

A Study on the Factors that Cause Addiction Relapse among Probationers Convicted of Violating the Philippines' Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002

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ABSTRACT

When Parole and Probation Administration started receiving Probationers convicted of violating the Philippines' Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (RA 9165) way back in 2018, the biggest challenge was the sudden increase of investigation caseload brought about by offenders who availed of plea-bargaining. The rehabilitation of Probationers who are recovering drug dependents brought with it the concept of "relapse" when former substance-abusers "stops maintaining their goal of reducing or avoiding use of alcohol or other drugs and returns to their previous levels of use." In the context of Probation however, relapse of active probationers undergoing a reformation program under the supervision of a PPO can also be manifested not only when the probationer tested positive in a random drug testing conducted by the PPO for monitoring, but also when probationers violate any of the conditions of his/her probation, suggestive of a potential relapse. In recent years however, it has been observed that non-compliance to the probation conditions, particularly the use of illegal drugs, is higher in probationers convicted of violating RA 9165. This is where the gap lies. This study thus aims to investigate the underlying factors contributing to this alarming phenomenon which hinders successful reintegration and poses a significant threat to public safety and community well-being. This study endeavors to understand what are the factors or causes why probationers relapse, despite the interventions and efforts the government has invested on their reformation. For a government agency always deficient in financial resources, every type of government resource utilized for a probationer's rehabilitation must guarantee a successful termination and eventual reintegration to society, otherwise it will just be wasted time and government resources. Essentially, determining the factors associated with addiction relapse among the study participants could help management in crafting recommendations to prevent similar incidents, avert potential reoffending, as well as formulate policies intended to improve rehabilitation interventions and supervision strategies, especially in drugs-related cases.

Keywords: relapse among probationers, addiction relapse during probation

INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale

President Ferdinand E. Marcos signed into law Presidential Decree No. 968 on July 24, 1976. More popularly known as the Adult Probation Law of 1976, it is a Philippine law that permits first-time offenders to serve their sentences under community supervision rather than in jail. The law created the Probation Administration in 1976 but was renamed the Parole and Probation Administration (herein referred to as **DOJ-PPA** for brevity) under Executive Order No. 292 (the Administrative Code of 1987) on July 25, 1987.

The Parole & Probation Administration is an attached agency under the Department of Justice that handles the investigation and supervision of probationers, parolees, and pardonees (collectively referred to as Probationers for brevity). This includes, but is not limited to, investigating petitions for probation, parole, pardon, and executive clemency, as well as for the voluntary confinement of recovering drug dependents as the authorized representative of the Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) within its jurisdiction. It is the only agency in the country mandated to "conserve and/or reform" convicted offenders under the probation and parole systems through various community-based corrections interventions embedded in the agency's Therapeutic Community

Ladderized Program. Additionally, the Therapeutic Community Modality is one of the rehabilitation programs designed for recovering drug dependents recognized by the Dangerous Drugs Board.

The law's primary objectives include: (1) correcting and rehabilitating criminals through individualized therapy; (2) providing an opportunity for contrite offenders to change; and (3) preventing the commission of crime. Having been granted the privilege of probation, the clients commit to comply religiously with the conditions stipulated in their Probation Order, as these conditions form part of their Supervision Treatment Plan or rehabilitation program.

Each year, DOJ-PPA allocates government resources to community-based corrections for clients, not only to separate the community from offenders and protect the innocent, but also primarily for the following reasons:

1. To delve into the origins of such behavior and instill structure
2. To correct the illicit behavior of the offender
3. To help in their reintegration to society
4. To ensure non-recommission of another offense, whether during or after the termination of their supervision
5. As a crime prevention mechanism of the government

On August 15, 2017, the Supreme Court promulgated the case of Salvador Estipona, Jr. y Asuela, vs. Hon. Frank E. Lobrigo, (RTC Branch 3, Legazpi City, Albay Presiding Judge) and People of the Philippines where the Supreme Court finally ruled over the question of constitutionality of Section 23 of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 (RA 9165 for brevity), to wit:

SEC 23. Plea-Bargaining Provision. - Any person charged under any provision of this Act regardless of the imposable penalty shall not be allowed to avail of the provision on plea-bargaining.

The Supreme Court granted the petition for certiorari and prohibition and declared Sec. 23 unconstitutional for being contrary to the “rule-making authority of the Supreme Court under Section 5(5), Article VIII of the 1987 Constitution”. This development in Philippine jurisprudence opened the floodgates of drug cases referred for Probation because of the Plea-bargaining mechanism availed of by the people accused of violating particular sections of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002. Around 2018, the Supreme Court's decision ushered in the entry of recovering drug dependents who became eligible for probation after being convicted of violating RA 9165, creating a huge gap in the Agency nationwide because of the lack of manpower vis-à-vis rising investigation and supervision caseload.

Almost all of the twelve offices of DOJ-PPA in Region 8 are affected by this legal development and are currently overloaded due to the drastic rise in the supervision caseload of clients who applied for probation after the declaration of unconstitutionality. This development is manifest in one City Parole and Probation Office, as evidenced by the Region's Integrated Quarterly Performance Report (IQPR) from 2022 to the present, showing a steady increase in probationers convicted of drug-related cases under supervision, here shown in Image 1:

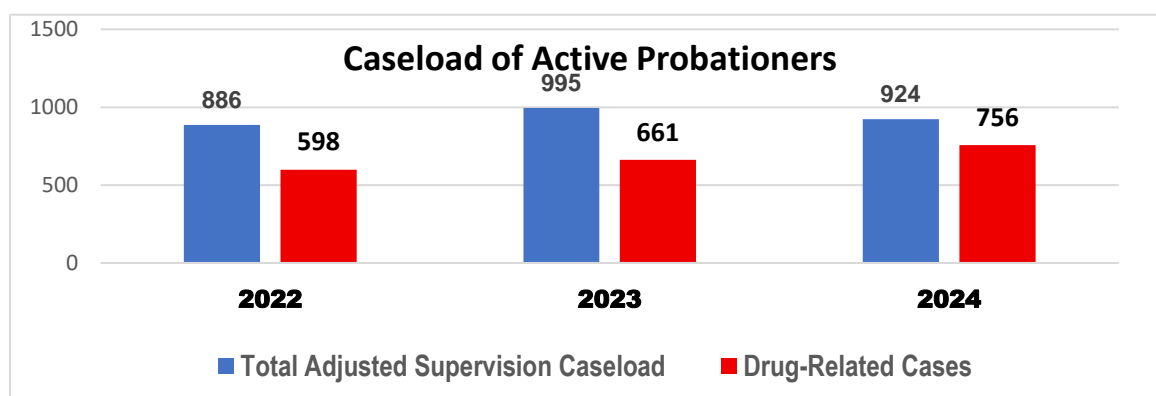


Image 1. Caseload of Active Probationers in one City Parole & Probation Office

Collaterally, Regional Management has observed that the propensity of violating the conditions of Probation is higher in probationers convicted of drug-related cases, with “relapse or acts indicative of a relapse” being one of the most common violations. The consequence of violating conditions is the filing of a Violation Report to the Courts, which could result in the Revocation of the Probation Order under Section 15 of PD 968:

Section 15. Arrest of Probationer; Subsequent Disposition. At any time during probation, the court may issue a warrant for the arrest of a probationer for violation of any of the conditions of probation. Xxxxx

For the past three years, DDOJ-PPA has aimed to keep the Revocation Rate at less than two percent (2%) annually, according to the Physical Targets of Outcome Indicator No. 3: Percent of clients’ compliance with the terms of their probation and/or parole conditions. In fact, for CY 2024, the Regional Target is 99.14%. With this target in place, the rising incidents of relapse in most Parole and Probation Offices are a challenge to DOJ-PPA Region 8.

Statement of the Problem

As a matter of procedure, all probationers convicted of RA 9165, prior to their application for plea-bargaining, were required to undergo a Drug Dependency Examination (DDE) which established their level of drug dependency, their drug-use or addiction to illegal substances. DOJ-PPA’s clients are assigned to a specific Probation and Parole Officer (**PPO** for brevity) who will supervise them and conduct various multi-faceted rehabilitation programs. Over the period of a client’s Supervision, which in drugs-related cases is a minimum of Three years, the government spends thousands of pesos for the conduct of numerous interventions, including strict monitoring and home visits to ensure the client’s successful integration. Sometimes however, clients fail to comply with the conditions of their Probation Order or may, in the case of clients convicted of RA 9165, test positive in random drug tests conducted during reporting schedules – which is the most apparent and common form of “relapse” in substance abuse language.

For purposes of this Research and within the context of Probation conditions, relapse means “when a person stops maintaining their goal of reducing or avoiding use of alcohol or other drugs and returns to their previous levels of use.” Relapse of active probationers undergoing a reformation program under the supervision of a PPO can also be manifested in the following instances:

- (a) the probationer tested positive in a random drug testing conducted by the PPO for monitoring.
- (b) violation of any of the conditions of his/her probation, suggestive of a potential relapse

Beginning 2022 to the present, there has been alarming incidents of probationers convicted of RA 9165 who have “relapsed” in one way or another. An initial examination of Field Office reports shows that non-compliance with the probation conditions, particularly the use of illegal drugs, is higher in probationers convicted of violating RA 9165. As relapse in Probationers has become more prevalent in recent years, despite all the government benefits and assistance infused into their rehabilitation program, looking into the causes or reasons why probationers relapse is essential in finding ways to prevent it from recurring. This is the primary objective of the Study: to identify the factors that cause the relapse of addiction among probationers who have been convicted of violating RA 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002. Essentially, determining the factors associated with addiction relapse among the study participants will help in crafting recommendations to improve supervision strategies that would prevent clients from relapsing and re-offending during the probation period.

The short-term goals of this study are: (1) to craft Recommendations to the Regional Management that can help in policy-formulation and (2) the improvement of rehabilitation interventions, especially in drugs-related cases. On the other hand, the long-term goal of this Case Study is to improve supervision techniques of PPOs when dealing with drugs-related probationers in order to:

1. Prevent “addiction relapse”
2. Possibly predict incidents leading to addiction relapse
3. Ensure the success of the Probation supervision

4. Avoid the revocation of the Probation Order

Framework of the Study

The framework for this study originates from several theories:

1. **Social Learning Theory:** This idea holds that people learn actions through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of addiction, individuals may learn substance use practices via peers, family members, or media exposure.
2. **Social Cognitive Theory:** This theory stresses how cognitive processes like self-efficacy and result expectancies influence behavior. Individuals with poor self-efficacy may be more prone to relapse because they question their capacity to avoid drug use.
3. **Self-Control Theory:** Gottfredson and Hirschi posits that individuals with low self-control are more likely to engage in criminal and deviant behavior. This lack of self-control stems from ineffective parenting during childhood.
4. **Theory of Planned Behavior:** This theory proposes that individuals' intentions to engage in a behavior are impacted by their attitudes about the conduct, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Individuals may relapse in the setting of addiction if they have positive views about drug use, feel social pressure to take drugs, or believe they lack the self-control to resist.

Essentially, the Biopsychosocial model sums up these theories into one: that addiction is the result of a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and social variables.

Under this Study's Framework, the following variables were identified:

Independent Variables: Addiction Relapse which is measured by self-report, urine random drug tests, or other relevant indicators.

Dependent Variables: Economic factors (e.g. income, livelihood and cost of living expenses) and Environmental factors (e.g. events, situations and other factors unique to the clients, and other drug-related cues) affecting or impacting the clients' reformation

Control Variables: Probation Conditions imposed upon the clients, regardless of age, gender and other conditions

Moderating Variables: Under this Research, the level of rehabilitation program participation and the severity of the client's addiction could influence the impact of other factors on relapse.

