
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Fight Against Drug Menace: Experiences Of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents

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| ABSTRACT

This study delved into the experiences of Agents in the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency. Thus, the Philippine government has waged a decades-long battle against illegal drugs. As the frontline in fighting against drug menace this study sought answers to questions about the experiences and addressed the problems encountered and aspirations of the informants in the performance of their duties. The research employed a transcendental phenomenological research design. Furthermore, it involved ten (10) agents from Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Regional Office VIII, located at Government Center Palo, Leyte : six were subjected to a focused group discussion, and four were interviewed in depth. Interviews were conducted and recorded using a smartphone application, ensuring detailed and accurate transcriptions. They were selected through the purposive sampling method and utilized a validated interview guide. The gathered data were treated through the Thematic Analysis approach. The study identified eight themes : *A Fruitful Encounter, Cleaning Up the Neighborhood, In the Line of Fire, Tough Row to Hoe, Turning Challenges into Stepping Stones, Joining Forces for a Common Cause, Building an Unbreakable Fortress and Laying the Foundation for Lasting Change*. These themes highlighted the importance of the that PDEA agents face numerous challenges in their roles, yet they also encounter rewarding experiences. The key themes identified in the study include the significance of their work, the dangers they face, and their efforts to overcome obstacles and collaborate with other agencies and the community.

| KEYWORDS

Criminological research, qualitative, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, Agents, Palo, drugs

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 01 April 2024

PUBLISHED: 15 April 2025

DOI: 10.32996/ijlps.2025.7.2.1

1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

Around the world, the drug problem has occupied a great space in every undertaking of the all governments. Drug abuse has plagued the American continent since the 1800s, when morphine, heroin, and cocaine were praised for their incredible medicinal abilities. As drugs have been abused for hundreds of years all over the world, their effects have been felt for just as long. For as long as drugs have been used, there have been those who have abused them. As the physical and mental health implications of addiction became clearer, rehabilitation efforts began to appear.

Since 2003, there has been a substantial increase in the data available on the prevalence and consequences of the use of drugs that are liable to abuse. Globally, evidence from various regions indicates that drug abuse was widespread and linked to significant public health and social problems. Initiation of drug abuse often occurs during adolescence, with both sexes now equally affected, whereas historically, it predominantly impacted men. Addiction to drugs, whether legal or illegal, remains a serious social and

health issue affecting millions worldwide (Bhanujirao et al., 2022). While some countries have claimed successes in controlling illicit drug demand, drug abuse continues to rise globally, particularly in some developing nations.

In the Philippines, the government has waged a decades-long battle against illegal drugs. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has spearheaded this effort, tasked with implementing the government's anti-drug policies and strategies. Hence, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents, on the front lines of this battle, have encountered numerous challenges and experiences that shape their perspectives and approaches to their duties. With the launch of the government's war on drugs campaign, official reports indicate a reduction in drug-related cases since its inception.

According to official data, the number of drug personalities killed during lawful police operations is reported to be 5,563. However, before the campaign, the Philippine National Police (PNP) recorded a higher number, with 6,600 drug suspects slain. These figures suggested a decrease in drug-related incidents since the implementation of the War on Drugs. Additionally, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) reports that 92% of barangays in the National Capital Region were affected by illegal drug use (Guay & Cawi, 2021).

Meanwhile, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) officers in Region VIII had firsthand experience with the severity of the drug problem. Despite facing challenges, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) remains committed to eradicating illegal substances, particularly in the Eastern Visayas region.

According to a recent report from the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Region VIII in 2024, a buy-bust operation led to the seizure of 23 grams of shabu, valued at approximately P151,000. The operation involved collaboration between Elements of Bato Municipal Police Station, Police Intelligence Team Southern Leyte-Regional Intelligence Unit 8, and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) 8-Southern Leyte Police Office, Leyte Provincial Office. Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) agents operate in dynamic and often perilous environments, facing challenges such as intelligence gathering, surveillance, raids, arrests, and the need to develop strategies to enhance operational effectiveness and safety.

With the combination of knowledge, skills, and dedication to research exemplifies the qualities of a competent registered criminologist and a researcher. Her work has made significant contributions to study the experiences of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) agents amidst the drug phenomenon to better understood the challenges faced by these frontline workers. Their untold stories of resilience, sacrifice, and struggle in the performance of their duties in implementing anti-drug operations were invaluable insights that deserve attention.

2. Theoretical Background

This study was anchored on the Social Cognitive theory by Albert Bandura (1989), and supported by the Self-Efficacy theory by Albert Bandura (1977) and the Routine Activity theory by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979).

The social cognitive theory of Bandura (1989) proposes that human behavior was the product of the interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioral patterns. He emphasized the role of observational learning, social experience, and reciprocal determinism in human behavior, suggesting that people are both influenced by and actively influence their environments.

The social cognitive theory has been nominated as a means of improving understanding of resilience in the workplace. The social cognitive theory has previously been used to provide a framework to interpret human behaviors in occupational settings based on its premise that learning can occur in a social context through a dynamic, reciprocal interaction of the biological, personal, and environmental factors that contribute to the manifestation of resilience. (Bandura, 1989).

According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, one's perceived self-efficacy has direct effects both on the initiation of and persistence of behavior. Another predictor of a person's behavior is outcome expectation, which was defined as a person's estimate that a certain behavior leads to certain positive and/ or negative consequences.

The self-efficacy theory by Bandura (1977) supported the study as he mentioned that self-efficacy was the beliefs in one's capacity to complete a particular behavior. Self-efficacy was a person's judgment of his or her abilities about a particular issue or subject. This also offers valuable insights into understanding how individuals perceive and approach tasks or challenges.

Furthermore, self-efficacy included a person's confidence in their ability to pursue resilient behaviors, and thus, self-efficacy plays a central role in changing behaviors. Self-efficacy was a person's confidence in their capacity to perform any action effectively and

implement specific habits into their daily routine. Also, it can be defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform the necessary actions that lead to desired outcomes.

The most influential source was the interpreted result of one's previous performance or mastery experience. Mastery experiences were the most influential source of efficacy information because they provided the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed. Success builds a robust belief in one's efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy was firmly established (Bandura, 1997).

Another theory supported this study was the Routine Activity theory by Cohen and Felson (1979) based on the idea that offenders make rational choices about whether to commit a crime. The idea was that crime is the result of people's everyday behavior, of how offenders and victims go about their daily lives. Crime was not something extraordinary that requires a deep psychological analysis.

Routine activity theory emphasizes that crime occurs when three elements converge: (1) a motivated offender, were individual with both the capacity and the willingness to commit wrongdoing. Routine activities theory, unlike other theories of crime, does not sought to explain the willingness of the potential offender; (2) a suitable target, could be either a person or property the motivated offender can readily identify and engage. The situational context and the nature of the wrongdoing may determine the exact form of the suitable target, and (3) the absence of a capable guardian Capable guardians could be individuals or objects that effectively deter criminal conduct via their simple presence in time and space. This type of either informal or formal guardianship can prevent wrongdoing even when a suitable target has been chosen by a motivated offender (Cohen and Felson, 1979).

According to Cohen and Felson (1979), crime rates depend on the constantly changing lifestyles and behaviors of the population. Depending on the time and place, three factors that were decisive for Cohen and Felson and were responsible for the occurrence or absence of criminal behavior vary.

According to Maddux (2012), individuals (e.g., law enforcers) with high self-efficacy tend to exhibit high levels of desire, effort, and perseverance when confronted with various challenges. Conversely, individuals with low self-efficacy tend to experience lower levels of drive and endeavor. The concept under consideration correlates with self-esteem, although it is different. Additionally, individuals with high self-efficacy exhibit psychological certainty when faced with ambiguous and challenging situations and tend to view these situations as promising. Furthermore, previous research has shown that self-efficacy plays a crucial role in predicting favorable outcomes such as innovation, creativity, and improved performance.

The study of Alamban et al. (2022) elaborated that job performance was a very important part of the achievement of organizational objectives of the law enforcers. A performance metric was measurable value that shows how effectively an organization achieves its main goals. Moreover, law enforcement job performance was of great importance for the lives of people, teamwork, and good integration of public representatives of every group in an efficient neighborhood crime reduction. Hence, a law enforcer's job performance has a strong impact on police confidence perceptions.

Thus, one factor of job performance was competence, which indicates the law enforcers' capability to solve problems in the community. The study of Montanio et al. (2019) propounded that law enforcers were competent because police officers can do their job efficiently and resolve disagreements between citizens. Certainly, their competence was demonstrated through the prism of their actions, which was also the basis of the evaluation of the activities of officials, which reflects their social image. When it comes to crime prevention, residents think that law enforcers act with competence.

Moreover, Roberts (2018) found that factors that promote and influence the hygiene of law enforcers has a positive connection with the effectiveness of their work. The law enforcer also strongly believed that adequate equipment facilitated an improvement in working efficiency, while the disparity in the workforce and lack of modern equipment were factors that hindered efficiency.

