
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Managing Drug-Free Communities: Stories of Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC) Chairpersons

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| ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (Badac) Chairperson managing drug free communities. Specifically, sought to the following specific problems: the experiences of the informants in managing drug prevention program, addressing the problems encountered by the informants, and their aspirations to improve the management of drug prevention programs in their barangays. A phenomenological and qualitative approach was employed, utilizing interviews as the primary data collection method. Ten BADAC Chairpersons, randomly selected but meeting specific qualifications and possessing extensive experience in the subject matter, were individually interviewed. The research was conducted in the top ten barangays in Talisay City, Cebu, known for high drug case numbers. A validated interview guide, supplemented by voice recordings for transcription, was used. Edmund Husserl's transcendental phenomenological analysis was applied to analyze the interview responses. The findings are articulated in emergent themes. Six emergent themes described the positive and negative experiences of the informants on the rehabilitation program. For the positive experiences, two emergent themes were developed, namely: Empowered Communities: Resilient Defense, and Governance and Partnership: A Winning Art. For the negative experiences, two emergent themes were also developed, to wit: My Life and my Family's Life are at Stake and Almost a Futile Fight Against a Hydra. Meanwhile, two emergent themes were formulated to explain the informants' coping with the challenges encountered during managing drug prevention program, namely: Creating a Drug-free community; a noble goal and A Strong Stand of Collaboration and Cooperation. Finally, two emergent themes were created to express the aspirations of the informants to improve the program, to wit: Unstoppable Duo: Resilience and Care and Trailblazing Leaders: A Positive Change. To enhance program effectiveness, the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC) Chairperson, the driving force behind grassroots drug prevention efforts, needs support. Therefore, I recommend implementing a structured program that prioritizes the mental and emotional well-being of BADAC members through access to counseling or mental health professionals and scheduled team retreats. Lastly, PDEA should train barangay officials on drug identification, investigation, legal procedures, and community-based prevention strategies to strengthen collaboration and effective anti-drug initiatives.

| KEYWORDS

Drug Free Communities, Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council, Drug Prevention Program

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) jointly developed the UNODC/WHO International Standards on Drug Use Prevention which outlines best practices for prevention programs. These standards emphasize a comprehensive approach that considers the social, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to drug use. They view drug use as a public health issue, focusing on prevention, treatment, and harm reduction. This approach prioritizes the well-being of individuals and communities impacted by drugs. The WHO, in particular, emphasizes the importance

of integrating drug prevention programs into broader health promotion initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and mental well-being.

Drug use patterns vary greatly by region, economics, and culture. Effective programs need to be tailored to stop drug abuse worldwide. Stopping illegal drug abuse is imperative due to its multifaceted impact on individuals and society. Primarily, illegal drugs pose significant health risks, leading to addiction, overdose, and long-term health issues. These substances not only jeopardize physical well-being but also have profound effects on mental health, contributing to psychological disorders and cognitive impairment. Beyond individual health concerns, drug abuse has far-reaching social repercussions, fueling crime, violence, and family breakdowns. Communities suffer as drug-related offenses increase, eroding safety and cohesion. Moreover, the economic costs of illegal drug abuse are staggering. The expenses associated with healthcare, law enforcement, and lost productivity drain public resources and hinder economic growth. The legal consequences of engaging in drug-related activities further compound the issue, with individuals facing arrest, imprisonment, and the enduring stigma of a criminal record. Such legal repercussions can impede reintegration into society, limiting employment opportunities and perpetuating cycles of poverty and criminality.

Illegal drug abuse in the Philippines is a complex issue with devastating consequences. Stopping illegal drug abuse in the Philippines is a public health crisis, with highly addictive drugs like shabu causing severe health problems, mental illness, and even the spread of HIV/AIDS. This addiction fuels a rise in crime, as desperate users steal or commit violence to get money for drugs. Families and communities suffer as drug abuse leads to broken homes, unemployment, and homelessness. The economic burden on the Philippines' healthcare system is immense.

The situation is further complicated by the easy availability of drugs. Methamphetamine (shabu) is the most commonly abused drug, readily available especially at the street level. Poverty and lack of opportunities can push some towards drug use. The government's past "war on drugs" raised human rights concerns due to the high number of deaths associated with police operations. A shift is happening, with a more balanced approach that focuses on rehabilitation and prevention programs alongside law enforcement efforts.

The Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC) serves as the frontline defense against drug abuse in the Philippines. They are tasked with crafting localized drug prevention plans specific to their community's needs. This involves pinpointing areas with high drug activity or demographics most susceptible to drug use. BADACs then organize information campaigns, educational workshops, and community outreach programs to raise awareness about the dangers of drugs and promote healthy alternatives. Beyond education, BADACs foster a supportive environment within their barangay. Residents feel empowered to report drug activity and seek help for those struggling with addiction. This allows for early intervention, where BADACs can connect at-risk individuals with counseling or skills development programs to prevent drug use before it starts. They can also advocate for and support access to rehabilitation programs for those already using drugs.

Drug abuse can have devastating consequences for individuals, families, and communities. It can lead to health problems, crime, violence, and social disorder. A resident in Talisay City, struggling financially, are lured into using illegal drugs. With continued use, addiction sets in, impacting their health and relationships. Law enforcement conducts an operation in their area, leading to the arrest of a small-time dealer. The user, in need of help, seeks treatment through the city's program. Poverty, unemployment, and gang activity can also contribute to crime, making it difficult to isolate the impact of drugs.

As a criminologist and faculty member, I'm researching the experiences of BADAC Chairpersons in maintaining drug-free and safe barangays, specifically their management of community drug prevention programs, as I believe this study is important. This is meant to support the need for more empirical study and help improve policy and implementation at the barangay level, and the findings can be valuable for both policymakers and the public that can provide a more nuanced understanding of the ground-level complexities in a rapidly changing municipality like Talisay City.

2. Literature Review

This study is anchored on the Broken Windows Theory of James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (1982) and supported by the Empowerment Theory of Julian Rappaport (1981) and Team Performance Theory of Meredith Belbin (1981). The Broken Windows Theory suggests that visible signs of disorder and neglect in a community contribute to the rise of crime by creating an environment that signals tolerance for deviant behavior. When minor issues such as vandalism or public disorder are left unaddressed, they lead to fear, disengagement, and an eventual breakdown of social control (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

Addressing these signs of disorder encourages citizens to feel safer, participate in collective actions, and restore order within their surroundings (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999). Studies further emphasize that perceptions of disorder, fear of crime, and limited community involvement become significant barriers to effective crime prevention (Ling et al., 2019). Hence, this theory underscores the importance of proactive policing and community engagement to maintain order and prevent the escalation of criminal activities.

Supporting this framework, Rappaport's Empowerment Theory (1981) highlights the process of enabling individuals and communities to gain control over their circumstances by utilizing their existing strengths and resources. Empowerment emerges through collaboration, shared decision-making, and collective action aimed at positive change. It stresses that when

communities are supported through participatory partnerships with government agencies and organizations, they become more capable of addressing local issues such as drug abuse and crime (Flora & Flora, 2004). Complementing this is Belbin's Team Performance Theory (1981), which explores how collaboration, diversity in roles, and teamwork contribute to achieving common goals. Effective team dynamics characterized by trust, adaptability, and cohesion, enable groups to sustain motivation and overcome challenges (Hackman, 2002; Hackman & Wageman, 2005). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how order, empowerment, and teamwork contribute to a united and resilient community in addressing the persistent challenges of drug abuse and criminality.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research method employing a transcendental phenomenological approach to gain a clear understanding of the lived experiences of the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC) Chairpersons in managing and controlling drug prevention programs in their respective barangays. According to Ramsook (2018), transcendental phenomenology focuses on uncovering the essence of lived experiences by setting aside biases and preconceived notions to grasp the phenomenon in its purest form. This approach allows the researcher to explore the perspectives and meanings constructed by the informants based on their actual experiences. While phenomenology seeks the unfiltered essence of human experience, hermeneutics acknowledges that interpretation is influenced by background and context, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the participants' reality.

The study also adopted a descriptive case study design to examine in depth the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the BADAC Chairpersons in implementing community-based drug prevention programs. Rooted in the philosophical foundations of Edmund Husserl (1931), transcendental phenomenology emphasizes the comprehension of consciousness and the search for true knowledge through understanding the structures of human experience. Husserl's concept of "transcendental consciousness" highlights the importance of setting aside personal biases while maintaining empathic understanding toward participants. As Warren (2009) noted, Husserl viewed consciousness as the foundation of human meaning and understanding, shaped by the interrelation of time, perception, and intentionality.

