rebuilding relationships, and returning to daily functioning (getting a job, earning money, fulfilling responsibilities). Recovery connections, social support, and recovery-supportive activities were important factors in sustaining recovery. Addiction was considered as a lifestyle that provides temporary relief and hinders building meaningful relationships while recovery was depicted as an ongoing process requiring support and finding purpose in being in recovery.

*Keywords:* recovery, addiction, recovery capital, posttreatment, stress

# Lived Experiences of Stigma Among Filipino Former Drug Dependents: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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This study is a qualitative phenomenological investigation on the experiences of Filipino former drug dependents who were subject to stigmatization. Seven semistructured interviews were conducted and analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The analysis revealed four themes: (1) discrimination after discovery, (2) psychological consequences, (3) ways of coping, and (4) sense of purpose. Findings suggest that the process of experiencing and overcoming stigma lies in the interplay of social, structural, and internal processes and is underpinned with a desire to improve oneself. Despite these experiences, participants have also learned to move beyond their stigmatized identity and attain a sense of purpose and hope. The role of stigma on help-seeking attitudes and practical implications for intervention and policy reform are also discussed.

*Keywords:* experiences of stigma, drug dependence, substance use stigma, interpretative phenomenological analysis

Stigma is one of the most important hindrances to the recovery and societal reintegration of persons who use drugs. Stigma is defined as social prejudice, inequalities, and negative stereotypes (Corrigan, 2004). Albeit a relatively understudied concept in the literature on

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# Engaging the Family in Recovery: Outcomes of a Community-Based Family Intervention

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The *Katatagan Kontra Droga para sa Komunidad* (KKDK) is a Filipino community-based drug recovery program that addresses individual and family issues. This study explores the changes in the family after the drug users completed the program. Surveys and interviews were used to evaluate changes in family support, quality of family life, and substance use disorder (SUD) symptoms. Results show participants perceived significant increase in family support and quality of family life, as well as decrease in SUD symptoms. Their family members also reported individual and familial changes in the participants as a result of the program. They showed remorse, became more responsible, and communicated better after going through the intervention. There was also an improvement in quality of family life, religious rituals, and time spent with the family. Implications on community-based drug recovery programs focusing on family changes are discussed.

*Keywords:* family, community, drug recovery program

# Dispositional Mindfulness and Relapse Vulnerability as Mediated by Self-Efficacy Among Persons in Recovery From Substance Use Disorders (SUDs)

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The study sought to explain the potential mechanism by which dispositional mindfulness influences relapse vulnerability through self-efficacy among persons in recovery from Substance Use Disorders (SUDs). Data were collected from residential clients (N=206) in both private and government drug rehabilitation centers. Results of the mediation analysis suggest that the trait of being fully attentive to present experiences allows recovering persons to access functional self-beliefs, such as the perceived capacity to accomplish tasks and overcome difficulties. In the face of challenging situations that may trigger relapse, dispositional mindfulness contributes partially to one's sense of command or mastery. Consequently, this helps individuals cope with relapse problems. The findings provide implications for relapse prevention and the utility of mindfulness-based interventions for SUDs.

*Keywords:* dispositional mindfulness, relapse vulnerability, general self-efficacy, Substance Use Disorders (SUDs)

Substance use disorders (SUDs) are chronic and one of the challenges to their effective treatment is the high tendency to relapse (Mohammadpoorasl et al., 2012). Studies show that a substantial number of people who enter rehabilitation return to substance use after treatment. For example, relapse rates of 25% to 50% are observed within two years after short-term treatment, 29% after three years of



# Narratives of Identity Reconstruction Among Recovering Drug Dependents

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This study explored the recovery narratives and identity reconstruction of seven recovering Filipino drug dependents in a rehabilitation center. Extant literature on drug abuse in the country has been limited to etiology and treatment, as well as the difficulties experienced by drug dependents following release from the rehabilitation center. The narratives culled in this study, however, gave depth and continuity to the experiences during rehabilitation and recovery. This study highlighted the role of Filipino values in driving the narrative forward. Using narrative analysis and self-positioning theory, seven main plots of the recovery narrative and the respective self-positions emerged. The plot progressed from etiology, to admission, and to recovery. Meanwhile, the positions showed participants' transition from an addict identity to a non-addict identity, within the rehabilitation process. Findings from this study offer new insights into drug abuse recovery as an attempt to fill the methodological and epistemological gap in addiction studies; moreover, this research shows how the combination of narrative analysis and positioning theory offers researchers a rigorous method that can contribute to studies that focus on identity and change, thus expanding the understanding of drug abuse beyond pathology.

*Keywords:* drug abuse, addiction recovery, narrative analysis, positioning analysis, Filipino psychology

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