Studies like one by Butler et al. (2023) on police recruits found that physical training improved self-efficacy in handling violent encounters. This mastery translates to confidence when applying those skills in the field. Training that sets achievable goals and benchmarks for success fosters a sense of progress.

The study of Kleygrewe et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of clear performance evaluations. This allowed officers to accurately gauge their development and build confidence. High-pressure situations can trigger physiological responses interpreted as fear or doubt. Training programs taught officers to recognized these responses as normal and even beneficial for heightened focus. This reframing empowers officers to stay calm and collected under pressure. A supportive law enforcement community was vital.

Training that fosters camaraderie and mentorship allows officers to learn from each other's experiences and successes. Highlighted real-life examples of officers who have effectively dealt with challenging situations can provide valuable inspiration.

A study by Kerr et al. (2020) argued for the nature of peer activities as it plays a significant role. Their findings suggested that positive peer relationships and engagement in constructive activities with peers can be beneficial for youth development. This underscores the importance of understanding the context of peer interactions rather than simply assuming unsupervised activity equals deviance.

Furthermore, the training and mentorship within law enforcement agencies can shape an officer's self-efficacy regarding their ability to handle drug-related situations. Studies suggested that officers with higher self-efficacy report feeling more prepared and confident in handling high-risk situations. The concept of collective efficacy refers to the belief in a team's ability to achieve a goal. In anti-drug operations, this pertains to an agent's belief in the team's effectiveness in combating drug activity. High collective efficacy bolstered individual self-efficacy and contribute to a more positive outlook on the program's effectiveness (El-Khatib et al., 2021).

The study of Arora (2015) stated that the basic objectives of budgetary control were planning, coordination, and control. It was difficult to discuss one without mentioning the other. A budget provided a detailed plan of action for an organization over a specified period of time. This means that in implementing the war on drugs on the local level, the budget was adequately determined and used.

This dovetails with the research of Hirst (2017) explained that an effective budgetary control solves an organization's need to plan and consider how to confront future potential risks and opportunities by establishing an efficient system of control. Likewise, a budget allocation detected variances between organizational objectives and performances in the government. Budgets further influenced the behavior and decisions of employees by translating objectives and providing a benchmark against which to assess performance. It provided a basis or yardstick that can measure the performance of a department and an individual in an organization. Hancock and Toma (2009) have even considered such a budget as the backbone of the management and implementation of any program and project.

The laws of the Philippine government that covered the performance of their duties in implementing anti-drug operations in the country were considered in the review of the literature of this study as a legal basis.

This study has its legal anchored on Republic Act No. 9165, popularly known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (CDDA), which was central to this dispute. Republic Act No. 9165, passed in 2002, abolished the old Dangerous Substances Act (1972) and created a tighter legal framework for tackling illegal substances. Certain sections would pertain to the implementation of anti-drug operation programs. The Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 defined the policy of the State to safeguard the integrity of its territory & the well-being of its citizenry, particularly the youth, from the harmful effects of dangerous drugs on their physical & mental well-being.

Since its implementation, the Republic Act of 9165 has faced various challenges, including issues related to human rights, effectiveness, and the balance between law enforcement and rehabilitation. Law enforcement agencies has been empowered to conduct drug-related operations, but this has also led to debates over due process and the rights of individuals. Several studies have examined the impact of the Republic Act of 9165 on drug-related offenses and the wider society.

The Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (CDDA) has undeniably had a significant impact on the drug trade in the Philippines. Apprehension rates have increased, and drug availability has fluctuated (Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, 2015). However, the act has also been met with controversy such as human rights concerns, extrajudicial killings, and limited rehabilitation resources. Critics argued that the act's harsh penalties, particularly the death penalty for some offenses, violate human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The war on drugs has been marred by allegations of extrajudicial killings by police and vigilantes, raising concerns about due process (Amnesty International, 2023). While the act mandates rehabilitation, critics argue that the Philippines lacks adequate resources and facilities to effectively implement these programs.

Another law that concerns the performance of duties in the implementation of anti-drug operations is Republic Act No. 10640, enacted on July 15, 2014, which amended Section 21 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (Republic Act No. 9165) to further strengthen the anti-drug campaign of the government. The act mandated changes in the custody and disposition of confiscated, seized, and/or surrendered dangerous drugs and related materials, outlining specific procedures for their inventory and examination to ensure integrity and evidentiary value. (Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, 2015).

Meanwhile, the article by Pila (2021) elaborated that the government's "war on drugs" has resulted in the criminalization of urban areas disguised as revitalization efforts. Rather than addressing the underlying social issues, the focus has been on blaming drugs, drug use, addiction, and the drug trade for the social problems faced in these communities. It is like attributing the symptoms of a disease as the cause of the disease itself, rather than addressing the root causes. This approach only managed the symptoms temporarily, while the underlying causes persist, leading to a vicious cycle. Consequently, the government has redirected resources from social programs to law enforcement and community policing initiatives, presenting them as a comprehensive solution for urban revitalization.

Moreover, the Philippine government has initiated the contentious anti-drug campaign known locally as Oplan Tokhang, despite ongoing concerns that police-led operations has resulted in widespread human rights violations. Tokhang has long been a primary concern for President Rodrigo Duterte, who promised to eradicate illegal narcotics within three to six months after taking power in 2016. Despite Duterte's controversial leadership, political risks were "unpredictable," but the country's economic fundamentals remain strong. Due to President Duterte's campaign on the War on Drugs. The Philippines' war against illegal drugs has been a lengthy and complex one.

On the other hand, the article by Luna (2021) noted that the Philippine National Police (PNP) was finalizing new guidelines for anti-drug operations that required stricter coordination with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA). These guidelines included penalties for officers who fail to follow the procedures. The need for these new guidelines arose from two recent incidents where a lack of coordination between the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) led to deadly standoffs. The existing Philippine National Police (PNP) guidelines already mandated informing the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) within twenty-four (24) hours of an operation, but the new guidelines aimed to be more comprehensive and included stricter enforcement. The Philippine National Police (PNP) chief expected these new guidelines to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of anti-drug operations while reducing the risk of similar incidents in the future.

According to the article of Dangerous Drug Board (2018), the Philippine Anti-Illegal Drugs Strategy (PADS) is a comprehensive framework designed to address the country's drug problem through a balanced approach that includes both supply and demand reduction strategies. The key components and objectives of Philippine Anti-Illegal Drugs Strategy are drug supply reduction and drug demand reduction. It emphasizes aggressive law enforcement operations to disrupt the supply chain of illegal drugs. This includes market denial operations, preventing the diversion of legal substances to illegal markets, and dismantling drug syndicates. Alternative development programs aim to provide sustainable livelihoods to communities involved in the cultivation of illegal drugs, such as marijuana. By offering alternative sources of income, the strategy seeks to reduce the economic incentives for drug production.

Furthermore, it includes extensive public education campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of drug use. These campaigns target various sectors of society, including schools, workplaces, and communities. The strategy promotes voluntary treatment and rehabilitation for drug dependents. It also supports their reintegration into society through aftercare programs and livelihood assistance.

Philippine Anti-Illegal Drugs Strategy (PADS) is implemented through a series of programs and initiatives that are aligned with the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022. These includes the community-based rehabilitation programs and capacity building. Local government units (LGUs) play a crucial role in implementing community-based programs that provide support and rehabilitation services to drug dependents. Training and capacity-building initiatives for law enforcement and other stakeholders ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively carry out their roles.

The article by Caliwán (2019) mentioned that the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has adopted a three-pronged strategy in the government's campaign against illegal drugs. The first prong was the Supply Reduction Approach, which focused on disrupting the manufacturing and distribution supply chain of dangerous drugs through law enforcement efforts. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) aimed to enhance local and international cooperation, address new drug trafficking trends, strengthen anti-corruption measures, and target clandestine drug manufacture, among other initiatives.

The second prong was the Demand Reduction Approach, which aims to reduce or prevent people from wanting to take illegal drugs. This approach was based on scientific evidence, freedom, dignity, and human rights. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) provides anti-drug education and information to the public, promotes community involvement, and offers treatment and rehabilitation services to drug users. The goal was enabled informed decision-making about drugs and provide support for recovery and reintegration into society.

The third prong was the Harm Reduction Approach, which focuses on reducing the acute impacts of drug use. This approach aimed to address social and economic harms associated with drug use, such as crime, corruption, violence, stigmatization, and marginalization. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) implements harm reduction programs, including voluntary surrender programs, support for plea bargaining agreements, and the implementation of various initiatives like the "Balay Silangan Program," "Project: Sagip Batang Solvent," and "Drug-Free Workplace Program."

Hence, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency's (PDEA) three-pronged strategy takes into account the importance of building self-confidence among agents, influencing social learning and community engagement, and disrupting routine activities related to drug use. These theories provided valuable frameworks for understanding and addressing the complexities of the drug problem and guiding the implementation of effective strategies.

