



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### LIFE STORIES OF WOMEN DRUG SURRENDERERS

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History:

Received 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2023

Received in revised form

19<sup>th</sup> November, 2023

Accepted 26<sup>th</sup> December, 2023

Published online 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2024

##### Key words:

Criminal Justice, Wellness Program, Life Stories of Women Drug Surrenderers, Narrative Inquiry, Philippines

#### ABSTRACT

Illegal drug activities produce negative impact to the society and this concern can be best addressed through effective and efficient implementation of rehabilitative programs such as wellness program to the women drug surrenderers in Negros Occidental. Thus, this study aimed to explore the life stories of women surrenderers on the rehabilitation program of Oplan Tokhang. Specifically, it sought to determine the different experiences of the women surrenderers before, during and after they surrendered. It also seeks to know the factors that influences the surrenderers in engaging into drugs and the contribution of the program to the quality of lives of the surrenderers and their family. This qualitative study utilized narrative inquiry. Informants were women drug surrenderers who underwent the wellness program of OplanTokhang in Negros Occidental. They were individually interviewed using validated and approved interview guide. The recorded interview was transcribed, read, and analyzed multiple times to determine the significant statements, formulated meanings, clusters and emergent themes based on the feelings and meanings of the informants. The study showed that twelve (12) emergent themes were identified. The following themes that were formulated are the following: before engaging to illegal drug activities were Hostaged by Broken Family; Chained into Poverty; The Product of Curiosity; during engagement to illegal drug activities were Financial Comfort through Drugs; Drug Abuse as Hindrance to Family Health; Social Predicament; and after engaging to illegal drug activities were Freedom Found in Reformation; A Family's Gratefulness; Indebted to the Law of the Land; The Negativity of Social Status; Constructive Outlook for a Brighter Future; and A Loving Family is a Pillar for Change. The findings suggested the need in sufficient funding support from the LGUs and an institutionalized after care program. Increasing the grant of livelihood assistance or LGUs should provide short term courses and seek employment that would match the capabilities of the surrenderers. Community and family support are also vital to the recovery and reintegration of these surrenderers.

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## INTRODUCTION

"Tokhang" is among the Philippine National Police flagship operations in the so-called "war on illegal drugs." The "knock and plead" operation involves cops literally knocking on the doors of suspected drug personalities – users and pushers alike – to ask them to end their ways. Illegal drugs are more rampant in the "street level." During "Tokhang" operations, police officers go to the homes of suspected drug users and pushers and ask them to stop using illegal drugs. Some suspected users and pushers are even asked to go to the barangay hall to surrender and their names submitted to a list of drug suspects who have given up narcotics. Illegal drug activities produce negative impact to the society and this concern can be best addressed through effective and efficient implementation of rehabilitative programs such as wellness program to the women drug surrenderers in Negros Occidental.

Thus, this study aimed to explore the life stories of women surrenderers on the rehabilitation program of *OplanTokhang*. Specifically, it sought to determine the different experiences of the women surrenderers before, during and after they surrendered. It also seeks to know the factors that influences the surrenderers in engaging into drugs and the contribution of the program to the quality of lives of the surrenderers and their family. This qualitative study utilized narrative inquiry. Informants were two women drug surrenderers who underwent the wellness program of *OplanTokhang* in Negros Occidental. They were individually interviewed using validated and approved interview guide. The recorded interview was transcribed, read, and analyzed multiple times to determine the significant statements, formulated meanings, clusters, and emergent themes based on the feelings and meanings of the informants. The study showed that twelve (12) emergent themes were identified. The following themes that were formulated are the following: before engaging to illegal drug activities were *Hostaged by Broken Family*; *Chained into Poverty*;

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*The Product of Curiosity*; during engagement to illegal drug activities were *Financial Comfort through Drugs*; *Drug Abuse as Hindrance to Family Health*; *Social Predicament*; and after engaging to illegal drug activities were *Freedom Found in Reformation*; *A Family's Gratefulness*; *Indebted to the Law of the Land*; *The Negativity of Social Status*; *Constructive Outlook for a Brighter Future*; and *A Loving Family is a Pillar for Change*.

The findings suggested the need in sufficient funding support from the LGUs and an institutionalized after care program. Increasing the grant of livelihood assistance or LGUs should provide short term courses and seek employment that would match the capabilities of the surrenderers. Community and family support are also vital to the recovery and reintegration of these surrenderers.

