



Drug Demand Reduction Programs of Law Enforcement Agencies: Basis for Advocacy Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

The UNODC World Drug Report 2023 reports that 296 million people globally used drugs in 2022 - a 23 percent increase over the last decade - underscoring the urgent need for effective demand reduction strategies. In response to this pressing issue, this study examined the extent of implementation, community awareness, and effectiveness of drug demand reduction programs led by the PDEA and PNP in Region 12. Programs assessed included the PDEA's Drug Abuse Prevention Education (DAPE) and Drug-Free Workplace Program (DFWP), alongside the PNP's Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo (KKDAT). Using a descriptive research design, data were gathered from 506 respondents through complete enumeration and stratified random sampling. Results showed a "strongly agree" rating across all programs, indicating high implementation, awareness, and effectiveness levels. Two-way ANOVA analysis revealed a significant difference in implementation between PDEA and PNP, with PDEA achieving a higher overall mean score than PNP. However, both agencies showed slightly lower ratings in resource allocation, suggesting a need for enhanced funding and logistical support. The findings emphasize the importance of multi-sector collaboration, youth engagement, and continuous program evaluation to ensure lasting success. The study recommends strengthened resource allocation, targeted prevention strategies for youth, and community-driven initiatives to sustain the effectiveness of these programs and further reduce drug demand.

Keywords: drug demand reduction programs, law enforcement agencies, advocacy sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The global issue of illegal drug use continues to pose serious challenges, with varying degrees of impact across regions, shaped by factors such as drug availability, law enforcement effectiveness, and socio-political conditions. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), global drug use has risen by 23% over the past decade, with 296 million people using drugs in 2022. In the Philippines, the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) reported a 42.73% increase in admissions to drug rehabilitation centers in 2022, with a significant proportion of drug users aged 15-19. Region 12, in particular, has become a drug-consuming area, with over 107,000 drug surrenderers as of 2021, many of whom are enrolled in government rehabilitation programs. Despite these national and regional efforts, the demand for illegal drugs persists, highlighting a critical gap in the effectiveness of drug demand reduction strategies. This gap is further compounded by misinterpretations of law enforcement actions, often resulting in allegations of extra-judicial killings, which undermine public support for these initiatives.

While various programs have been implemented by the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), there is a significant gap in research assessing the level of implementation and effectiveness of these drug demand reduction programs, particularly in Region 12. Despite the programs implemented by the national and local law enforcement agencies, such as Drug Abuse Prevention Education (DAPE), Drug-Free Workplace Program (DFWP), Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), and Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo (KKDAT), there is limited empirical data on how well these programs are perceived and their tangible impact on the community.

This research addresses this gap by evaluating the awareness, implementation, and effectiveness of these drug demand reduction programs in Region 12. Specifically, it investigates how these programs are implemented by PDEA and PNP, the level of community awareness about these initiatives, and the overall impact on reducing drug demand in the region. The study also examines whether there is a significant difference in the implementation and effectiveness of these programs between the two agencies and seeks to identify areas for improvement in sustaining their long-term impact. The findings will contribute valuable insights for refining current strategies, enhancing future interventions, and improving the overall response to the ongoing drug crisis in Region 12.

RELATED LITERATURE

The reviewed literature underscores that effective drug demand reduction programs adopt a multifaceted approach, integrating behavioral theories, social systems frameworks, and evidence-based strategies. Programs implemented in the Philippines—particularly by the PDEA, PNP, and DDB—target schools, communities, and workplaces through initiatives like DARE, DAPE, DFWP, and KKDAT. These programs draw on behavioral conditioning (Skinner, 1953; Watson, 1913) and systems thinking (Skyttner, 2005) to modify individual behaviors and reshape community norms. Research shows that multi-sectoral collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and context-specific interventions enhance program success (Hawkins et al., 2002; Griffin & Botvin, 2010), although challenges such as inconsistent implementation and limited evaluation persist (Saxe et al., 2006; El-Khatib et al., 2021).

Law enforcement's role in drug prevention extends beyond interdiction, with increasing emphasis on education and community-based engagement (Hellawell, 1995; Spooner et al., 2004). The Philippines' NADPA 2015–2020 framework and DILG-led initiatives like BIDA mandate integrated local strategies, though gaps in coverage—especially among out-of-school youth and marginalized sectors—highlight the need for improved outreach (PDEA, 2024; Cabanayan et al., 2022). International models such as the U.S. Communities That Care and Chile's Plan Nacional de Drogas reinforce the effectiveness of comprehensive, community-driven approaches. Overall, sustained collaboration, continuous evaluation, and a balance between deterrence and support are key to achieving long-term reductions in substance abuse.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design to assess the implementation, community awareness, and effectiveness of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and Philippine National Police (PNP) drug demand reduction programs in Region XII. The study was conducted in five locations: South Cotabato, Cotabato Province (North), Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City. A total of 506 respondents participated, including 106 program implementers from PDEA ROXII and PNP PROXII through complete enumeration, and 400 community members selected via proportionate stratified random sampling based on Yamane's formula. The community respondents were drawn from drug-affected barangays, provincial local government units, NDEP Coordinators, and Sangguniang Kabataan members, ensuring a multi-sectoral perspective aligned with General Systems and Behavioral Theories.