Through this lens, the study aimed to uncover the core essence of the BADAC Chairpersons' experiences in managing drug prevention efforts. It sought to explore how they interpret their roles, the challenges they encounter, and their motivations in sustaining a drug-free community. This methodological approach not only captures the depth of their lived realities but also provides valuable insights that can guide more empathetic, effective, and community-centered drug prevention initiatives. By understanding the intentional actions and perspectives of BADAC Chairpersons, programs can be better tailored to meet both leadership and community needs, fostering a more holistic and sustainable approach to drug prevention at the barangay level.

3.2 Research Participants

The informants of the study were ten (10) BADAC Chairperson in the selected barangays in the City of Talisay, Cebu who have rendered at least three years as BADAC Chairperson of their barangay, who come from Biasong, Bulacao, Candulawan, Cansojong, Dumlog, Lagtang, Lawaan 2, Lawaan 3, San Roque, Tabunoc. All informants were individually interviewed.

3.3 Research Instrument

The study utilized a researcher-made Interview Guide (IG) as the primary instrument for data collection, designed to explore the lived experiences of BADAC Chairpersons in managing and controlling drug prevention programs in their respective barangays. The guide, validated by the panel and submitted to the Ethics Committee for review, consisted of three parts: (1) the informants' experiences in managing peace and security programs, (2) the challenges encountered in implementing drug prevention initiatives, and (3) their aspirations to enhance program management. Following Creswell (2012) and McNamara (2009), the study employed open-ended, in-depth interviews to encourage participants to narrate and elaborate on their personal experiences and interpretations of events. Each participant provided informed consent ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time. The researcher used a voice recorder and kept written notes to accurately capture responses and key insights. All recorded data were transcribed, encoded, and thoroughly reviewed to ensure that the findings authentically reflected the informants' genuine words and lived experiences.

3.4 Data Collection

As the researcher stated in this study, I collected data through individual interviews using a voice recorder and field notes. Within 72 hours of the interview's conclusion, I manually transcribed any digital audio recordings. I made certain that the recordings and transcriptions correctly portrayed the entire discussion experience.

3.5 Data Analysis

The researcher involved a transcendental phenomenology approach, which emphasizes the interpretation of meaning and understanding of experiences from the perspective of the informants (Van Manen, 2014). The following is a step-by-step process that was used for data analysis:

The first step in the data analysis process involves becoming immersed in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts several times. This process allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the informants' experiences and identify key themes and patterns. The second step involves identifying key themes and patterns in the data. This process involves using a coding system to identify and categorize the data into themes and sub-themes. The third step involves interpreting the data by making connections between the themes and the informants' experiences. This process involves a hermeneutic circle, which involves moving back and forth between the parts (themes) and the whole (the informants' experiences) to gain a deeper understanding of the data (Gadamer, 1976).

The hermeneutic circle is a crucial element in the process of data analysis within hermeneutic phenomenology. It entails circling between the components and the whole in order to acquire a more comprehensive comprehension of the data. This implies that the researcher must contribute their own understanding and experiences to the data while remaining receptive to the informants' perspectives. The final stage entails the researcher engaging in a reflective dialogue in order to ascertain the findings' validity and dependability. This procedure involves scrutinizing and questioning the data's interpretation, in addition to cross-referencing the conclusions with the original data to guarantee precision and rigor (Gadamer, 1976).

The overall methodology employed for data analysis in this study will be hermeneutic phenomenology. This will entail a cyclical examination of the transcripts through repeated readings in order to discern significant themes and patterns. The data will be interpreted employing the hermeneutic circle approach, and the findings' validity and dependability will be upheld via a reflective dialogue procedure. Employing a hermeneutic phenomenology methodology, a comprehensive and intricate comprehension of the postpartum lived experiences of the participants is achieved through the lens of their own perspectives.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical principles guided every stage of this study, as emphasized by Creswell (2007), recognizing that issues may arise before, during, and after data collection. Given the sensitivity of drug prevention, the researcher prioritized building rapport, ensuring confidentiality, and maintaining a non-judgmental stance to encourage honest participation. Guided by the principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001; Freedman, 2000), the study aimed to protect participants' welfare, avoid harm, uphold fairness, and respect their right to voluntary participation. All information shared by the BADAC Chairpersons was treated with strict confidentiality; identities were kept anonymous, and informed consent was obtained before each interview. Voice recordings and transcripts were securely stored and will be destroyed after the study's acceptance. To ensure trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the researcher applied credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability measures such as member-checking, accurate transcription, and secure data handling to ensure that findings genuinely reflected the lived experiences of the informants. Ultimately, the ethical approach safeguarded participants' dignity, promoted truthful representation, and enhanced the reliability and integrity of the research outcomes.