**Statement of the Problem:** This study aimed to unfold the life stories of women drug surrenderers in Negros Occidental.

**This study seeks answers to the following questions:**

- What are the experiences of the informants as drug users and runners of illegal drugs before, during and after surrender?
- What are the causative factors that lead the informants in engaging into drugs?
- How has the Tokhang Program contributed to the wellness and quality of life of the informants and to their families?

**Significance of the Study:** The findings of this investigation are significant to the following:

- **Women Drug Surrenderers.** They will be the first persons who can benefit in this study because it will help them fully understood what would be the advantage and help if they will undergo the wellness program that were provided by the government or their local government unit.
- **Philippine National Police (PNP).** It can benefit in this study and it will aid them to enhance or to improve some of the parts of their double barrel or tokhang program.
- **Families of Women Drug Surrenderers.** They can also benefit in this study because they can be fully aware if what is really the purpose of the Tokhang Program, specifically the wellness program provided to every surrenderers. In this way, the family of women drug surrenderers could fully understand what they are going through and to support them all step of the way.
- **Local Government Units (LGUs).** They can benefit in this study because they will be aware of what are their lapses or what are the things that they need to be improved. In this way, their surrenderers who undergo wellness program will have a chance and be motivated to be a law-abiding citizen of their unit.
- **Community.** This is because it could help them fully understand what are the disadvantages and the consequences are once, they will engage in both drug using and drug trafficking.
- **Researcher.** She can also benefit in this study because she can use these as a reference especially those studies where focused are drugs, women in drugs and rehabilitation.

- **Future Researchers.** They can develop and research more about women who have been renewed and rehabilitated from illegal drug activity.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Research Design:** This qualitative research utilized narrative inquiry as an approach to explore the life stories of women drug surrenderers. Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Qualitative research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focused groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size is typically small, and respondents are selected to fulfill a given quota (DeFranzo, 2011).

**Research Environment:** The study was be conducted in Negros Occidental.

**Research Respondents:** The respondents of this study are the women drug surrenderers undergoing wellness program from Negros Occidental. They are the drug surrenderers under the Double Barrel or Tokhang Program and had been using and running illegal drugs for more than five (5) years before they surrendered. The other respondent is an elementary graduate, living with her partner and she has two children. The other respondent is a high school graduate, a widow and had five children. They both started using drugs through the influence of their peers and decided later to sell drugs because of easy income and because of poverty.

**Research Instrument:** The researcher utilized an interview guide, recorder, and field notes for the individual in-depth interview. The interview guide was validated by the panel. Part I of the interview guide deals with the experiences of the informants as drug users and runners of illegal drugs, when she surrendered and when she undergoes wellness program; part II deals into the causative factors that lead the informants in engaging in drugs, and part III deals with how the Tokhang Program contributed to the wellness and quality of life of the informants.

## Research Procedures

**Data Collection.** In collecting data, the researcher identified first the point person personally known by the informants. This identified point person assisted the researcher in locating the informants for setting the interview schedule. After the interview was set, the researcher distributed the informed consent form to the informants and explained to them the contents and purposes. After forms have been signed, the interview and discussion started and documented using audio recorder. The interviews were done in a language known and comfortable to the informants. One interview was conducted in her own residence and the other one was in the police station for privacy purposes.

Immediately after completion of the interview, recorded conversation of the researcher and informants were transcribed accordingly and translated. Ensuring accuracy and reliability of the transcriptions, audio recording was made available for necessary verification made by any concerned examiner/panel member. Results of the transcriptions were also made available to the informants and signed by them as proof of their acknowledgement to avoid biases.

**Data Analysis:** The researcher used Thematic Analysis in this study. Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research. It emphasizes pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns or "themes" within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question. Thematic analysis is used in qualitative research and focuses on examining themes within data. This method emphasizes organization and rich description of the data set. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. To analyze the collected data, the six phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used namely: transcribing data, reading and re-reading the data, noting down, and initial ideas; coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set; collating data relevant to each code; collating codes into potential themes; generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis; generating clear definitions and names for each theme; final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

**Ethical Consideration:** Due to the confidentiality of the informants' personal information, their name was not mentioned in this research. The participants' information was dealt with utmost confidentiality in accordance with the ethics of research. The ethical principles adhered to in the study include informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and justice. Written informed consent forms were also presented to the participants. It was emphasized that the interview would be audio recorded and that the data gathered in the interview would be used for academic purposes only. The researcher assured the informant that the information gathered in the interview would be strictly confidential and anonymity of their identities would be constantly maintained. The study used code names to conceal participants' identities. Recordings were also kept to aid in the transcription of their verbatim accounts.

