

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Residents' awareness level and self-initiated judgement on community environment drug awareness and prevention operations in barangay bagong bayan, Malolos, Bulacan

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### ABSTRACT

Addressing illegal drug abuse is imperative to protect human health and community well-being. It has far-reaching consequences for communities, contributing to increasing crime rates, economic instability, and overburdened healthcare systems. This paper discussed the knowledge and self-initiated judgement of the constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan. This paper also assessed the skills of purok leaders of the barangay and the capacity of Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC) initiatives. Stratified random sampling (n=101) was carried out to sample the participants to undergo intervention. They participated in a seminar about illegal drug use, the characteristics of illegal drugs, and its effects. The intervention also asked the eight purok leaders of the barangay to demonstrate a simulation exercise for drug-related crime. Standard tests were carried out to determine the knowledge of the participants and questionnaire was administered to determine their self-initiated judgements. Evidently, residents demonstrated a high level of drug awareness and proactive attitudes towards prevention, with most recognizing the harmful effects of illegal substances and taking active roles in reporting drug-related activities. The community's perception of their purok core leaders is positive, as these leaders are seen as competent in managing drug-related issues, though there was a need for continuous skill development. While the BADAC has shown some capability in drug clearing operations, further improvements are necessary to enhance its effectiveness and ensure sustained efforts in drug prevention. Consequently, although the findings reflected positive outcomes of the intervention, there was still a need to integrate community-led adaptive strategies to expand the coverage of educational initiatives.

**Keywords:** drug awareness; drug prevention; illegal drug abuse; knowledge; self-initiated actions

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## 1. Introduction

There has been a consistent stream of drug-related crime news in both print and broadcast media, reflecting the severity of the drug problem. This issue has emerged as the foremost threat to public safety and national security in the Philippines, making it the primary concern of the Filipino people. In the fight against this threat, public safety offices, particularly the Philippine National Police (PNP), have often faced criticism from the community. A common complaint is that the PNP lacks the capacity to effectively apprehend drug pushers and users.

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Addiction represents a persistent and distressing challenge for individuals who use drugs; the suffering experienced by these individuals is exacerbated when they encounter barriers to accessing evidence-based treatment or when they face discrimination<sup>[1]</sup>. Drug addiction is classified as a chronic disease that is marked by compulsive or uncontrollable drug-seeking behavior and usage, even in the presence of detrimental consequences often associated with changes in brain function, which may persist over an extended period<sup>[2]</sup>. From a psychological perspective, the trend of drug addiction is characterized by complex foundations which emerge from the individual's internal dynamics, their overall psychosocial functioning, and the contextual factors present in their environment<sup>[3]</sup>.

When Rodrigo Duterte assumed office in 2016, he unleashed one of the most infamous campaigns to address the illegal drug market in the Philippines. President Duterte has implemented efficient processes and strategies aimed at dismantling illegal drug trafficking, which has catalyzed the ongoing war on drugs following the Philippines' declaration as a drug emergency state on July 1, 2016. The drug-war policy implemented by Duterte involved the extrajudicial killing of individuals identified as drug criminals, while the PNP double barreling campaign is designed to address the issue of illegal substances<sup>[4-6]</sup>.

Under the presidency of Ferdinand Marcos Jr., the fight for illegal drugs continues. In 2023 alone, the Marcos administration reported seizing approximately PhP10.41 billion worth of illegal drugs, clearing over 27,000 barangays of narcotics, and arresting 56,495 suspects through more than 44,000 anti-drug operations as part of its new strategy against drug abuse<sup>[7]</sup>. In a Manila Bulletin report<sup>[8]</sup>, PNP revealed that over Php36.5 billion worth of illegal drugs was confiscated since Marcos assumed presidency in 2022. This includes the confiscation of almost P10 billion worth of shabu (methamphetamine) in Alitagtag, Batangas in April of this year—the most substantial amount ever confiscated. They claimed that their war on drug is ‘less bloody’ with a focus on preservation of societal dignity by adhering to the rule of law, with a particular emphasis on human rights considerations<sup>[8]</sup>.

With an effort to expand the understanding of Filipino’s knowledge and attitude towards drug prevention, this paper conducted a descriptive survey that assessed the knowledge and attitude of the constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan, as well as assessment on the skills of their purok leaders and the capacity of BADAC initiatives. Despite attitudes are thought to govern behavior<sup>[9-11]</sup>; hence the reception and consequences (behavior change) of prevention treatments, the understanding of community attitudes toward drug use prevention strategies is still limited.