Data were collected using a validated and reliable survey instrument consisting of three sections measuring implementation, awareness, and effectiveness of the programs. Content validity was established through expert evaluation, achieving a perfect I-CVI and S-CVI of 1.0, while a pilot test showed high internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.98). Data gathering procedures followed ethical protocols, including formal permissions from academic and government institutions. Statistical analysis employed both descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, charts) and inferential tools (independent samples t-test, Two-Way ANOVA at $\alpha = 0.05$) using SPSS Version 22. This rigorous methodological approach ensured the reliability and validity of the findings, enabling informed recommendations to enhance drug prevention strategies in the region.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

1. National Drug Use Trends

The 2019 National Household Survey conducted by the Dangerous Drugs Board revealed that Region IV-A (CALABARZON) and the National Capital Region (NCR) had the highest reported lifetime drug users, at 835,348 and 738,107 respectively. These urbanized regions are more prone to drug issues due to higher accessibility and socio-economic stressors. The Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) and BARMM showed the lowest figures, with 64,490 and 120,553 users, respectively, attributed to strong cultural and religious norms. Drug use was most prevalent among individuals aged 20–29 years old (7.5%), decreasing with age. Methamphetamine (Shabu) was the most commonly used drug (57%), followed by marijuana (35%), with lesser use of inhalants, cocaine, and ecstasy. These results highlight the urgent need for age-targeted and region-specific intervention strategies.

2. Extent of Implementation of Drug Demand Reduction Programs

The implementation of PDEA ROXII's programs was rated highly effective. The Drug Abuse Prevention Education (DAPE) program had a mean score of 4.33, while the Drug-Free Workplace Program (DFWP) scored 4.31. All indicators received a "Strongly Agree" rating, demonstrating effective alignment with objectives, strong monitoring, timely execution, and high recipient engagement, though slightly lower scores in resource allocation pointed to minor funding challenges.

Similarly, PNP PROXII's programs, including the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Kabataan Kontra Droga at Terorismo (KKDAT), both had an overall mean of 4.27, also within the "Strongly Agree" category. These findings indicate consistent implementation practices, with strengths in community engagement and goal alignment.

3. Comparative Implementation (PDEA vs. PNP)

A two-way ANOVA analysis was conducted to compare program implementation between PDEA and PNP. The results showed that PDEA's programs had a slightly higher mean (4.32) than PNP's (4.27). The F-ratio was 92.34 with a p-value less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference in implementation levels between the two agencies. This suggests PDEA's implementation was marginally more robust than that of the PNP.

4. Awareness of Drug Demand Reduction Programs

Both PDEA and PNP achieved high public awareness scores, each with an overall mean of 4.30, classified as “Strongly Agree.” A paired t-test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in awareness levels between the programs. The result showed p-values ranging from 0.567 to 0.840, all above the 0.05 threshold, indicating no statistically significant difference in awareness. The Cohen’s d effect size was -0.090, suggesting only a small, negligible difference. Thus, both agencies were equally effective in informing the public about their drug prevention programs.

5. Effectiveness of Drug Demand Reduction Programs

The perceived effectiveness of the programs was also rated highly. PDEA’s programs received an overall mean of 4.29, while PNP’s received 4.26, both within the “Strongly Agree” range. These scores reflect success in meeting program goals, educating recipients, and encouraging advocacy and behavior change. A paired t-test comparing the effectiveness of both agencies yielded p-values between 0.12 and 1.00, again showing no significant difference. The Cohen’s d ranged from 0.00 to 0.30, indicating small to moderate effect sizes. This implies that both PDEA and PNP have delivered equally effective drug demand reduction efforts.

6. Advocacy Strategies for Drug Demand Reduction

Thematic analysis of respondents' open-ended responses revealed five dominant strategies: Prevention and Education, Community Engagement, Law Enforcement Collaboration, Accessibility and Inclusion, and Livelihood Programs. These themes reflect a multi-sectoral approach and indicate strong public support for integrated, community-based drug prevention initiatives. The data suggests that effective strategies must combine education, local engagement, economic empowerment, and inclusive access to services.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that drug abuse in Region 12 is most prevalent among young adults, particularly in urban areas, with shabu and marijuana being the most commonly abused substances. This highlights the need for targeted, age-specific, and location-sensitive interventions. Both PDEA and PNP have effectively implemented their drug demand reduction programs, earning strong community awareness and support. Their alignment in objectives and strategies has contributed to the overall success of these initiatives.

Importantly, the study emphasizes that effective drug demand reduction cannot rely on single-dimensional approaches. Instead, a comprehensive, multi-sectoral strategy that includes prevention and education, community involvement, collaborative law enforcement, inclusive outreach, and livelihood opportunities is essential. Strengthening inter-agency collaboration and community partnerships is key to sustaining the positive outcomes observed. The study underscores that locally grounded, coordinated, and adaptive programs are crucial for long-term success in combating drug use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that drug demand reduction efforts in Region 12 be intensified among young adults aged 20–29, particularly in urban areas where shabu and marijuana use is most prevalent. Both PDEA and PNP should sustain their current programs while improving resource allocation in terms of funding, personnel, and technology to enhance effectiveness. Strengthening implementer training and institutionalizing continuous monitoring and evaluation will ensure consistency and long-term impact. Community awareness should also be reinforced by empowering youth groups and local leaders, leveraging social media for outreach, and fostering partnerships through Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Councils (BADAC). These strategies aim to keep the programs adaptive, relevant, and community-driven.

To unify and sustain these efforts, the study proposes the ABAD Sustainable Advocacy Plan: Advancing Drug-Free Communities. This framework integrates key findings from the DAPE, DFWP, DARE, and KKDAT programs, and offers a strategic approach centered on community engagement, youth leadership, and evidence-based prevention. The plan encourages inter-agency collaboration, localized leadership, and proactive public education. By adopting this plan, PDEA and PNP can build on their successes and create a resilient, multi-sectoral approach to drug prevention. Future studies are also encouraged to explore long-term program impact, digital outreach tools, community-based interventions, and the socio-economic and psychological drivers of drug use.

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