**Trustworthiness of Research:** This study was conducted with credibility over its result. Biases over the interpretation were avoided to make this study reliable. The outcome of this study was greatly used to achieve greater benefits of the corroborative by others to see its conformability and dependably to which an independent auditor reviews the activities of the researcher to see how well the techniques for meeting the credibility and transferability standards. Credibility or trustworthiness is involved in establishing that the results of the research are believable. This is a classic example of quality not quantity. It depends more on the richness of the information gathered, rather than the amount of data gathered. There are many techniques to gauge the accuracy of the findings, such as data triangulation, triangulation through multiple analysts and 'member checks.'

In reality, the participants/ readers are the only ones who can reasonably judge the credibility of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability refers to the degree in which the research can be transferred to other contexts; this section is define by readers of the research. The reader notes the specific details of the research situation and methods, and compares them to a similar situation that they are more familiar with. If the specific are comparable, the original research would be deemed more credible. It is essential that the original researcher supplies a highly detailed description of their situation and methods. Reliability/ Dependability ensures that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated. This is measured by the standard of which the research is conducted, analyzed, and presented. Each process in the study should be reported in detail to enable an external researcher to repeat the inquiry and achieve similar results. This also enables researcher to understand the methods and their effectiveness. Confirmability questions how the research findings are supported by the data collected. This is a process to establish whether the researcher has been biased during the study; this is due to the assumption that qualitative research allows the research to bring the case by studying the data collected during the original inquiry. To enhance the confirmability of the initial conclusion, and audit trail can be completed throughout the study to demonstrate how each decision was made (Moser &Korstjens, 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Presentation of Data:** This study presented through qualitative method and thematic analysis where it identifies, analyze and report patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For clear context of the study, each informant was taken in local dialect, thus allowing them for freely express their part. These were transcribed and translated for readability and understanding. Likewise, all the statements from the informants were selected from the transcribed interview. Out from each significant statement extracted, formulated meanings were created and coded as it reflected an exhaustive description of the informant's experience. The formulated core meanings which appeared to a common grouped and reflecting unique structures were organized into clustered themes. Lastly, cluster themed were then re-grouped to come up with emergent themes. After the thorough and exhaustive description of the formulated meanings using thematic analysis method to form twelve (12) emergent themes, they are the following:

**What are the experiences of the informants as drug users and runners of illegal drugs before, during and after surrender?**

### Before

- Hostaged by Broken Family
- Chained into Poverty
- The Product of Curiosity

### During

- Financial Comfort Through Drugs
- Drug Abuse as a Hindrance to Family Relationship
- Social Indifference