Mediating Variables: Clients' Areas of change (i.e. behavioral, emotional and mental)

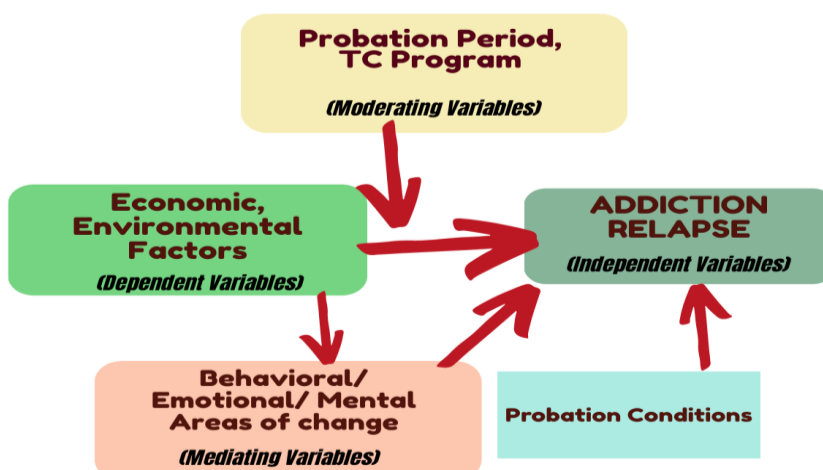


Image 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Paul Gendreau (1996) said that “the strongest predictor of recidivism in adult offenders belong in the domains under criminogenic needs, criminal history/history of antisocial behavior, social achievement, age/gender/race, and family factors.” In order to help first-time offenders break-away from these strong external factors, the Philippine Adult Probation Law of 1976 was created to ensure that adult offenders are given the second chance with the end goal to prevent recidivism and recommitment of another offense through the use of “individualized community-based three pronged approach to crime prevention and treatment of offender with Restorative Justice as its philosophical foundation, Therapeutic Community as its treatment modality and Volunteers as its community resources”¹

On the other hand, Republic Act No. 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 was signed into law on June 7, 2002. The law included the investigation and supervision of First Time Minor Drug Offenders under suspended sentence (FTMDO) as an added function of the Agency, but since the impossible sentence for violating RA 9165 exceed the period of six years, DOJ-PPA never had probationers who were convicted of drugs use or those that have addiction to illegal substances. The grant of plea-bargaining for RA 9165 cases however allowed the entry of offenders with a history of substance-abuse into the fold of Probationers being supervised by the Agency.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine has defined Addiction as “*a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual’s life experiences*”. Also called Substance-Use Disorder, the Mayo Clinic also defined it as “*a disease that affects a person’s brain and behavior and leads to an inability to control the use of a legal or illegal drug or medicine*”.² Medically, *a substance use disorder is characterized by the inability to have voluntary control over substance use as well as health and social impairments*³. Substance use disorders are in three levels of severity: mild, moderate, and severe⁴

The Dangerous Drugs Board of the Philippines provides that the “Treatment and rehabilitation of drug dependents is an essential component of drug demand reduction. The Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 mandates that “it is the State policy to provide effective mechanisms or measures to re-integrate into society individuals who have fallen victims to drug abuse or dangerous drug dependence through sustainable programs of treatment and rehabilitation.” Thus, when probationers convicted of drugs cases submit themselves to DOJ-PPA, they too undergo the Agency’s reformation program which is also a DDB-recognized drug treatment modality called the **Therapeutic Community Approach**, defined as:

“It is a highly structured program wherein the community is utilized as the primary vehicle to foster behavioral and attitudinal change. The patient receives the information and the impetus to change from being a part of the community. Role modelling and peer pressure play significant parts in the program. The goal of every therapeutic community is to change the patients’ self-destructive thinking and behavioral pattern, teach them personal responsibility, positize their self-image, create a sense of human community and provide an environment in which human beings can grow and take responsibility and credit for the growth.”⁵

Over the last 20 years, scientific breakthroughs have revealed that drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing disease caused by drugs’ long-term effects on the brain. Recognizing addiction as a chronic, relapsing brain condition defined by compulsive drug seeking and use has the potential to influence society’s general health and social policy measures, as well as assist reduce the health and social costs associated with drug abuse and addiction.⁶ This is why the Agency’s Therapeutic Community Ladderized Program is ideal for probationers

¹ <https://probation.gov.ph/rehabilitation-program/>

² <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/drug-addiction/symptoms-causes/syc-20365112>

³ Medina KL, Shear PK, Corcoran K (2005) Ecstasy (MDMA) exposure and neuropsychological functioning: A polydrug perspective. J Int Neuropsychol Soc 11: 1-13.

⁴ Medina J (2015) Symptoms of substance use disorders (Revised for DSM-5).

⁵ <https://ddb.gov.ph/treatment-and-rehabilitation/>

⁶ Leshner, Alan I. Addiction is a Brain Disease, and it Matters (2022)

who were convicted of common crimes, but specially for those convicted of committing drugs-related cases. According to the Agency's official website, Therapeutic Community (TC) is an environment that helps people get help while helping others. It is a treatment environment: the interactions of its members are designed to be therapeutic within the context of the norms that require for each to play the dual role of client-therapist. At a given moment, one may be in a client role when receiving help or support from others because of a problem behavior or when experiencing distress. At another time, the same person assumes a therapist role when assisting or supporting another person in trouble."⁷

A substantial body of evidence show that substance users suffer through a cyclical process of relapse, treatment reentry, incarceration and recovery, oftentimes experiencing the cycle over and over again, lasting through several years. Which is why Relapse among substance-users is commonly accepted as part of their journey of rehabilitation. When an ordinary substance-user "stops maintaining their goal of reducing or avoiding use of alcohol or other drugs and returns to their previous levels of use", relapse happens.

According to Albert Bandura's Social learning theory, "Reciprocal determinism is a central component of this theory and proposes that human behavior is determined by functional relationships between (1) personal factors, (2) the external environment, and (3) the behavior itself".⁸ Based on this model, drug addiction is considered as the outcome of functional interactions between an individual's personal qualities, social environment, and drug-related behaviors. After Bandura developed the social learning theory in 1977, it evolved into the social cognitive theory in 1986 suggesting that "learning takes place in a social framework with an ever-changing and shared interaction between the person, environment, and behavior."⁹ According to the social learning theory, people imitate the actions they see in others, particularly when those actions are rewarded.

In the perspective of criminology, Gottfredson and Hirschi (G&H) talked about their Self-Control Theory (SCT) in the journal *A General Theory of Crime*. The two brought the idea of self-control to the forefront of criminological thought concretizing the principle that "Self-control is widely, and largely uncontroversially, considered to be one of the strongest known correlates of crime, while low self-control is one of the "best," "strongest," and "most reliable" predictors of criminal and delinquent behaviors".¹⁰ The theory simply assumes that individuals with low self-control tend to be impulsive, risk-taking, and insensitive to the needs of others prioritizing immediate gratification over long-term consequences, making them more susceptible to criminal opportunities. Collaterally, SCT does not adequately account for the influence of social and economic factors on crime.