Moreover, the program of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) has highlighted that, by 2022, the Philippines achieved drug-free communities. It can be realized through supply reduction efforts involving vigorous law enforcement with consistent adherence to and observance of human rights, coupled with comprehensive demand reduction initiatives and supported by strong international ties. This strategy provided an extensive framework for law enforcement and penalties for violations. It simultaneously adopts a compassionate approach to the victims of drug use by encouraging voluntary treatment and rehabilitation under an overarching framework that emphasizes respect for the dignity of the human person (Guay & Cawi, 2021).

In the context of the issues and problems, deterrence may make it harder to identify and address the community's needs associated with drug-related issues. This was problematic because knowing and responding to the felt needs and barriers to the treatment of users is essential for the successful treatment of drug use. Violence was used as a manifestation to frighten criminals while guaranteeing respectable legal residents that they are safe. Hence, Duterte wanted to protect the 'good citizens' against crime, poverty, and corruption in the country, of which drugs are a major cause (Kaiman, 2017).

Guay & Cawi (2021) have purported that the audience were informed regarding the program's ultimate goals and main objectives to make the program successful. Support, cooperation, and motivation from stakeholders should be necessary to maintain a particular program's excellent achievement and performance (Martin & Bonesto-Tugguin, 2020).

Most likely, the majority to benefit from the programs of PDEA were the communities, the general public. Hence, raising the awareness of the whole community about the agency's activities could affect everybody's life and may encourage them to work together to keep things in order. Based on this, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) took advantage of educating the public by effectively teaching each community in the country how to fight drug problems (Cerado, 2015).

Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and law enforcement moved beyond solely increasing patrols in hangout spots. Partnering with community centers, youth organizations, and schools to create safe spaces with supervised activities can be a powerful strategy (National Institute of Justice, 2021).

The study of Cerado (2015) concluded that Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) programs on demand and supply reduction were well-implemented. The community members know and understand relative to dangerous drugs, controlled precursors and essential chemicals, provisions of Republic Act 9165, common causes of drug use/abuse, and adverse effects on the health of using dangerous drugs. Besides, it was ascertained that the agency performed well through the substantial arrests made, number of drugs seized, buy-bust operations conducted, and cases filed in courts. It was also verified that the implementation of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) programs was related to the awareness level of the community. Nevertheless, said program implementation was proven not related to agency accomplishments.

Considering the results of the study, it was recommended that a relevant and sufficient budget be appropriated to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) by Congress to increase its manpower, procuring the necessary and proper vehicles, conducting more anti-drug campaigns and advocacies, as well as providing professional development opportunities to personnel. It was equally important to consider establishing a special court to exclusively attend to all drug-related cases for a speedy yet judicious resolution of the same. Another study was likewise suggested to perhaps explore the apparent effect of government allocation to drug-related crimes.

The aforementioned theories, related literature, and studies also served as a guide to the researcher in gathering and organizing data, and to come up with a concrete output of the study particularly on the formulation of implications for practice such as recommendation, suggestion, and measures for implementations. It also served as a guide in the formulation of the implication of future studies for in-depth investigation of a problem or phenomena relative to the performance of their duties implementing anti-drug operations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative study employed a transcendental phenomenology research design. Thus, this type of research brings added dimensions to the study of human experiences through qualitative research. Transcendental phenomenology (TPh), largely developed by Husserl, was a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology seeking to understand human experience. It was in this context that the researcher was taking the cue from Creswell (2013) as the study has utilized qualitative research methods in the investigation, particularly through the phenomenological approach.

In context, a phenomenology study was a qualitative approach that aims to explore the experiences of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents and the underlying corresponding challenges and strategies in the performance of their duties in the implementation of anti-drug operation programs. In extension, the researcher explored approaches to improved their performance in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities. These relevant data were gathered to support the study and were the results of interviews, observations, and documents available in the study area.

Qualitative phenomenological research was concerned with the study of human perception of events or phenomena from the actual happenings in the real world. It was reliving the experiences of the co-researchers involved in the study and going deep into their thoughts, identifying the essence of the experience as described by the participants, through lengthy discussions. The phenomenological approach was very good at surfacing deep issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Husserl (1970) originally conceived of and developed a method of phenomenological description. A Husserlian description uncovered or disclosed the structure and forms of conscious experience. Thus, it typically begins by describing an experience in the first person.

For a more localized context, it was beneficial to conducted interviews with Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents, observed their operations, and review related documents. These methods provided valuable insights into the experiences, challenges, and strategies from their perspective. The phenomenological approach was instrumental in capturing the essence of their lived experiences and shedding light on the complexities of their work.

3.2 Research Environment

The locale of the study is on the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Region VIII, centered in Eastern Visayas, Philippines. The Eastern Visayas Region was the largest in Visayas with a total land area of 2,143,169 hectares. It was composed of the main islands of Leyte, Samar, and Biliran and consists of six provinces: Leyte, Southern Leyte, Samar, Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, and Biliran. There were seven (7) cities in the Region with Tacloban City being the Regional Capital, the others were Ormoc City, Baybay City, Maasin City, Calbayog City, Catbalogan, and Borongan City. As of the 2020 census, Eastern Visayas has a population of approximately 4.55 million people. The major language was Waray-Waray while Cebuano, Boholanos, and Abaknon were spoken in some parts of the region. Seated between Luzon and Mindanao, the Eastern Visayas was the gateway to both island groups with the pan-Philippine Highway traversing through Samar and Leyte which were connected by the famous San Juanico Bridge.

Through the years, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Regional Office VIII located in Palo, Leyte, has remained steadfast in the delivery of its services to the people of Eastern Visayas, effectively meeting its mandate and cementing its commitment to the eradication and control of the illegal drug menace in the area of jurisdiction. The agency was composed of one hundred forty (140) personnel, eighty-nine (89) are drug enforcement officers. As of the first quarter of 2024, Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Region Office VIII continued to make its presence felt in the entire Eastern Visayas region, from the cities of Tacloban, Ormoc, Baybay, Calbayog, Maasin, Catbalogan and Borongan in the provinces of Leyte, Southern Leyte, Biliran, Samar, Eastern Samar and Northern Samar.

Ultimately, the research environment in the Eastern Visayas region offers opportunities to explored the experiences of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) in the performance of their duties in the implementation of anti-drug operations programs in several contexts, such as urban cities, rural villages, and coastal locales. It enabled academics to look into community dynamics, local government structures, and the impact of geography on drug-related issues.

3.3 Research Informants

Ten (10) male intelligence officers from the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Region VIII took part in this study. The researcher regarded them as informants because they were directly involved in the situation and had first-hand knowledge of the information required for this study, as they provided the necessary data. The informants were those who had rendered at least 5 years as Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) agents and participated in at least different operational cases or activities – buy-bust, entrapment cases, test-buy. Four (4) of the informants were individual interviewed while the six (6) informants were included in the focused group discussion were assigned to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Region Office VIII. They were chosen for the specific reason that they belong to the group that was considered active and handled cases in the war

on drugs. Moreover, the principle of voluntary participation required that people not be coerced into participating in research. To conducted the study and as an ethical consideration, the sample size was included participant willingness. In a nutshell, regardless of the potential of the person, participation was heavily dependent on the participant's willingness to be a part of the entire research.

3.4 Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with chosen PDEA Agents to acquired relevant and meaningful information. Furthermore, they were personally involved and offer the necessary information on the obstacles and approaches to improved their performance in carrying out their duties and obligations. The interview guide was open-ended and divided into three sections: part 1 discusses the informants' experiences in the performance of their duties; part 2 addresses the problems encountered by the informants in the performance of their duties; and part 3 delves into the informants' aspirations to improve the performance of their duties. In addition, other data sources, such as documents, were used to supplement the collection of important information through interviews and observation. These document sources comprised books, journals, essays, as well as foreign and local literature on the implementation of anti-drug operations in the research area. Furthermore, an interview guide was created with open-ended questions to prevent leading the informants and to gathered as much information about the phenomenon as possible.

3.5 Research Procedure

The study was undertaken in a step-by-step manner, beginning with obtaining the approval letter, data collection, and progressing through data analysis relative to the phenomenon with the interview guide utilized. The researcher submitted the research protocol to University Ethics Review Board for ethical review. A protocol approved was issued subsequently. The researcher personally explained to the participants the purpose of the interview seeing to it that all questions in the semi-structured interview guide was asked to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data needed in the study. The in-depth interview allowed the informants to speak in the vernacular to make the phenomenon clear as advised by Diehl et al. (2011).

In this way, the informants were able to express their ideas or views and attitudes which added credibility to the results. Recording of responses, which was crucial to the analysis of data, was done with the consent of the interviewees.

The in-depth interview was the primary method in the data collection for this study. Hence, a semi-structured interview was used to answer the research problems of the study. Open-ended type of questions was constructed for the co-researchers to answer the questions in detail and fully described their experiences relative to the phenomenon.

Following henceforth was the transcription of all the recorded interviews. The transcribed interview was thereafter confirmed by the informants as proof that all information provided was exact and neither fabricated nor falsified by the researcher.