## After

- Freedom in Reformation
- The Beholden Family
- One Subservient Citizen

**What are the causative factors that lead the informants in engaging in drugs?**

Peer Pressure

**How did the Tokhang Program contribute to the wellness and quality of life of the informants and their families?**

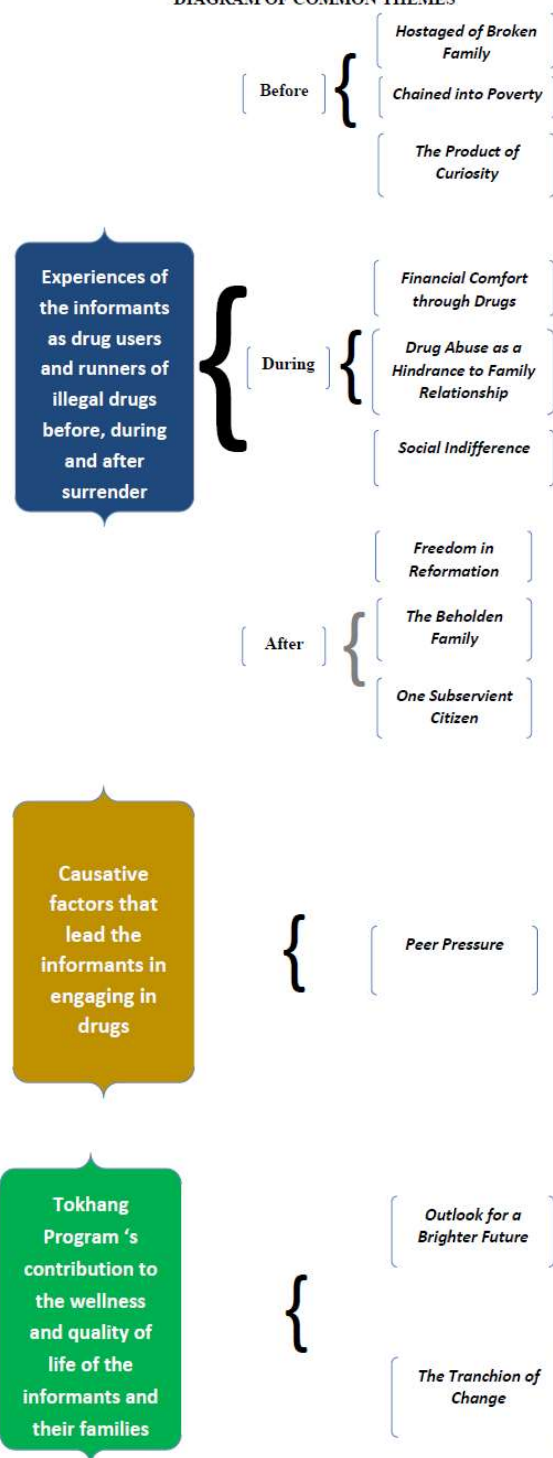
- Outlook for Brighter Future
- Their Stanchion of Change

### DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGENT THEMES

CLUSTERED THEMES	EMERGENT THEMES
<b>BEFORE</b>	
Grew up in a stepfather A mistress mother A caring mother and stepfather Started to try different vices A kind mother and stepfather A strict stepfather A good child and have a kind friends. The middle performer student She was an obedient daughter.	Hostaged by Broken Family
A poverty as a socio-economic status A very abundant life she had when was not yet a widow.	Chained into Poverty
Family, not a reason to her rebellious actions It is all about friends or peers until you liked it and looked for it. New to her eyes.	The Product of Curiosity
<b>DURING</b>	
Would bring home any amount from running of drugs for her children. Her children know where she was getting the money that she is bringing home to her children. A user, became a runner and sometimes pusher. The incentives for the service became an income. Neighbors are her costumers The income of being a runner. From a user and became a runner. Her reliance to drugs as her livelihood. From vice that became a job. The easiness of money in drugs. The double income from left and right The real income in drugs. Her children enjoy the abundance of her money, but it was from drugs. Her profit of being a runner was good. She shares to others what she had. The experience of becoming a carrier of drugs.	Financial Comfort Through Drugs
Her realization after surrendering and not using drugs Her children became disrespectful to her. The rude children The eldest son's rant to her mother. Her paranoid Feeling Her motherly advise to her children. Her obedient and kind children. The insisting mother	Drug Abuse as a Hindrance to Family Relationship
Her neighbors doesn't care at all Her neighbors comment.	Social Indifference
<b>AFTER</b>	
She was able to save money and bought a tricycle. Another savings for the motorcycle franchise. She now feels pity to her parents. Free from all expenses and has an everyday income. The big help of the program. The children's convincing power God's perfect way. The sleepless God. Her self-convincement Focusing more to the family.	Freedom in Reformation
The happy child. The happy family The caring and loving eldest son. The help of the program to her family. The proudest children.	The Beholden Family
The cooperative citizen in their barangay The agent of change.	One Subservient Citizen
Her girl friend was her greatest influencer. The influence of peers to her. Friends influence The greatest influencer of all. Curiosity strikes	Peer Pressure
The abundance of the program that were provided to them. The service provided became her inspiration. The big contribution of the livelihood program. Life's improvement	Outlook for a Brighter Future

Her family became happy of what she has achieved. Her family became thankful. Program's contribution to life	The Tranchion of Change
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### DIAGRAM OF COMMON THEMES



## RESULTS

Based on the result and findings of the study, twelve emergent themes were identified. Nine themes described the experiences of women drug surrenderers and each three themes represent the before, during and after experiences. The following themes that were formulated are namely: (Before) *Hostaged by Broken Family*; *Chained into Poverty*; *The Product of Curiosity*; (During) *Financial Comfort through Drugs*; *Drug Abuse as Hindrance to Family Relationship*; *Social Indifference*; (After) *Freedom in Reformation*; *The Beholden Family*; *One Subservient Citizen*.