Vital in understanding criminal behavior is understanding criminogenic needs which are dynamic attributes related to offenders and their circumstances which can influence the probability of recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 1998). Criminogenic needs derive from the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model, which has the core principles of who to target (risk), what should be done (need), and how the work should be delivered (responsibility) (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2020). Needs derived from the RNR model may include pro-offending attitudes, substance abuse, and impulsiveness – all aspects of antisocial behaviour which can be described as 'dynamic'.¹¹ Continued criminal activities may be due to more deep-seated issues and may require ongoing, tailored interventions within the Criminal Justice System (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Such ongoing interventions could address more underlying issues such as psychological issues or in the case of probationers convicted of violating RA 9165, substance abuse.

⁷ <https://probation.gov.ph/therapeutic-community/>

⁸ Smith, Mark A., Social Learning and Addiction. PMCID: PMC7719575 NIHMSID: NIHMS1642534 PMID: 33053384

⁹ <https://www.onlinemswprograms.com/social-work/theories/social-learning-theory/>

¹⁰ Pratt & Cullen 2000; Antonaccio & Tittle 2008

¹¹ Marilyn Gomes from Cambridge University, Sunaina Kanda from Catch22, and Jody Audley from Catch22. Offender management and rehabilitation: The future of probation.

It is undisputed that the impact of probation on criminal behavior is a complex issue with mixed results. While probation can be an effective tool for reducing recidivism, its success depends on various factors, including the specific conditions of probation, the quality of supervision, and the individual characteristics of the offender. Ultimately, the impact of probation on criminal behavior depends on a variety of factors. Well-designed and well-implemented probation programs, combined with effective supervision and appropriate treatment, can be a valuable tool in reducing recidivism and promoting public safety. With the alarming rise in relapse among probationers however, probation may be counter-productive in reducing crime because relapse may also mean signs indicative of failure or the failure of Probation systems in implementing the community-based reformation program upon the Probationers. It could also mean government resources wasted on Probationers or opportunities for improvement.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This Research is the initial phase intended to collect a baseline data, of a bigger, more expansive Research in the future, projected to follow an Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Design.

For purposes of this project however, the Research is in a form of a Case Study following a Descriptive Qualitative Survey which examined and interpreted the pattern of behavior of probationers who have experienced “relapse”, a new phenomenon happening in the Region, but is most manifest in one Parole and Probation Office. The particular group that was the focus of the Case Study is active probationers of one Parole and Probation Office in Region 8 convicted of violating RA 9165 and who have tested positive in a random drug test during the period of their probation supervision. This Case Study aims to acquire a deeper and more expansive understanding of a phenomenon (addiction relapse) over a specific group of people (Probationers convicted of RA 9165) who have similar positive results between July 2022 to July 2024, after random drug tests were conducted during the same period.

This is the first time that this Study was conducted in the Agency and was primarily exploratory, intended to explore, gather and collect the probable causes and factors that delve into the Whys and the personal reasons on why Probationers relapse. The end goal is to establish its effect over DOJ-PPA’s Reformation program and thereafter prevent relapse and reoffending. Due to the limited supervision period of the probationers, a longitudinal study designed to dive deeper into distinct relapse patterns of the respondent-probationers is not possible. With courts granting a maximum supervision period of only three years and becoming considerably shorter in recent months, a longitudinal study of the same respondent-probationers over an extended period is not viable as the probationers’ supervision period may be terminated at the end of the period or revoked any time upon violation of any of the conditions.

The Regional Management permitted the conduct of interviews with identified Probationers who have recorded a positive result in random drug tests conducted by their Supervising officers. Pursuant to Regional Office Memorandum Order No. 77, s. 2024, the one-on-one Interviews and other activities incidental thereto started on November 14, 2024, with the assistance of the Supervising Officers of the respondent-probationers. With the potential success of this Research, the management likewise intends to expand the study to other Field Offices in order to acquire a more significant insight into this phenomenon, as well as establish a correlation with other socio-demographic factors, if any.

On top of the data collected from a mix of structured and semi-structured questions in one-on-one interviews (transcribed in transcripts), documentary analyses from Regional Office reports were also conducted, limited only by the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Sampling Method

The type of Sample Design used in this Research is the deliberate and purposive Non-Probability type. The general population upon which the respondents were taken is active probationers under the jurisdiction of one Parole and Probation Office. The sample set consists of active probationers who belong to the same category,

particularly those who have tested positive at least once during the Supervision period, or those exhibiting manifestations indicative of a relapse during the period of active supervision. All of the identified Probationers who have relapsed are MALE, belonging to the following demographics:

Respondent-Probationers: Age

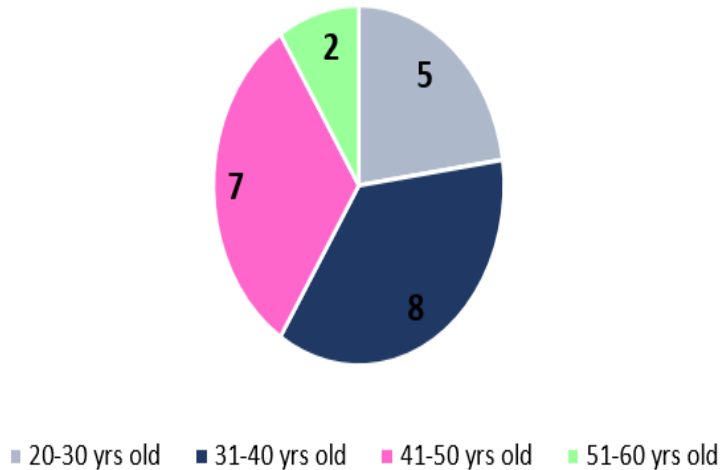


Image 3. Demographics of the Respondent-Probationers

The primary purpose of choosing this sample design is to ensure that the data needed for this Research is accurate and responsive to the primary objective of the study: to gain initial insight and understanding on the factors that cause or causes of addiction relapse in probationers of one Parole and Probation Office, a specific population. The use of non-probability sampling is ideal for this kind of qualitative research, which explored the phenomenon of relapse among probationers during their period of Probation. Moreover, the cost of conducting the interviews within office premises during the reporting schedules of the respondents was almost nil.