Moreover, this study used a purposive sampling approach found the specific informants needed for data collection on Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) agents' experiences in the performance of their duties in implementing anti-drug operation initiatives in the Eastern Visayas region. Purposive sampling, according to Nikolopoulou (2022), was the most commonly used non-probability sampling technique in which units are chosen because they exhibit traits that you require in your sample.

3.5.1 Data Collection

In the conduct of this study, the researcher observed considerable courtesy and respect in dealing with the informants. The researcher had observed proper channels of communication to sought approval to conduct the study. Emails were sent to them or their places of work provided the rationale and intent of the study specified their participation was very vital in sought answers to the problem and to the beneficiaries of this study. The data was gathered through interviews and FGD's face-to-face. However, before the interview was started, the researcher signed a non-disclosure agreement to protect the identity of the informants. The interview was tape-recorded and questions were phrased simply and elaborated on to elicit the necessary information. The consent forms were distributed to the informants and accurate data was recorded during the one-on-one interview with the informants, ensuring protocols were followed given by the Chief of Operations. The responses of the informants were recorded, transcribed, and coded for the generation of common themes. In terms of the privacy of data and confidentiality of information, the provisions of the Data Privacy Law (RA 10173) in dealing with the personal and sensitive information of the informants were strictly observed. Subsequently, transcripts of the individual interviews and the focus group discussion were created for use in the thematic analysis.

3.5.2 Data Analysis

The principles of the thematic analysis technique, such as coding of data, searching for themes, refining the themes, and reporting the findings, are relatable to other qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis (Flick, 2022). Thematic analysis was a method to analyzed qualitative data. It involves the identification and reporting of patterns in a data set, which were then interpreted for their inherent meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006); these patterns can be found based on understanding the meaning of keywords used by participants. This consists of five (5) parts: familiarization, coding, developing the theme, defining the theme, and conclusion. The

first part of this study included familiarization. Hackett and Strickland (2018) stated that familiarization follows a semi-structured interview. In this stage, the first author made field notes and transcribed the audio recording of the interview. The next part was coding. Braun & Clarke (2006) generating codes moves the researcher to a more detailed and systematic engagement with the data. Further, the third part was developing the theme. Braun & Clarke (2006) developing themes is a continuous process of the previous parts. Themes were built, molded, and gave meaning at the intersection of data, researchers' experiences and subjectivity, and research questions. The next part was defining the themes. This phase involves the deep analytic work involved in thematic analysis, the crucial shaping up of analysis into its fine-grained detail. The last part was producing a conclusion or a report. Braun & Clarke, (2006) produced the report often served as a final test of how well the themes work, individually about the dataset and overall, about the experiences of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents in the performance of their duties in implementing of anti-drug operation in the Eastern Visayas region. Content analysis of the data collected was used to identify themes within the research informant's interviews. Interview recordings were transcribed and prominent ideas were identified. Once ideas were identified throughout the interviews they were coded and grouped into themes. The researcher analyzed data by using an interpretation of interviews and the use of coding and grouping into themes.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Engaged in qualitative research about the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents in the performance of their duties in implementing anti-drug operations imposed inherent ethical responsibilities to minimized harm and enhance benefits. In this study, which delved into the experiences of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents, the commitment to ethical conduct was of utmost importance. This section delineates how the research adhered to the fundamental principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy.

Beneficence. The primary objective of the study was contributed positively to the well-being of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents, advocating for enhanced working conditions and support systems. The research sought to bring attention to the distinctive challenges and needs of these individuals by providing a platform for their voices, with the potential to influence favorable policy and systematic changes. Furthermore, it demonstrated a commitment to not only understanding their experiences but also used that knowledge to make positive changes in the performance of their duties in implementing anti-drug operations.

Non-maleficence. The research prioritized minimizing harm. Participation was voluntary, with a comprehensive informed consent process that explains the study's purpose, potential risks, and participants' rights, including the ability to withdraw without consequences. Confidentiality was ensured through anonymized data collection and storage procedures. Sensitive topics were approached with empathy, and participants receive debriefing and emotional support as needed.

Justice. The research strived for a fair and equitable process. Recruitment efforts target a diverse sample that accurately represents the demographic of Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents within the jurisdiction. Selection was based on informed consent, avoiding predetermined criteria that can introduce bias. Data analysis was mindful of power imbalances, aiming to authentically represent participants' experiences.

Autonomy. Respecting informants' autonomy was woven throughout the research process. Informed consent forms used clear and accessible language, emphasizing informants' rights to make informed decisions. Coercion or undue influence was strictly avoided. Informants had controlled over the pace and content of interviews, and their feedback on the research findings was actively sought to ensure accuracy and authenticity.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the Research

The trustworthiness of this qualitative study centers on had reliable and valid data manifested by the research findings. The trustworthiness of research studies was ensured when the findings and results gathered possess the elements of credibility, dependability, transferability, confirmability, bracketing and reflexivity.

Credibility. The results and findings of this case study were reliable and valid since the ones who provided data to the study were those informants who have direct experience with Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents. The accounts of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents made the study reliable and valid and when it was reliable it was then credible making it trustworthy. The study was trustworthy for it was conducted credibly and involved the personal accounts and experiences of the key informants. The credibility of the study was contained in the transcribed responses of the informants obtained through interviews that provided significant ideas about the problem. These findings were interpreted by the researcher free from any element of bias.

Transferability. A qualitative study was trustworthy if the study was transferable, and it was transferable if it was applicable. This case study was essentially transferable for it was applicable or repeatable by others who would like to explore the continuity of

conducting the same study or follow-up research upon knowing the results and findings. The data gathered from this study became the springboard for the conduct of future similar studies that were related to the experience of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents in the performance of their duties in implementing anti-drug operation. The findings served as the basis for further applicable research inquiries. Transferability of this study happens if others who intend to venture into similar, related studies or studies in different contexts could utilized the results and findings of this research.

Dependability. Dependability in research was the stability of data over time and the changing conditions. It was an evaluation of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. In the context of this study, the dependability and trustworthiness of the findings were attributed to the proper documentation of records, interview guides, transcripts of the interviews, development of meanings and themes that are made available for any possible audit trail and examination by other researchers. The independent examination of records and documentation by some researchers attested to the acceptability and dependability of this study. This study was dependable even if other researchers conducted a verification study of the same informants, the findings and results remained the same. It was concluded that a dependable study needed to be consistent and accurate. Thus, proper documentation and record keeping of all research data, records, and transcripts were very necessary in making any research work dependable.

Confirmability. The confirmability in this study was strictly observed making the results, findings, and recommendations as products of the objective inquiry and not on the biases of the researcher. The documents and records if assessed by other researchers could traced from the responses to the semi-structured interviews. The manuscripts provided enough audit trail to help increase the study's trustworthiness. Thus, if the results, findings, and recommendations could trace back by other researchers into the documents and records of interviews used in the study. The themes generated and categorized from the narration and experiences of the informants were used as the sources of the researcher's data verification for easy and accurate access to information. The emphasis was on the essence of confirmability which has been strictly observed because it deals primarily with the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings the researcher obtained. The conduct of the study was objective and the findings obtained were based on informants' responses and not on the biases and personal preferences of the researcher.

Bracketing. Throughout this study, this involved setting aside the researcher's own biases, assumptions, and preconceptions to ensure that the findings are genuinely reflective of the informants' experiences. Bracketing was crucial because it helps in maintaining the integrity of the research. It ensured that the findings are a true reflection of the informants' experiences, free from the researcher's influence.

Reflexivity. Throughout the study, the researcher practiced reflexivity by critically examining their positionality and its potential impact on the research. They acknowledged their backgrounds, experiences, and values, and how these might influence their interpretation of the data. Reflexivity was maintained through regular discussions with the adviser, where the researcher and the adviser openly shared their thought and reflections on the research process. This self-reflective practice ensures transparency and allows for a nuanced understanding of the informant's experiences.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Experiences of the Informants in the Performance of Their Duties

4.1.1 Positive Experience

4.1.1.1 A Fruitful Encounter

This theme describes the positive experiences of the informants in apprehending drug personalities. Informants often find that their diligent efforts and strategic planning lead to successful operations, which are both professionally rewarding and personally fulfilling. These fruitful encounters serve as milestones in their careers and reinforce their commitment to the fight against illegal drugs.

Digging into the in-depth interviews of the informants I was sort of amazed as the informants narrated their experiences. When I asked them about their positive experience, they expressed their answers with modesty. Informant 3 was grateful for apprehending drug personalities :

(So, after that, at least our operation became successful as we were able to trace our personalities. There were even women involved there, and there were minors as well, that's why it was really concerning for us). (IDI3: SS53).