*Freedom in Reformation; The Beholden Family; One Subservient Citizen; Peer Pressure; Outlook for a Brighter Future; The Truncheon of Change.*

More broadly, women drug surrenderers needed a better support from the government. Also, increase funding for the drug surrenderers or for the wellness program itself to support larger client populations to avoid the risk of the drug surrenderers to engage in drug activities again because of long periods of waiting. Additionally, increase the grant of the livelihood assistance to the surrenderers once they graduated or finished the wellness program. It would help cut down the numbers of drugs surrenderers who went back in illegal drug activities because of lack of financial and employment support from the government. This would help decrease their anxiety of what will happen if the financial assistance is not enough for them to start a small business or to start a new life. Furthermore, strengthen the after-care program of the government to the drug surrenderers not only to women but also to men. This can help prevent relapse, it decreases the probability that they will return to addictive behavior or any illegal drug activities and help them stay focused on their recovery. The full support and acceptance of members of the family and the community are needed to attain effective and efficient wellness program of the drug surrenderers. Stigma towards the drug surrenderers should be eliminated to assist them in the recovery and reintegration into the mainstream of the society. Proper information dissemination on drug education, prevention, and rehabilitation should be done regularly by the police to the community through barangay assembly, meetings, and other social gatherings.

The surrenderers should also participate whole-heartedly all activities favorable for their early recovery. These surrenderers should be developed in their skills and potentials such as livelihood trainings and enrolment to short term vocational courses that would give them the chance and the opportunities to support their families. After the surrenderers have completed and acquired the necessary knowledge and skills, the LGU's should help them in seeking employment that would match their capabilities.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

This study was conducted with a goal of making suggestions for informing policies concerning wellness program not only for women but also for men who surrendered during the Tokhang Program and the findings suggests some areas of improvement. More broadly, women drug surrenderers are in need of a better support from the government. Also, increase funding for the drug surrenderers or for the wellness program itself to support larger client populations to avoid the risk of the drug surrenderers to engage in drug activities again because of long periods of waiting. Additionally, increase the grant of the livelihood assistance to the surrenderers once they graduated or finished the wellness program. It would help cut down the numbers of drugs surrenderers who went back in illegal drug activities because of lack of financial and employment support from the government. This would help decrease their anxiety of what will happen if the financial assistance is not enough for them to start a small business or to start a new life. Furthermore, strengthen the after-care program of the government to the drug surrenderers not only to women

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### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

A major contribution of this study is that it suggests so many avenues for future researches. The narrative inquiry allows the identification numerous questions that remain unanswered and provides a background from which to develop to the next generation of inquiry. Future research should continue in this direction with the goal of improving the maternal and the outcome of the wellness program for the entire population. The researcher suggests conducting further studies on the following areas:

Experiences of Wellness Program Personnel, to find out also their stories and experiences about the implementation of the Tokhang Program and its wellness program to the drug surrenderers. As such, it could help check the measures of the wellness program. The experiences of the Tokhang PNCO (Police Officer In-Charge of Tokhang Program), to find out also their stories on their experiences during the implementation of the Tokhang Program in their area of responsibility. On the Wellness Program, there should be an in-depth study on the program so that it will determine the areas and services that needs improvement to better facilitate the reformation and reintegration of the surrenderers in the community.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Summary**

The main thrust of this study is to explore the life stories of women drug surrenderers in the Province of Negros Occidental, C. Y. 2019.

**Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:**

- What are the experiences of the informants as drug users and runners of illegal drugs before, during and after they surrender?



- What are the causative factors that lead the informants in engaging in drugs?
- How did the Tokhang Program contribute to the wellness and quality of life of the informants and their families?

The researcher utilized the qualitative method of research employing the narrative inquiry approach using an interview guide with an open ended question for the in-depth interview in exploring the life stories of the informants as women drugs surrenderers. Furthermore, the study was conducted in Negros Occidental.

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