4. Results and Discussion

From the gathered data, through the recorded response of the 10 informants, six (6) emergent themes were created. These themes formulated are as follows:

For the positive experiences of the informants as Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council Chairperson in managing drug prevention program in their barangay, the themes generated were: Empowered Communities: Resilient Defense, and Governance and Partnership: A Winning Art.

For the negative experiences of the informants as Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council Chairperson in managing drug prevention program in their barangay, the themes generated were: My Life and my Family's Life are at Stake and Almost a Futile Fight Against a Hydra.

In dealing with the challenges encountered in managing the drug prevention program in their barangay, the following themes were: Creating a Drug-free Community: A noble goal and A Strong Stand of Collaboration and Cooperation.

For the aspirations of the informants to improve the management of drug prevention programs in their barangay, themes created were: Unstoppable Duo: Resilience and Care and Trailblazing Leaders: A Positive Change.

4.1.1 Empowered Communities: Resilient Defense

This theme narrates the positive experience of the informants on managing drug prevention program in their barangay. Through collaborative efforts with law enforcement and the implementation of comprehensive treatment programs, the barangay has successfully reduced drug use and created a safer environment for its residents. The informant has demonstrated remarkable resilience and community empowerment in its fight against drug addiction.

4.1.2 Governance and Partnership: A Winning Art

The successful implementation of the drug prevention program in Talisay is a testament to the power of effective governance and strong partnerships. The barangay's leadership, collaboration with law enforcement agencies, and engagement with the community have been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes.

4.1.3 My Life and My Family's Life are at Stake

This theme narrates the negative experiences of the informants in managing drug prevention program. The urgent need for comprehensive drug prevention and treatment programs that address not only the individual's addiction but also the broader impact on families of the informants and communities in general.

4.1.4 Almost a Futile Fight Against a Hydra

The informants in this study experienced the crushing weight of limited resources, authority, and opposition, which made their efforts to combat drug addiction and crime feel like fighting a hydra. Despite their determination, the persistent reemergence of drug-related issues after every intervention created frustration and fatigue among them. They also struggled with uncooperative individuals, threats to their safety, and the slow response of some agencies, which hindered progress. Nevertheless, their unwavering commitment to uphold their duty and protect their communities kept them motivated to continue the fight, even when success seemed elusive.

4.1.5 Creating a Drug-free Community: A Noble Goal

The importance of comprehensive drug prevention strategies and the positive impact they can have on individuals and communities. These strategies not only reduce drug-related crimes but also promote healthier lifestyles and stronger family relationships. By involving youth in sports, education, and livelihood programs, the barangay helps divert their attention from illegal activities and fosters personal growth. Ultimately, a drug-free community represents hope, unity, and the shared commitment of residents and leaders to build a safer and more progressive society.

4.1.6 A Strong Stand of Collaboration and Cooperation

This theme emphasizes the need for a worldwide effort to address the drug problem and the potential for positive impact through international cooperation. The informants recognized that sustained coordination among government agencies, law enforcement, and local communities is essential in maintaining drug-free environments. Through shared responsibilities and consistent communication, programs become more effective and responsive to emerging challenges. This collaborative approach fosters trust, accountability, and unity, empowering communities to stand together against the threats of illegal drugs.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the lived experiences of Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC) Chairpersons in managing and implementing drug prevention programs in Talisay City, Cebu, Philippines. Using a transcendental phenomenological approach, the study captured the essence of their roles, challenges, and aspirations in sustaining a drug-free community. The findings revealed that while BADAC Chairpersons experienced empowerment, strong governance, and community partnership in their roles, they also faced threats, resource limitations, and emotional burdens that made their work feel like a constant uphill battle. Despite these obstacles, their resilience, compassion, and collaborative efforts remained steadfast, reflecting their deep commitment to public service and social responsibility.

The study concludes that effective drug prevention at the barangay level depends not only on leadership and collaboration but also on the continuous support and coordination among local and national government agencies. Strengthening the capacities of BADAC Chairpersons through training, funding, and inter-agency cooperation can significantly enhance the success of grassroots drug prevention efforts. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of empathy-driven leadership, transparency, and shared responsibility in addressing the complex issue of illegal drugs. Ultimately, empowering BADAC leaders and fostering strong community participation serve as vital foundations for building safer, more resilient, and drug-free communities across the nation.

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References to the work should follow the 7th APA style and carefully checked for accuracy and consistency. Please ensure that every reference cited in the text is also present in the reference list and vice versa.

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