Informant 2 shared that a successful buy-bust operation requires a drug personality to be convicted however, when it comes to their performance, they felt that the anti-drug operation was successful:

(Apprehending the drug personality was successful however, I haven't had an experience with that yet because our justice system here takes quite a while. You can't really consider a buy-bust operation

successful unless the person caught is convicted. I haven't experienced anyone being convicted yet because some trials are still ongoing. If you really catch someone, file a case in court, and they are convicted, it proves that they were really involved. It's not just about catching them and filing a case; there is a trial before they are convicted). (IDI2: SS33)

During focused group discussions, informants felt satisfied that they apprehended the drug personality and were expecting a kilo of illegal drugs. The statement made by Informant 5 and Informant 8 was further corroborated by Informant 6:

(It was successful because our information, although somewhat confidential, was accurate. Even though it didn't push through, he was expecting a kilo to arrive. Because, of course, with the arrival of his one kilo, at least the spread of drugs in Leyte would be minimized. And they said it's also a headache because he's said to be a tough guy. In situations like this, that's what really changes my perspective because sometimes this is where my personality is shaped so that I will help eradicate this drug). (FGD2: SS129).

This theme finds connection and support of Self-Efficacy by Albert Bandura (1977), was the belief in one's capacity to complete a particular behavior. A person's judgment of his or her abilities about a particular issue or subject. This also offers valuable insights into understanding how individuals perceive and approach tasks or challenges. Furthermore, Butler et al. (2023) highlighted the self-beliefs of individuals about their ability and competency to accomplish a task. Self-efficacy is determined by many factors such as emotions and some of the outcomes of self-efficacy include persistence on a task, effort as well as achievement.

A person's confidence in their capacity to perform any action effectively and implement specific habits into their daily routine. Also, it can be defined as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform the necessary actions that will lead to desired outcomes. The most influential source is the interpreted result of one's previous performance or mastery experience (Butler et al., 2023).

Positive reinforcement occurred when individuals meet or exceed these expectations (Marshall et al., 2024). Therefore, positive reinforcement is when they successfully perform their duties, such as apprehending drug offenders or dismantling drug operations. Provided, successful operations result in positive feedback and recognition from these groups, validating the agents' roles and contributing to their sense of fulfillment and success. Innovating and successfully adapting their roles to achieve operational success leads to positive experiences and fulfillment. Despite the resurgence of the drug trade, informants may still be contained in some regions, notably urban ones. With this study, is a clear manifestation that the fruitful encounter of the agents in the performance of their duties is based on their positive interaction, professional fulfillment, and commitment to continue serving the public.

4.1.1.2 Cleaning Up the Neighborhood

This theme describes the positive experiences of the informants in the implementation of anti-drug operations. Particularly, on their efforts to rid communities of drug-related activities and restore a sense of safety and order. Informants often report feelings of pride and accomplishment when they see the tangible impacts of their work, such as reduced crime rates and improved quality of life for residents.

Informant 2 expressed satisfaction in contributing to the community by assisting in the apprehension of drug offenders and preventing others, particularly children, from becoming involved in illegal drug activities:

(Okay, we are happy because at least our efforts are recognized, and if they see that, we can help them, especially when they report cases like that and we take action. It's good because we can help the community so they won't get into trouble, especially when it comes to drug dens where even children are affected. I have had experiences like that too). (IDI2: SS34).

Informant 1 emphasized that successful buy-bust operations required safely apprehending the subject, securing solid evidence during the arrest, and removing the individual from the community:

(Every operation is successful, when first, the person subject for buybust operation is recovered safely, second, there is evidence present during the arrest where the troops are morally convinced of the subject and have solid evidence, and third the troops or operatives return safely and unharmed. Of course, the success of the operation would have eliminated him from the community until he could file for a court hearing and be convicted in court. By the time we got to the correctional facility, we had eliminated his presence and his illegal activity in the community). (IDI1: SS4).

Furthermore, focused group discussion informants stated the satisfaction and sense of accomplishment that comes from navigating these complex operations effectively. The statements made by Informants 7 and 8 were further corroborated by Informant 5:

(The accomplishments of the barangays have an impact on the community by reducing the presence of the problem. This is where the sense of relief comes in, this is where the feeling of relief comes in, this is something that the operatives have accomplished. When the subject is neutralized, neutralized means that the pushers have been arrested, and eventually the users in that area no longer have access to illegal drugs because the pushers have been apprehended in their barangay. This is when you can say that the operation is fruitful, successful, and has an impact on the community as a whole). (FGD1: SS104).

This theme also revolves around the positive experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties. This would explain how the informants serve and help the community in resolving the drug trade. The significant and positive influence informants have on communities through their dedicated efforts to eliminate drug-related activities. As manifested by informants, he describes effective operations that resulted in the detection and dismantling of drug dens and hotspots, considerably lowering the availability of illegal substances in the area.

This theme finds connection and support to the routine activity theory of Cohen and Felson (1979) based on the idea that offenders make rational choices about whether to commit a crime. The idea is that crime is the result of people's everyday behavior, of how offenders and victims go about their daily lives. Crime is not something extraordinary that requires a deep psychological analysis.

Accordingly, Informants serve as capable guardians in their communities, supplying information to the agency and improving the presence and effectiveness of law enforcement. Their alertness and willingness to report suspicious activity discourage potential offenders from engaging in drug-related activities. Informants interrupt motivated offenders' routines by finding and reporting drug dens and hotspots. This interruption makes it more difficult for offenders to identify suitable targets and carry out illicit acts without being identified.

The use of informants improves community surveillance, making it more difficult for drug-related actions to go undetected. The combined efforts of citizens working with informants create an atmosphere in which criminal acts are less likely to occur due to the heightened risk of identification and intervention.

This study demonstrates that the agents' cleaning up of the area as part of their duties is dependent on their positive engagement and collaboration with the local population. This collaborative endeavor involves the effective use of informants to locate and dismantle drug dens and hotspots, hence improving general safety. The agents' commitment to open lines of contact with residents, resolving their concerns, and actively including them in the process has resulted in a more secure and supportive environment, demonstrating the vital significance of community involvement in effective narcotics enforcement operations.

4.1.2 Negative Experiences

4.1.2.1 In the Line of Fire.

This theme describes the negative experience of the informants in the performance of their duties. Working in anti-drug operations often places informants in high-risk situations where they face significant dangers and stress. These negative experiences can impact their physical and mental well-being, as well as their overall job satisfaction.

Meanwhile, during the focused group discussion, Informants emphasizes the impact of being an agent on his personal life such as reducing family time, countercharges, and their everyday routine. The statement made by the Informants 9 and Informant 10 was further corroborated by Informant 7. He said:

(Of course, it has a big impact on you as a person, many will be affected when you enter into this kind of work. Your previous routine is gone, time with family is reduced, that's how it is, ma'am. Cases like counter charges are common, although they are already a natural part of this kind of work that we do. And in the family, there are occasions when you can't go or attend because of work.) (FGD3: SS157)

Moreover, Informant 3 also added that his well-being and work quality were adversely affected. He said:

(Furthermore, lifestyle is also affected, even eating is sometimes neglected. Being sleepless can lead to anxiety or psychological effects, causing an imbalance in hormones or fluids because, of course. For

example, if you only have 3 hours of sleep and you still need to work, you won't be able to rest well, so it affects everything in a person, the quality of your work is affected). (IDI3: SS68)

Furthermore, Informant 2 shared the risks associated with wearing body cameras during transactions. He said:

(During operations, you should have a body cam. If the footage from the body cam is not clear, they may raise objections because if it's not clear, they may doubt it. They could even use it against us because they know the reality of our work. That's true, especially now, during transactions, the Barangay Captain should have a body cam. Our body cams are quite noticeable, so it's not like you can hide it because you have to put it in front). (IDI2: SS39)

This theme also revolves around the negative experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties. This would explain how the informants face various risks and challenges. Informants are often placed in life-threatening situations due to their proximity to criminal activities.

They risk exposure and retaliation from drug dealers and other criminals who may resort to violence to protect their operations. Informants often risk their lives as they infiltrate dangerous environments and deal with individuals involved in the drug trade. This can include threats, intimidation, or violence from drug dealers and their associates.

As mentioned by the informants, some drug personalities or groups may also threaten or harm their family members to exert pressure or retaliate against their actions. The constant fear of being discovered and potential retaliation can lead to significant psychological stress. Living with the continual threat of being exposed informants may suffer from anxiety, and depression, due to the high-stress nature of their work. The high-stakes nature of their work means that any mistake can have dire consequences. Informants may become isolated from their communities or families due to the secretive nature of their work. They might be unable to share their experiences or struggles, leading to feelings of loneliness and detachment.

This theme associated with the general strain theory by Agnew (1992). According to this theory strain and stress are abundant in the lives of many people. Strain and stress come from different stressors. Stressors are situations that are experienced as a perceived threat to one's well-being or position in life, especially if the challenge of dealing with exceeds a person's perceived available resources (Valera, 2022).

Stressors lead to stress. Stress can be defined as a person-environment relationship. The experience of stress is the manifestation of negative emotion triggered by challenges which signaled the body the need to prepare action of defense and protection. Strain generates negative affective states, such as anger and frustration, which create pressure (Jang & Agnew 2015).

With this viewpoint, it is evident that the agents faced severe emotional and ethical issues. The agents are emotionally burdened by the continual danger of being detected, as well as the high-stress nature of their profession. This constant pressure can cause serious psychological strain, including anxiety, despair, and emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, the requirement for secrecy frequently results in social isolation, making it difficult for agents to establish personal relationships and instilling feelings of loneliness and detachment.