Data Collection Techniques

The method chosen for this particular study is face-to-face in-depth Interviews. The Researcher conducted Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions to the following identified respondents, particularly probationers convicted of RA 9165 who:

1. Have tested positive in random drugs test conducted by the PPO
2. Have violated any of the conditions of his/her probation or his/her reformation program (as acts indicative of a relapse)

Should there be a need to validate the information given by the respondents, the Supervising Officers of the probationers were ready to be interviewed for this purpose.

Ethical Consideration

Researching recovering drug-dependents or probationers with a history of substance abuse and criminal involvement requires careful consideration of ethical principles. Here are some key ethical considerations of this study:

1. Informed Consent:

The voluntary participation of the identified respondents is critical in this Study. To ensure that the participants voluntarily agreed to participate without coercion or undue influence and as proof that Ethical Approval was obtained, the respondents signed a Waiver before the conduct of the Interview. The Study's

purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits were explained to them in a language they can fully understand. The respondents' Right to Withdraw from the Study at any time without penalty was likewise clearly explained.

2. Privacy and Confidentiality:

In order to protect participants' identities, codes were used to identify each of them. The confidentiality of the respondents' pertinent personal details and their statements was explicitly explained that all information will be kept confidential and secure. Each respondent signed a Waiver, explicitly allowing the Researcher to seek for answers and use the same for purposes of academic advancement. Other than strict confidentiality of the respondents' pertinent answers, robust measures to safeguard data and identifiers from unauthorized access were likewise made.

3. Potential Harm from “Triggers”

In medicine, “triggers” are specific events that start a process or that cause a particular outcome. In this Study, the possibility that memories, people or events from the respondent's former substance-abuse and use may cause Psychological Distress. The Researcher was extra mindful in discussing sensitive topics like addiction and criminal history which may cause emotional distress or may “trigger” the onslaught of memories. For recovering drug dependents, “triggers” may come in many forms, such as a faint smell, a remembrance of a place, the vision of a person or thing or even a recollection of events. The Researcher was very careful in probing so that these conversations would not become the “trigger” to the respondent-probationer.

4. Researcher Bias:

The possibility of bias on the side of the Researcher is high, especially since she is herself a Probation Officer. For this particular Study however, the Researcher was able to divest her profession from the researcher bias since she conducted the study as a student of Research using the lens of management. The fact that she is not the Supervising officer of the clients is also useful because the respondents were observed to be more open and honest in giving their answers because a disinterested third party was asking. Indeed, avoiding personal biases to influence data collection and analysis is vital in this Study. It is also important that the Researcher approach participants with empathy and respect, recognizing their vulnerabilities, thus she has to be extra-sensitive and mindful of asking the questions or making probing questions. Other than these circumstances, there is no conflict of interest.

Moreover, the following additional Considerations were given special attention, especially since the respondents belong to the neglected niche of the society, being convicted offenders with history of substance-abuse or drug addiction.

1. **Power Dynamics:** The fact that the Researcher conducted the Interview herself is a double-edged sword, with the power dynamics still manifest. Collaterally, since the Researcher is not the Supervising officer, this allowed the identified respondents to be honest and straightforward. While her position in the Agency initially made the respondents apprehensive, they eventually warmed-up to the Researcher in the course of the Interview.
2. **Therapeutic Misconception:** The Researcher being a practicing Probation Officer herself, she has to be really careful to avoid blurring the lines between research and therapy.
3. **Self-Reported Data:** The possibility of potential misrepresentation is almost always present in a qualitative Case Study like this, however, the Researcher has made the transcripts of the one-on-one interviews available for scrutiny of other probation officers and the regional management. This allows peers and relevant officials of the Agency to check the results of the Study and maintain the analysis of the empirical data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

The Data analysis in this particular case study involved the systematic approach of examining and interpreting the qualitative data gathered from the Probationers (PS for brevity). After document analyses, one-on-one interviews, and the transcription of the responses, the Researcher dived right into the transcripts to identify the essence of the statements and find recurring patterns, words, or concepts emerging from the data.

After the Researcher assigned codes to key words, phrases and ideas, the data revealed the following four over-arching Factors as Meta-themes: Economic, Personal, Social and Environmental. To better delineate the categories and homogenously group responses with common or similar thoughts, the Researcher likewise assigned the following descriptions to the meta-themes and emerging basic themes based on the statements of the respondents:

Economic - economic factors such as income and cost of living expenses affecting or impacting the reformation leading to Relapse

Livelihood - illegal drugs is needed to improve performance for job or task

Employment - the Probationer's primary source of income/ employment is pushing or selling illegal drugs

Other Economic factors – other economic factors affecting compliance to Probation conditions (e.g. existence of loans to pay, cheap drugs and thus attractive, etc.)

Personal - issues and concerns personal to the Probationer that may affect or impact compliance to Probation conditions leading to Relapse

Family - Family matters that has driven Probationer to relapse or violate conditions of his Probation.

Mental/Emotional – Mental and emotional issues of the Probationer

Behavioral/Psychological – Behavioral and Psychological traits including lifestyle, values, attitude and other behavioral/psychological traits personal and innate to the Probationer

Social - *inter-personal relations and factors that may affect or impact compliance to Probation conditions leading to Relapse*

1. **Friends/Relational** - inter-personal relations with people outside of his/her immediate family
2. **Neighborhood** - physical or conditions peculiar/distinctive in the Probationer's neighborhood that may affect or impact compliance to Probation conditions
3. **Probation office** - conditions or distinct circumstances in the Probation Office that affects or impacts the Probationer

Environmental - external factors that affect or impact compliance to Probation conditions, availability/accessibility of illegal drugs and other drug-related cues

Occasions/Events – occasions or events unique to the Probationer

Situations/circumstances – situations/circumstances unique to the Probationer that affect or impacts compliance to Probation conditions

Out of thirty recognized Probationers who were identified to have relapsed during CY 2023 and 2024, twenty-two (22) respondents were available for the one-on-one Interview, resulting in a 73% response rate. The Interviews were conducted by the Researcher at different reporting dates from November 2024 to May 7,

2025. The Interviews began with the Researcher setting the confidentiality policy and the signing of the Waiver in compliance with the Data Privacy Act as required by the Regional Management. This somehow put the respondents at ease and opened the Interview on a positive note. Generally, the Interviews lasted a minimum of thirty minutes each respondent with the Researcher asking open-ended questions that allowed the respondents to expound on their experiences, and allowed the Researcher to probe further, sensitive to the nuances and physical cues of the interviewees. The primary question the Researcher asked was “What do you think is the reason or the causes why you ‘relapsed’ or tested positive in a random drug test while on probation?”, with a series of follow-up questions deeply probing into the circumstances leading to or after the relapse. Sometimes, the respondents would have two or more reasons to the primary question, or would elucidate further, providing justifications for the reasons or causes given, giving the Researcher a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and the essence of the respondents’ narratives.