Education serves as a significant tool in the ongoing efforts to combat drug-related issues. Educating individuals regarding the risks associated with drugs, as well as equipping them with skills that may mitigate drug use, constitutes a significant component of the national strategy to combat drug-related issues<sup>[12]</sup>. To date, research regarding the knowledge and attitude of Filipino people about illegal drug use was scarce. There is also a need to assess the effectiveness of barangay authorities in addressing barangay-level drug-related crimes, which the previous studies did not focused on. These can be beneficial in developing effective guidelines for community-based initiatives that enable the authorities to develop effective strategies in reducing drug-related crimes and encourage people to take part in drug prevention<sup>[13,14]</sup>.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Illegal drugs laws in the Philippines**

Human Rights are essential rights inherent to every individual, and it is imperative that these rights remain inviolable<sup>[15-17]</sup>. The discourse surrounding human rights has gained prominence within the international community, particularly following the integration of human rights into the United Nations

Charter in 1945. This marked a significant advancement in the dialogue regarding the systematic protection of human rights within the international framework<sup>[18]</sup>. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) represents a significant milestone in the evolution of human rights, asserting that these rights are inalienable and serve as the foundation for justice, freedom, and peace globally<sup>[19]</sup>. The Philippine legislation on illegal use of drugs has been developed with a focus on international human rights standards to achieve a balance between law enforcement and the protection of freedom and rights of individuals. The Philippines addresses drug problems through Republic Act 9165, or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, which considers drug abuse a threat to national integrity and public welfare<sup>[20]</sup>. Passed on June 7, 2002, this law enforces stricter policies on drug trafficking, restructures the drug law enforcement system, and establishes the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) under the President's office to ensure effective enforcement of drug-related laws<sup>[19]</sup>. Republic Act No. 10640, enacted in 2014, amends RA 9165 to enhance the anti-drug campaign by improving procedures for handling seized drugs and reducing the required witnesses during inventory from three to two, including an elected official and a media or Department of Justice representative<sup>[21,22]</sup>.

## **2.2. Education and drug prevention**

Studies on drug prevention have consistently emphasized the critical role of education in equipping individuals, particularly young people, with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions regarding substance use. Prevention programs are essential public health strategies designed to prevent illegal substance use by addressing risk factors and enhancing protective factors before substance use begins or escalates<sup>[23]</sup>. For example, school-based preventive programs, such as “LifeSkills Training” and “Project ALERT,” have been shown to effectively reduce the initiation and progression of substance use among young people<sup>[24]</sup>. These programs usually consist of interactive courses presented over several sessions, with a focus on developing emotional and social abilities, improving decision-making ability, and developing strong peer relationships. Similarly, in a preliminary study of Jamri et al.<sup>[25]</sup>, strategies related to message, language, and media channels were highly effective in Drug Awareness Campaigns, while time and presentation strategies were moderately effective. The study also identified strong positive correlations between message and language strategies, message and presentation strategies, and language and presentation strategies. Nevertheless, in addressing health-related concerns like drug and alcohol abuse, action-learning process is effective to fill the disparities between communities and health systems by involving key stakeholders in identifying local health priorities, promoting dialogue and partnerships, and collectively implementing and improving interventions<sup>[26]</sup>.

## **2.3. Drug prevention efforts in Malolos, Bulacan**

Malolos is a “coastal component city” in the province of Bulacan, Philippines that served as the provincial capital<sup>[27]</sup>. In recent years, the city has experienced substantial economic expansion driven by the establishment of retail malls, supermarkets, and small to medium-sized businesses, educational institutions and government agencies<sup>[28]</sup>. It is a 3<sup>rd</sup> class city in the province with 261,189 total number of residents based on the 2020 census<sup>[29]</sup>.

Malolos local government unit (LGU) is working in combating drug abuse and drug-related crimes. The Provincial Government of Bulacan received the 2022 National Anti-Drug Abuse Council Performance Award from the DILG for its effective anti-drug efforts, alongside other recognized cities and municipalities, and Governor Daniel Fernando pledged to maintain the province's excellence in creating a drug-free environment<sup>[30]</sup>. At a joint meeting of the Provincial Peace and Order Council, Provincial Anti-Drug Abuse Council, and the Provincial Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, Governor Daniel

Fernando emphasized the need for vigilance in combating the proliferation of illegal substances<sup>[31]</sup>. Recently, the Bulacan PNP conducted a Simultaneous Anti-Criminality Law Enforcement Operation (SACLEO) on August 19, 2020<sup>4</sup> resulting in the arrest of thirteen individuals involved in drug-related activities that seized illegal substances with a street value of P250,000 from the suspects<sup>[32]</sup>.