4.1.2.2 Tough Row to Hoe

This theme describes the negative experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties in terms of the lack of resources that would help them implement anti-drug operations. The scarcity of essential resources such as manpower, vehicles, equipment, and funding significantly hamper their ability to conduct effective operations and increases the challenges they face.

The informants shared the challenges and difficulties that they encountered in conducting anti-drug operations such as limited resources, and insufficient operational budget. In full confidence, Informant 3 stated:

(Difficulties and challenges, maybe number 1 is logistics, this is what hinders or limits the execution or performance. Financial support from anti-drug operations is crucial because if the budget of the operation is inadequate, of course, your movement will be controlled. So, if instead of being able to gather the information and enter smoothly because your budget is limited, you won't be able to perform well). (IDI3: SS63)

Accordingly, sometimes they pull out their pockets just to patch up every expense. Despite being under the supervision of the government, they felt unwanted and biased. Informant 1 highlighted:

(Not because we are under in the government it is supported that every operation or human movement has its own forces and there is no support from above, we walk even if coordinated by the regional office. From our own pockets we take the budget and when it is gone, we approach the PNP and the municipalities but the municipality is sometimes discriminated against because the PDEA is under the president's office). (IDI1: SS8)

Moreover, focused group discussion informants expressed their deep concern about a limited number of personnel, mobility, and backups that would hinder the successful pursuit of drug personalities. The statements made by Informants 5 and 10 were further corroborated by Informant 9. He stated:

(Secondly, our equipment, while adequate, is not specifically designed for these areas, such as the vehicles. As a result, we may find ourselves unable to pursue the subject effectively if they escape, especially if they are familiar with the area and the vehicle gets stuck or breaks down. Moreover, in terms of personnel, especially human resources, we need a significant number of personnel to effectively focus on these drug cases. We are often limited in each team because when dealing with high-profile drug personalities, we require backup and coordination from other units. These personnel are carefully selected based on their expertise in handling such cases). (FGD5: SS188)

This theme describes the negative experiences of the informants in the performance of their duties including the limited resources, lack of personnel, and insufficient allocation of funds in anti-drug operations. Furthermore, vehicles for intelligence and anti-narcotic entrapment operations are the same. This resulted in the drug criminals' familiarity and easy recognition of the same that prompted them to escape and eventually evade arrest during operations. Hence, PDEA agents are less effective due to work burnout. It happened most likely when the same agents did tiresome multitasking responsibilities like clerical work, field operations, and appearing in courts during litigation.

Henceforth, clogging of drug cases in courts leads to slow resolution of crimes. Aside from the many criminals and civil cases being filed in courts every day, drug cases are added to the bulk causing further congestion of unresolved cases.

The budget plays a significant role in implementing the program. It is very imperative to make certain that funds are utilized for their main purpose. This indicates that funds needed in operation to carry out the war on drugs program in the locality are insufficient. To achieve effectiveness in budget preparation, the entity's management team should ensure that the budgets allocated for projects and programs are implemented within the stipulated time and costs to enhance efficiency.

As mentioned by informants, they emphasize that work would be efficient if the budget is provided and properly allocated. These findings corroborate the research of Arora (2015), stating that the basic objectives of budgetary control are planning, coordination, and control. It is difficult to discuss one without mentioning the other. A budget provides a detailed plan of action for an organization over a specified period. This means that in implementing the war on drugs on the local level, the budget must be adequately determined and used.

Hancock and Toma (2009) have even considered such a budget as the backbone of the management and implementation of any program and project. Furthermore, securing information and cooperation is very crucial to the informants. Based on the interview, the key informants emphasize that in today's trends of leadership, cooperation is not just a 'nice to have.' Cooperation is indeed very valuable. The administrators must strategize activities on how to reinforce the essence of cooperation among the stakeholders as it plays a paramount aspect in the success of the campaign.

This theme is associated with the resource dependence theory of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) to explain how organizations' behavior is affected by the external resources they possess. They propose that firms change, as well as negotiate with, their external environment to secure access to the resources that they need to survive. This means that a firm's competitiveness is determined by the way it deals with its external resources. Van Weele (2018) believes that this is, in fact, more important than their internal resources.

With this view, it is a clear manifestation that the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) agents face significant internal and external challenges that impact their ability to effectively perform their duties in anti-drug operations. Internally, resource limitations are a major concern. PDEA operatives often deal with insufficient vehicles and manpower, necessitating the use of borrowed or personal vehicles for operations. This logistical shortfall not only affects operational efficiency but also poses significant safety risks to the agents. Furthermore, the influence of local leadership, particularly mayors, on PDEA operations can create conflicts of interest and hinder the agency's ability to function autonomously and effectively. The limited number of

operatives also forces agents to multitask and remain constantly on duty, leading to burnout and decreased operational effectiveness.

4.2 Address the Problems Encountered in the Performance of Their Duties

4.2.1 Turning Challenges into Stepping Stones

This theme describes the ability of informants involved in anti-drug operations to convert the obstacles they face into avenues for growth and improvement. Their resilience and adaptability play a critical role in enhancing the effectiveness of their strategies and actions. In the context of the war on drugs, this transformative approach is evident in two primary processes such as supply reduction and demand reduction. Informant 1 stated:

(We have two processes or characteristics of defense and offense in the war on drugs: supply reduction and demand reduction. Which in Supply reduction is the offense we're doing including eradication, buy-bust operation and applying a search warrant on a drug suspect. First the supply reduction where the operation happens then the demand reduction where we have to educate these kids. So that they don't engage in illegal activities that could put them at risk so that's what we're doing). (IDI1: SS15)

Furthermore, Informant 2 added the preventive education community involvement as one of the actions they had taken. He said:

(Of course, our Preventive Education Community Involvement (PECI) program is really making a difference by conducting seminars in communities about the illegal drugs that should not be tolerated. You also have the supply and demand reduction efforts, with your Barangay Drug Clearing Program (BDCCP) and PEGI spreading information in schools and establishments to create drug-free workplaces. Your agency's initiatives are essential in combating drugs). (IDI2: SS46)

During the focused group discussions, Informants highlighted strategies for addressing anti-drug operations such as K9 paneling, surveillance, and interrogation. The statements made by Informants 7, Informant 9, and Informant 10 were further corroborated by Informant 5. He stated:

(Drug trafficking often involves strategies at the ports because usually, in K9 paneling and random K9 sweeping, that's where they can detect if you are trafficking. Like in the trafficking of illegal drugs, once there is a presence of K9 units at airports and seaports, the importation of illegal drugs can be minimized to prevent drug traffickers from finding other ways to smuggle their illegal drugs. Since the Philippines is surrounded by seas, the coastal areas can be access points. So, for drugs in large volumes, they may not pass through the ports but through back doors, like in Malaysia, or here in Tawi-Tawi, through backdoors where they can successfully smuggle drugs because of the coastal areas. The drug lords have become wise and they do not pass through the ports). (FGD1: SS114)

This theme describes the ability of informants involved in anti-drug operations to convert the obstacles they face into avenues for growth and improvement. the remarkable ability of informants involved in anti-drug operations to transform obstacles into opportunities for growth and improvement. Despite facing numerous risks and adversities, these dedicated individuals leverage their experiences to enhance their skills, knowledge, and resilience.

They not only adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of drug enforcement but also use each challenge as a learning opportunity to refine their strategies and methodologies. By converting setbacks into stepping stones, informants contribute significantly to the effectiveness of anti-drug operations, ultimately playing a crucial role in promoting community safety and dismantling drug networks. Their unwavering commitment and resourcefulness exemplify the power of perseverance and innovation in overcoming adversity.

Most likely, the majority to benefit from the programs of PDEA are the communities—the general public. Hence, raising the awareness of the whole community about the agency's activities could affect everybody's life and may encourage them to work together to keep things in order. Based on this, PDEA can take advantage of educating the public by effectively teaching each community in the country how to fight drug problems (Cerado, 2015).

Guay & Cawi (2021) have purported that the audience must be informed regarding the program's ultimate goals and main objectives to make the program successful. Support, cooperation, and motivation from stakeholders should be necessary to maintain a particular program's excellent achievement and performance (Martin & Bonesto-Tugguin, 2020). In the context of health issues, taking prohibited drugs and behavioral health services as part of an essential benefits package should be considered. Indeed, the implementer must know how to initiate activities to solve problems related to prohibited drugs.

This theme finds connection and support with Resilience theory, developed by Norman Garmezy, defined as a common factor of resilient is external support from institutions (Garmezy, 1991). Hence, this refers to as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances. This framework explores how individuals can thrive and grow in the face of adversity, turning potential setbacks into opportunities for personal and professional development.

Mccraty & Atkinson (2012) suggest that law enforcement work is among the most stressful occupations in the world and officers typically suffer a variety of physiological, psychological, and behavioral effects and symptoms. Officers operating under severe or chronic stress are likely to be at greater risk of error, accidents, and overreactions that can compromise their performance, jeopardize public safety, and pose significant liability costs to the organization.