Based on the Interviews, **Methamphetamine** is the drug of choice by the respondents. Commonly known as “shabu” in the Philippines, this is one of the drugs identified by the Dangerous Drugs Board as illegal because it is a highly powerful stimulant that belongs to the family of amphetamines, with effects similar to cocaine, but lasts longer.

Table 1 to 4 shows a summary of the statements during the interviews conducted and a detailed breakdown of the number of respondents with a common or similar thought, homogeneously grouped:

Under the Meta-theme **Economic Factors**, 3 First-order themes emerged: Livelihood, Employment, and Other Economic Factors. Here is the breakdown of the economic-related responses, according to the frequency they occurred during the interviews:

Table 1. Economic factors

Statements	Frequency
Livelihood	
needed drugs to make him work longer hours at night	1
needed drugs to make him work longer hours	2
needed drugs for the long drive (was just hired as driver)	1
Employment	
PS sold drugs/forced to sell as he was unemployed	3
PS is unemployed	2
Other economic factors	
PS needed extra income	1
Cheap illegal drugs are available in the streets/ suppliers	2
PS is anxious about family’s expenses being the sole breadwinner	1
PS wanted to impress his employer and be rehired for the next project	1
PS needed the money	1
PS had existing loans to be paid to pusher	2
PS had bills to pay and no food to eat	1

Under the Meta-theme **Personal Factors**, 3 First-order themes emerged: Relations to Family, Mental and Emotional factors, and Behavioral and Psychological factors. Hereunder is the breakdown of responses and its frequency of occurrence during the interviews:

Table 2. Personal Factors

Statements	Frequency
Relations to Family	
PS' new-born child was sick	1
PS' children needed money for school	1
PS needed money for family's needs	1
PS has no family support	1
PS' mother recently died and have been fighting with CLS	1
Mental and Emotional Factors	
PS is depressed	3
PS needed to be alert and awake, not get tired (e.g. for the long drive as he was afraid there will be an accident if he sleeps while driving, needed as he is studying law, awake until after New Year, PS is the only one taking care/in charge of Mother's 7-day wake)	4
PS was unable to resist the strong temptation from friends	4
PS had illegal drugs on hand, was tempted to take	1
PS is afraid to lose or disappoint his friend/s if he refuses	1
PS was having fun, likes having fun, likes the company of friends	3
PS was feeling lonely and sad because of death of mother	1
Behavioral and Psychological factors	
PS is envious of friends using drugs	1
PS' craving for illegal drugs is strong, admits he has no self-control	5
PS was problematic at time of relapse	3
PS didn't think he would get caught by TCPPO/PPO, thinking he could get away with it	4
PS is afraid he will get caught with the drugs paid to him, so he used it instead	1
Illegal drugs gives him relief from pain, keeps him awake	1

Under the Meta-theme **Social Factors**, 3 First-order themes emerged: Friends/Relational, Neighborhood and Probation Office. Under these first-order themes are seventeen responses broken down into their frequency of occurrence during the interviews:

Table 3. Social factors

Statements	Frequency
Friends/Relational	
PS have (close) friends who are still drug users	7
Peer pressure	1
The illegal drugs dealer is a friend	1
PS has no other friends but illegal drugs users and pushers	1
Neighborhood	
Use of Illegal drugs is prevalent & rampant in their neighborhood	4
• Selling Illegal drugs is rampant in their neighborhood	
• Many illegal drugs users live in their neighborhood	
• Illegal drugs users in their neighborhood never gets caught	
Parole and Probation Office	
PS knows/ can see other PS are still using drugs	2
PS knows/thinks that other PS gets away with using drugs	1

Under the Meta-theme **Environmental Factors**, 2 First-order themes emerged: Occasions/Events and Situations/Circumstances unique to the Probationer (PS) that affect or impact compliance to Probation conditions. Here is the breakdown of the responses under this description and the number of times it occurred during the interviews:

Table 4. Environmental Factors

Statements	Frequency
Occasions/ Events	
PS' wife just gave birth and he was anxious	1
PS celebrated a series of festivities or a special occasion (christmas, New Year, fiesta, birthday)	5
Drugs were given to the PS at a time he was problematic	1
Situations/ Circumstances	
Illegal drugs were just given to the PS	2
Illegal drugs are easily available from the PS' friends and neighborhood	1
PS has no other friends but illegal drugs users and pushers	1
PS was hired by a relative to drive from Manila to Tacloban	1
PS' former job was as a drug "mule/ runner"	1
PS is paid in not only in cash but with drugs	2

PS was in an accident and drugs give him relief	1
PS knows where to buy drugs as the dealer is a friend	1

Here is graphical presentation of the emerging causes of relapse among probationers:

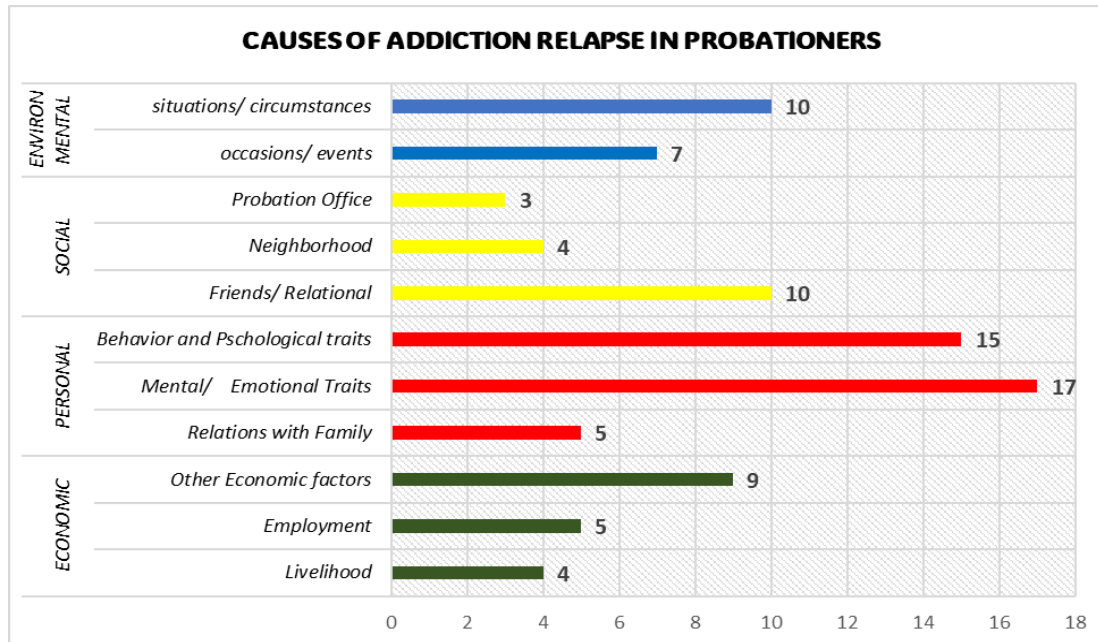


Image 4. Causes of Addiction relapse (according to Probationers)

The following Factors that cause or causes of addiction relapse were ranked according to quantity/frequency of responses:

Legend: ● Personal ● Social
● Environmental ● Economic

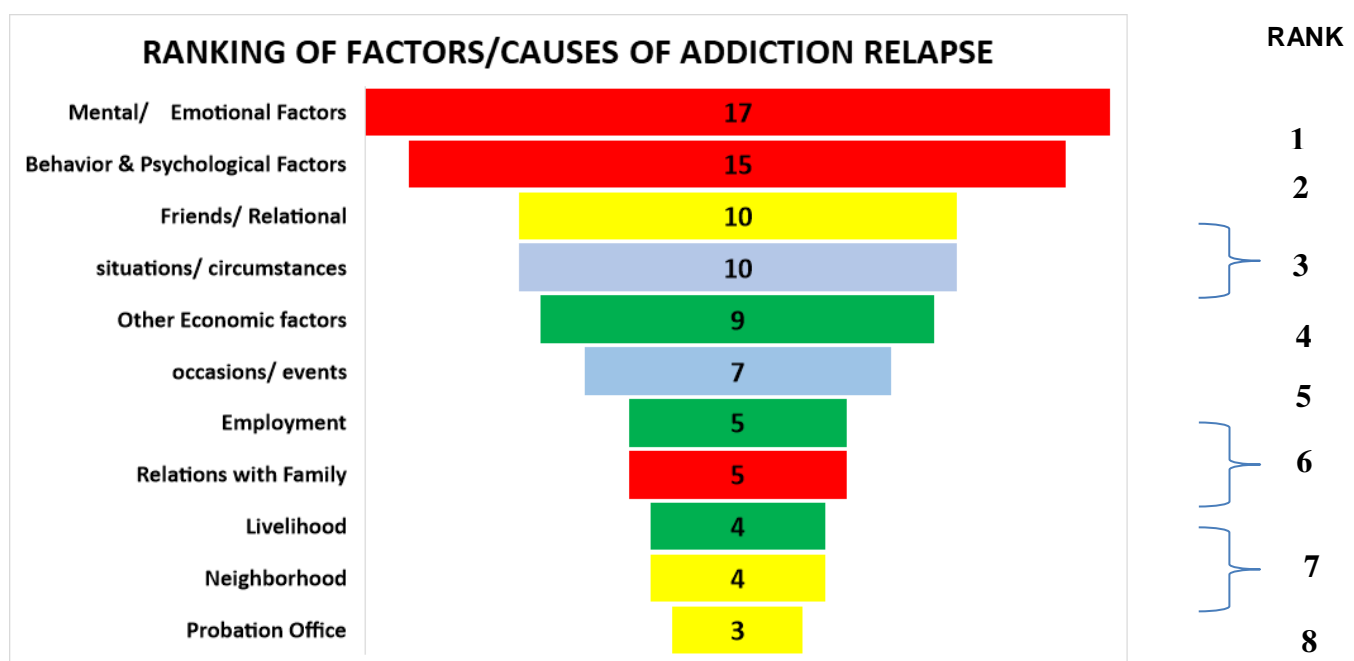


Image 5. Ranking of Factors/Causes of Addiction Relapse among Probationers

The results of the Study show that the Probationers of one Parole and Probation Office have similar reasons why they relapsed, while some reasons are unique only to their particular situation and circumstances. The apparent commonalities revolve around issues that are economic, personal, social and environmental in nature. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the respondents divulged that mental and emotional issues pushed them to seek the feeling of happiness, fun, company with friends or to remove the anxiety attached to the fear of losing them, feelings that can only be achieved by taking “shabu”. Twenty-three percent (23%) of this group fight their “inner demons” due to the strong temptation of the illegal drugs readily and easily accessible from neighborhood and friends. These results reinforce the fact that Addiction is a chronic brain disease with a recurrence rate comparable to that of other chronic illnesses such as diabetes. Following a close second are various Behavioral and Psychological Factors at Sixty-eight percent (68%). It is alarming that Probationers have a strong feeling that they “did not think they will get caught” or one even thought that he could “get away with it”, showing some sort of “gap” in the assertion of authority by the PPO. Anxiety brought about by feelings of craving, lack of self-control or fear are perfect examples of the Structural model from the Psychological theory on Psychodynamics which says that our personality reflects the interplay of these three psychic structures (the Super Ego, Ego and the Id), which greatly differs and is distinct in every individual. The mental and emotional anguish of fighting and later giving-in manifests the cognitive process of Self-Cognitive Theory like self-efficacy and result expectancies which greatly influence behavior. The theory says that “individuals with poor self-efficacy may be more prone to relapse” because the inner conflict that they feel is a form of questioning their own capacity to avoid drug use. According to Albert Bandura, Self-efficacy is a belief, not a skill: It's about what we think we can do, not necessarily what we can actually do.