With this view, it is a clear manifestation that preventive education is a stepping stone to promoting the resilience of the community. Along with effective intelligence operations due to its constant adaptation to the evolving tactics of drug traffickers. Agents must continuously learn and refine their methods, demonstrating resilience in the face of new challenges. Gathering and analyzing intelligence involves being resourceful, and using available information creatively to disrupt drug networks.

With that, communities learn to use their collective knowledge and resources to create supportive environments that discourage drug use. Preventive education fosters a sense of community and mutual support, essential components of resilience that help individuals and groups withstand and recover from drug-related challenges.

4.2.2. Joining Forces for A Common Cause

This theme describes the collaborative efforts of informants and various stakeholders in the implementation of anti-drug operations. Recognizing that the fight against drug-related crimes cannot be won in isolation, informants work closely with other law enforcement agencies, community leaders, non-governmental organizations, and residents to create a unified front. The power of synergy and the importance of building strong, trust-based relationships to achieve a common goal.

Informant 4 expresses interest in collaboration with the international community to unify the efforts in the anti-drug operation advocacy. He stated:

(First and foremost, our collaboration when it comes to law enforcement services. All agencies such as the NBI, PNP, military, or any other law enforcement service present in our country should be unified. Because we all have the same goal, not just to reduce, but we really aim for the eradication of illegal drugs). (IDI4: SS93)

Furthermore, Informant 1 mentioned the collaboration with PNP to prevent drug trafficking. He stated

(Drug trafficking mostly happens in the Philippines where they actually turn minors into runners. Drug trafficking mostly happens in the Philippines where they actually turn minors into runners. Operation is the only thing that can prevent them or save them together with PNP because even if they were lectured by lecturers, they wouldn't listen). (IDI1: SS20)

On the other hand, focused group discussion informants shared collaboration with other regions, especially around NCR. The statement made by Informant 9 was further supported by Informant 6, he said:

(Sometimes, we also coordinate with other regions. We suspect where the items in Region VIII came from. Of course, there's no laboratory here, so wherever the items came from, it could be from NCR. That's why we coordinate with them, in case they know of any items entering our region so we can intercept them. For example, if they have leads, they will coordinate with us, and we will also coordinate with them). (FGD2: SS140)

This theme describes the collaboration of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency to various agencies in the performance of their duties. This collaboration was essential to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency's (PDEA) success in combating illegal drug activities. By working with other government agencies, local government units, non-governmental organizations, and international partners, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) can leverage additional resources, intelligence, and support to enhance its operations.

They collaborate with the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and other law enforcement agencies to conduct joint operations. These operations can range from small-scale raids to large, complex missions targeting drug syndicates. Regular meetings and communication channels are established to ensure information sharing and operational synchronization. Furthermore, the local government officials, including mayors and barangay captains, play a crucial role in the anti-drug campaign. They provide local intelligence and support for PDEA operations within their jurisdictions. They assist in

community-based programs aimed at drug prevention and rehabilitation, fostering a supportive environment for those affected by drug abuse.

This theme associated with Social Cognitive theory by Bandura (1989), proposes that human behavior is the product of the interaction between personal factors, environmental influences, and behavioral patterns. Rather than passively absorbing knowledge from environmental inputs, social cognitive theory argues that people actively influence their learning by interpreting the outcomes of their actions, which, in turn, affects their environments and personal factors, informing and altering subsequent behavior.

Agents and collaborating agencies can learn from each other's experiences and best practices. Observing successful strategies and techniques used by other agencies helps in adopting effective methods and improving operational performance. Effective practices demonstrated by one agency can serve as models for others. For example, successful drug interdiction strategies or community engagement practices can be adopted across different agencies through observation and imitation.

Meanwhile, validation of information through casing, surveillance, and other modes of intelligence build-up is one of the strengths of the implementation of the drug war. Because of the involvement of barangay officials, the media or the DOJ find the conviction rate to be a high chance which should be consistently observed for every anti-drug operation (Alagabia & Cawi, 2019).

Drug law enforcement operations are a reflection that the agency is doing its duties and responsibilities, which could lead to the prosecution of drug cases. Additionally, prosecution of drug cases and conviction of criminals may be impossible without the cooperation of the community (Cerado, 2015).

Given these observations, it is, therefore, necessary that the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and other law enforcement agencies continuously spearhead an intensified information campaign to encourage the citizenry to be vigilant and divulge any illegal drug activities in their respective areas. The collective efforts and shared resources among the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency and its partner agencies lead to more effective anti-drug operations. By pooling intelligence, personnel, and equipment, the agencies can conduct more comprehensive and successful operations.

4.3. Aspiration of Informants to Improve the Performance of Their Duties

4.3.1 Building An Unbreakable Fortress

This theme describes the efforts of informants and their teams to create a robust and resilient structure for anti-drug operations. It involves establishing strong foundations in terms of strategy, penalties, resources, and community support to ensure sustained success in combating drug-related crimes. Informant 2 shared that the weight of the punishment should increase to deter people from engaging in illegal drugs. He stated:

(The punishment should really be increased, depending on the grams confiscated. If only a small amount is confiscated, one can easily plea bargain. This is why there are many instances of plea bargaining, as it allows for quick release and often leads to relapse). (IDI2: SS49)

Another highlighted the importance of building a network of reliable informants and allies within the community, which provides crucial intelligence and enhances operational security. Informant 4 described how rigorous training programs and continuous professional development have fortified their team's capabilities, making them more adept at handling complex and high-risk operations. He stated:

(In PDEA, I can see that they will additional knowledge in terms if advance technology since the transaction of drug are evolving. Hoping that they give more attention with our law, to strengthen the law to those who use and sell drugs). (IDI4: SS99)

According to the focused group discussion informants, they recommended investing in personnel, fostering partnerships, and implementing best practices. The statements made by Informants 8 and 9 were supported by Informant 5. He stated:

(Drug law enforcement is more about international cooperation in dealing with drug trafficking. Sharing information and coordinating the efforts of neighboring countries and international agencies is essential. The PDEA will strengthen their role in international collaborations, sharing intelligence, participating in joint operations, and attending international forums to update global trends and best practices. The number of drug cases in our country seems to be decreasing). (FGD1: SS124)

This theme describes the efforts of informants and their teams to create a robust and resilient structure for anti-drug operations. It involves establishing strong foundations in terms of strategy, penalties, resources, and community support to ensure sustained

success in combating drug-related crimes. This emphasizes the battle against drug-related crimes requires more than just reactive measures; it demands a proactive and strategic approach that creates an unbreakable fortress.

Agents play a crucial role in the fight against drug-related crimes eventually the goals for improving their performance revolve around building a strong and resilient structure for anti-drug operations. As stated by the informants, receiving continuous and advanced training could help them stay updated on the latest tactics and strategies in combating drug syndicates. Also, they seek specialized training in intelligence gathering, surveillance, and undercover operations.

The organization and the agents aimed for better coordination and communication with other law enforcement agencies, such as the police, and local government units. This includes establishing joint task forces and regular inter-agency meetings to share information and strategies. Developing and implementing adaptive strategies that can quickly respond to the evolving tactics of drug traffickers includes the use of technology, data analytics, and predictive modeling to anticipate and counteract drug operations.

This theme associated with Transformational Leadership theory developed by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and further expanded by Bernard M. Bass (2006) emphasizes the role of leadership in inspiring and motivating followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their leadership capacity. Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to bring about significant change by fostering an environment of trust, innovation, and high performance.

A leadership model that relies on a team's encouragement to realize overall success. By raising a team's morale and self-confidence, the team can then align itself to an overall vision or common purpose. This purpose, however, must be established early on for it to be effective.

On the other hand, intellectual stimulation describes leaders who encourage their members to think outside the box and be innovative. Stimulating followers promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills to improve the group or organization as a whole.

This challenges the normal beliefs of a group and encourages the team to perform better than they ever thought originally possible. Encouraging innovation involves each team member in the decision-making process and fosters a sense of importance and a stake in the organization's overall success (Bass & Riggo, 2006).

With this view, it is clear that the informants are determined and dedicated to delivering effective performance in their duties despite unpredictable circumstances. By leveraging the strengths of each informant and fostering a collaborative environment, the resilience, and effectiveness of anti-drug operations are significantly enhanced, thereby creating an unbreakable fortress against the threat of illegal drugs. Work with resilience, determination, and faith informants continue to pursue their goals or uphold their responsibilities believing that persistence and hard work eventually lead to a positive result.

4.3.2 Laying the Foundation for Lasting Changes

This theme describes the efforts of the informants to implement sustainable strategies and initiatives that address the root causes of drug-related issues. Rather than focusing solely on immediate enforcement, informants emphasize the importance of prevention, education, and community empowerment to create a long-term impact. Informant 1 stated:

(Of course, our Preventive Education Community Involvement (PECI) program is really making a difference by conducting seminars in communities about the illegal drugs that should not be tolerated. You also have the supply and demand reduction efforts, with your Barangay Drug Clearing Program (BDCP) and PEGI spreading information in schools and establishments to create drug-free workplaces. That's our agency's initiatives are essential in combating drugs). (IDI2: SS46)

The dedication of the informants to creates enduring solutions by addressing socio-economic factors, enhancing public awareness, and fostering community resilience. Informant 1 aimed to reduce the prevalence of drug-related problems and build healthier, safer communities for future generations. He stated:

(PDEA RO8 is more recognized as respectable and respected by the speed of action on information related to illegal drugs. Actually, I see in the year of 2030 which is the long-term goal of our office in the Philippines is to be a drug-free country in which no drugs are actually sold. Of course, the role of the PDEA is that what we call the terminator of the illegal drugs in the Philippines which will focus only in that kind of duty because that's all we really focus on. Actually, not only do they mostly inform the

community because they are only working in discrete method in which that they would be even more effective in line of eradicating the illegal drugs in the Philippines). (ID11: SS28)

Meanwhile, focused group discussion informants shared their experience in the envisions the role of agency as characterized by effective management, particularly when working with other agencies with government support. The statements made by Informant 10, Informant 5, and Informant 8 were corroborated by Informant 6. He stated:

(Based on the role of PDEA, I see effective management, especially when working alongside other agencies with government support. Our goal as a PDEA agent will be fulfilled well, especially in our agency. At the same time, the agency can adopt advanced technologies that we can use when it comes to operations). (FGD2: SS47)

This theme describes the goal and motivation of the informants. This also includes the role of the organization and the drug enforcement efforts in implementing anti-drug operations. Informants are driven by a profound commitment to creating safer, drug-free communities. Their goals extend beyond merely assisting in law enforcement operations; they are motivated by a vision of lasting change and the eradication of the root causes of drug-related issues. By working closely with community members, informants aim to rebuild trust between the community and law enforcement agencies.

As stated by the informants continuous training programs to ensure they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to tackle evolving drug-related challenges effectively. The organization actively engages in community outreach programs, fostering partnerships with local leaders, schools, and NGOs. These efforts help create a unified front against drug issues and promote community-driven solutions.

This theme associated with Social Cognitive theory by Albert Bandura (1986) pertains to one's perceived self-efficacy has direct effects both on the initiation of and persistence of behavior. Another predictor of a person's behavior is outcome expectation, which is defined as a person's estimate that a certain behavior will lead to certain positive and/ or negative consequences. This theory emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in learning and behavior change. By understanding how individuals perceive drug use, we can develop targeted prevention and treatment programs.

Therefore, a person's perceived social support is also a key element in influencing treatment outcomes where it indicates that the social support available (Eslami et al., 2017) to drug personalities can have an impact on treatment outcomes.

Another research has also shown that community-based programs based on these factors can be effective in preventing adolescent substance use (Dastgerdi et al., 2021).

At the core of the PDEA's community-based efforts is the Preventive Education and Involvement Service (PECIS) which carries out demand reduction activities at the barangay level, different sectors in the community, private and public institutions, and colleges and universities in the Philippines, using lectures, seminars, meetings, and dialogues. These initiatives are envisioned to increase the awareness of the citizenry on the drug problem in society and its ill effects.

Given these observations, informants expressed exceeding expectations in the campaign's execution. Despite unforeseen challenges, the team's perseverance and dedication ensured the campaign's success. In response, the organization will reinforce existing strategies and provide enhanced support to agents in future anti-drug operations.

5. Conclusion

This study utilized a qualitative research method via a transcendental phenomenology approach. Furthermore, this study was conducted in Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Region VIII, centered in Eastern Visayas. This study involved ten (10) informants. Four (4) were individually interviewed while six (6) were included in the focused group discussion and they were all male intelligence officer. The researcher conducted interviews in Filipino through the help of an audio recorder to properly document the responses of the informants. Before its conduct, the informants were provided an informed consent form to be properly aware of their participation in the study and prove that they had the freedom to refuse or not answer some questions they think are not appropriate for them to answer. After this, a transcript of the interview was produced and transcribed. Gathered data were now subjected to thematic analysis and the researcher was able to craft eight (8) themes that best represent the lived experiences of the informants.

Out of the gathered data, the researcher was able to formulate eight (8) themes that best represent the experiences, and address the problems encountered and aspirations to improve the performance of their duties. The researcher came up with these themes

after carefully analyzing two hundred sixteen (216) significant statements made by the informants and formulated the same number of core meanings. Furthermore, it was regrouped to form sixteen (16) clustered themes.

The emergent themes are as follows: For the positive experiences of informants, there are two (2) themes, namely: *A Fruitful Encounter and Clearing Up the Neighborhood*.

For the negative experiences of informants, there are two (2) themes, namely: *In the Line of Fire and Tough Row to Hoe*.

For the strategies employed by the informants, there are two (2) themes namely: *Turning Challenges into Stepping Stones and Joining Forces for a Common Cause*.

For the aspiration of the informants, there are two (2) themes, namely: *Building an Unbreakable Fortress and Laying the Foundation for Lasting Change*.

Through the findings of this study, the researcher was able to come up with relevant recommendations and suggestions that could be applied to present practice and future studies.

The findings of this study are significant to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents, a family of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents, and important institutions.

To fulfill and be effective in the performance of their duties, the agents should undergo rigorous and continuous training. This training should encompass not only the technical aspects of drug enforcement operations but also focus on enhancing their physical, mental, and emotional resilience. Additionally, agents should be provided with adequate resources and support systems to ensure their well-being and operational efficiency.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) as an organization and lead agency in the campaign against the war on drugs should develop a unified strategic framework of Demand Reduction implementation to strengthen the information drive and observance of the rule of law to the barangay officials, drug surrenderers and community as a whole. Furthermore, this includes improving operational control, ensuring sufficient manpower and vehicular resources, and minimizing external influences, such as those from local political figures. The agency should also implement policies and strategies that enhance the safety and security of their agents, such as prioritizing the use of four-wheeled vehicles during operations for better protection.

The family of the agents should show support and awareness of the jobs of their loved ones and help enlighten and understand the minds of every family in society about anti-drug programs. The importance of providing support to agents, as the nature of their work often puts them under significant stress and danger. Recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by agents can help in creating a more supportive and understanding environment for them at home.

The Philippine National Police (PNP) should enhance its clear coordination mechanism and priority and verification. The guidelines provide a clear-cut mechanism for coordination between the Philippine National Police (PNP) and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) before conducting planned anti-drug operations. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) is provided with an official list of Philippine National Police (PNP) drug enforcement operatives for reference and verification, ensuring proper coordination and monitoring. Joint efforts between the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) can improve the overall efficacy of anti-drug operations and address complex drug-related issues more effectively.

The Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) should focus on formulating and implementing comprehensive drug policies and strategic frameworks. By setting clear national guidelines and overseeing drug enforcement efforts, the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) plays a critical role in guiding the direction and effectiveness of anti-drug campaigns.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) should provide robust support to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and local enforcement agencies through guidance, resources, and oversight. Strengthening the partnership between the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) can streamline anti-drug initiatives and improve operational coordination.

To Local Government Units (LGUs) should actively participate in the welfare and progress of their stakeholders by mobilizing resources and allocating annual budgets to support anti-drug operations. The Local Government Units (LGUs) can allocate funds for training, equipment, and other necessary resources for anti-drug operations. This ensures that the personnel involved are well-

equipped and prepared. This support can boost the morale of the personnel involved and ensure sustained motivation and commitment to their duties.

To Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (BADAC) should play an active role in local anti-drug initiatives by collaborating with the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and other relevant agencies. By engaging in community-based programs, Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (BADAC) can help raise awareness, prevent drug abuse, and support enforcement efforts at the grassroots level.

The community should play a major part in recognizing their effort and dedication to making tangible differences in the lives of residents and restoring order and peace in the affected. Stories of community outreach programs where they educate the public about drug prevention and awareness, fostering a sense of trust and collaboration between the agency and the community.

Future researchers play an important role in furtherance of conducting a study to fill in the gap that is not covered in the study.

Through this study, the researcher was also able to discover the lived experiences of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents in the performance of their duties. As revealed in the study, the Agents have a negative experience dealing with them. It is need also to be studied how to cope with the demands of the judiciary, which has put the lives of these people in danger considering they have to comply with all the requirements.

Moreover, it is recommended that Congress appropriate a relevant and sufficient budget to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) to increase its manpower, procure the necessary and proper vehicles, conduct more anti-drug campaigns and advocacy, and provide personnel with professional development opportunities. It is also vital to consider establishing a separate court to handle all drug-related issues in a timely and judicious manner.

Another study is proposed to investigate the apparent influence of government allocation on drug-related offenses. This implication will allow future researchers to explore the lived experiences of the Philippines Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) Agents in various regions. Considering that there are few studies made, in doing so the researcher could explore and comprehensively formulate necessary recommendations and suggestions that will help improve the performance of their duties.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest

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