Furthermore, the Self-Control Theory of Gottfredson and Hirschi say that individuals with low self-control are more likely to engage in criminal and deviant behavior, thus the relapse, despite the close Supervision, reformation program and close monitoring by the PPO. The third most common factor is a tie between Social (Friends/Relational) and Other Environmental Factors (Situations and circumstances unique to the Probationer that affect or impacts compliance to Probation conditions). Apparently, relationships with friends, whether close or merely social, strongly influence a Probationer's decision to violate their Probation conditions. The presence of peer pressure, especially close friends who are still drug users may put a strain on a recovering drug-dependent's resolve. This is reinforced again by the theory on Self-efficacy which says that “observing others succeed can boost our own self-efficacy”. In the case of the Probationers however, seeing their friends enjoying the comforts of substance abuse while they fight every day the limitations and restrictions of rehabilitation pushed them into yielding-in to peer pressure. Collaterally, situations and circumstances unique to the Probationer may be counter-productive to his reformation and rehabilitation. The theory on Self-efficacy likewise says that “self-efficacy can vary depending on the task or challenge” and may thus vary because it may be specific to certain situations. There is no “one-size fits all” program that can ensure the continued journey towards becoming completely drug-free. In substance-abuse parlance, one of the biggest challenges to recovering drug dependents is called a “trigger”, which is a stimulus, either internal or external, that can provoke a strong urge to use a substance. These triggers can be emotional, environmental, or social factors that remind a person of past drug use, which can lead to intense cravings, and in unfortunate circumstances, result in a relapse. According to the respondents, their “triggers” come in different forms unique only to them and its prolonged presence whether in their mind or visually, usually precedes another episode of fighting their inner demons. Sometimes though, they can be successful in fighting off the craving, but in some instances, they fail. This is supported by the Self-Control theory which is a criminological hypothesis that holds that people who lack self-control are more prone to participate in criminal activity. The other factors and causes shared by the respondents all fall under the Environmental, Economic, Social and Personal factors, ranked fourth to eighth. Other economic factors such as the need for extra income, the existence of a loan to be paid and bills to pay also come close. But most alarming under the fourth factor/cause is the availability of cheap and affordable illegal drugs which is easily accessible and readily available in the streets and neighborhood. This item falls under economic factors because the low prices of illegal drugs in free-market trade, is a strong element to a Probationer. The fact that they can afford it and is easily accessible upon request or purchase, is a vital obstacle in their rehabilitation journey. This factor alone makes the environment obstructive to one's rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

With the results from the interviews collated, the most common factors associated with addiction relapse among the Probationers of one city were identified. The primary objective of the Study was thus achieved. These results can help in crafting recommendations to prevent this phenomenon from happening among active probationers of one City Parole and Probation Office. The results of the Study are worth looking into by the Regional Management of DOJ-PPA for purposes of policy-formulation or program assessment. There are telling signs that show a gap in the reformation program of the Agency, and there is information given by the respondents that are essential in improving how law enforcement operates their illegal drug supply and demand reduction activities. Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) suggests that people learn not only through direct experience but also by observing others and the consequences of their actions. Thus, when three probationers say that other probationers of a Field Office are still using drugs and some even get away with it, it is worthy of attention as the Agency and the PPO's credibility is put into question. Even their belief that "illegal drugs users are rampant in their neighborhood and nobody ever gets caught" puts a dent on the law enforcement authorities and how the government maintains peace and order in our communities. The rising incidents of relapse in probationers who are themselves subjected to strict supervision by PPOs show an alarming sign that the government is losing its fight against criminality and disorder, and thus should maybe innovate or improve its enforcement against illegal drugs.

Since the top two factors are personal to the Probationer, it is likewise best for DOJ-PPA to recalibrate the reformation program to be more self-regulating and self-focused. A properly implemented Therapeutic Community Program in the Field Office, with its five areas of change, focusing primarily on self-discipline and structure, is ideal for probationers to gain help while also helping others. The development of self, mentally, emotionally and psychologically should be given more attention as the change must come from within pursuant to Therapeutic Community's unwritten principle that aptly says: "you alone can do it, but you cannot do it alone".

Indeed, the Psychological Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) can help in explaining the distinct human behavior of Probationers by considering the interplay of behavioral, normative, and control beliefs since it assumes that our intentions to perform a behavior are influenced by three main factors: Attitude toward the behavior, Subjective norm and Perceived behavioral control. These three factors combine to form our intention to perform a behavior, which, in turn, directly influences one's actual behavior. The TPB is surely a valuable tool for understanding and predicting human behavior in various contexts, which in this case, the Probationer's reformation program and their compliance to Probation conditions. Moreover, the foundations of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) can also be used to improve the Agency's reformation program, with emphasis on the fact that people learn not only through direct experience but also by observing others and the consequences of their actions." The interplay between personal factors, environmental influences, behavior and each individual's unique dynamics must be taken into consideration in crafting a Probationer's Supervision Treatment Plan. A reformation program that is implemented to all Probationers, regardless of their demographics may, in the long run, become unproductive.

The Biopsychosocial model sums up these theories into one: that addiction, being a medical condition, results from a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and social variables. The biopsychosocial model suggests that health and illness are determined by the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors that are interconnected and influence each other. The presence of criminogenic factors makes these dynamics even more challenging. To address the issue of substance-use, Biological Factors (e.g. genetic predispositions, brain chemistry), Psychological Factors (e.g. to include thoughts, emotions, behaviors), and Social Factors (e.g. social support, cultural factors, socioeconomic status, and environmental influences) must be taken into careful consideration if the Agency is to create a holistic approach to community-based treatment, a big leap from the traditional models that focus solely on biological factors.

Data Availability:

Transcripts and copies of the signed Waivers are in the custody of the Researcher and are available upon request. Regional Case Management and Records statistics are not available online but may be requested from

the Regional Officer-in-Charge of the Parole and Probation Administration Regional Office VIII through the Researcher, if needed. Regional caseload data is found in the Agency's Case Management and Records System and is protected by Section 17 and penalized under Section 29 of the Adult Probation Law, to wit:

Sec. 17. Confidentiality of Records. – The investigation report and the supervision history of a probationer obtained under this Decree shall be privileged and shall not be disclosed directly or indirectly to anyone other than the Probation Administration or the court concerned, except that the court, in its discretion, may permit the probationer or his attorney to inspect the aforementioned documents or parts thereof whenever the best interest of the probationer makes such disclosure desirable or helpful; Provided, further, That, any government office or agency engaged in the corrections or rehabilitation of offenders may, if necessary, obtain copies of said documents for its official use from the proper court or the Administration.

Sec. 29. Violation of Confidential Nature of Probation Records. – The penalty of imprisonment ranging from six months and one day to six years and a fine ranging from six hundred to six thousand pesos shall be imposed upon any person who violates Section 17 hereof.

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