### 3. Research questions

The study determined the drug awareness and attitude towards drug prevention of the constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan. This study also analyzed the skills of purok leaders after a demonstration and assess the capability of the BADAC. Specifically, it sought answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What is the respondents' drug awareness level in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan?
2. What are the respondents' self-initiated judgement on drug prevention in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan?
3. What is the respondents' perception of purok core leaders' skills in a community environment illegal drug clearing operations in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan
4. How do they perceive the capability of the BADAC in barangay illegal drug clearing operations?

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Research design

This paper was a retrospective descriptive survey study that characterize the motivation, knowledge, and self-initiated actions on drug awareness and prevention in Barangay Bagong Bayan. According to Macfarlane<sup>[33]</sup>, descriptive survey design is commonly used because it tries to describe present conditions, events or system based on impressions and reactions of respondents. It is a fact-finding study with adequate interpretation of the findings. It describes with emphasis what actually exists such as current conditions, practices, situations or any phenomena—herein, the emergence of drug prevention efforts of the government. Retrospective surveys ask participants to recall past events, experiences, or behaviors<sup>[34]</sup>. This has an advantage over other research designs because of its simplicity, its being less time consuming, inexpensive and easy to undertake.

### 4.2. Participants and sampling

A total of 101 respondents were selected using systematic sampling, with every 10th household in the purok being chosen to participate in the study. Systematic sampling embodies a probability sampling technique whereby individuals from the population are chosen at predetermined regular interval,  $k$ <sup>[35]</sup>. Participants were introduced in the drug awareness, drug prevention and Barangay Illegal Drug Clearing Operations Seminar conducted by the researcher. **Table 1** presents the summary of the participants' demographics.

**Table 1.** Respondents grouped according to age, Sex and number of children.

Demographics	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
>60 years old	4	3.96
50-60 years old	20	19.81
40-49 years old	24	23.76
30-39 years old	14	13.86
<30 years old	39	38.61

Sex			
	Male	71	70.30
	Female	30	29.70
Number of Children			
	>3 children	34	33.66
	1-3 children	30	29.70
	None	37	36.64
Years of Stay			
	>5 years	84	83.16
	5 years and below	17	16.84
Occupation			
	Barangay Captain	1	0.99
	Councilor	4	3.96
	Secretary	1	0.99
	Clerk	1	0.99
	Barangay Tanod	18	17.82
	Lupon	11	10.89
	Street Sweeper	3	2.97
	Sinag Member	11	10.89
	Driver	1	0.99
	Dance Group Member	2	1.98
	BADAC	10	9.90
	Treasurer	1	0.99
	Barangay Health Worker	12	11.88
	Human Rights Committee Member	2	1.98
	Utility Man	1	0.99
	Church Prayer Group Member	1	0.99
	Chapter President	1	0.99
	Students	10	9.90
	None	10	9.90

**Table 1.** *(Continued).*

#### **4.3. Research instrument**

A survey was developed to gather the necessary data from the respondents. It was jury validated by three persons knowledgeable in social research and helped in translating the instrument to Filipino for clearer understanding by the respondents. It was composed of four parts, namely: Part I (Personal Information), Part II (Drug Awareness), Part III (Drug Prevention), and Part IV (Barangay Illegal Drug Clearing Operations).

A skill test was constructed to measure the respondents' perception on skills in basic investigation; basic intelligence and reporting; citizen's arrest; handcuffing and categorization as demonstrated by the eight Purok leaders. Criteria were set with ratings of 90-100 – excellent; 80-89 – good; 75-79 – fair; and below 75 – needs improvement.

The capability of the BADAC was measured by means of the respondents' remarks written at the end of the questionnaire.

#### **4.4. Data collection method**

The group conducted actual data gathering after the respondents have attended a drug awareness, drug prevention and barangay illegal drug clearing operations seminar held at the Barangay Hall. They were given enough time to answer the instrument. There was 100% retrieval of the answered survey. The gathered data were sorted and tallied according to the indicators.

Unstructured interviews were conducted in all possible instances particularly during the orientation session and first-hand information on whether or not they believed that the barangay was cleared of drugs was obtained. With proper motivation by the speaker on drug awareness, the residents wrote in a piece of paper names of existing drug pushers and drug users which they dropped in a box for secrecy and confidentiality.

Lecture-demonstration sessions in barangay illegal drug clearing operations were conducted. They were evaluated by the respondents with the use of an evaluation sheet to measure their perception on the Purok core leaders' skills. Criteria for evaluation was explained to the respondents.

#### 4.5. Data analysis

Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program (version 0.19.0.0), commonly referred as JASP, was used to analyze the quantitative data collected from the survey and skill tests. JASP is an open access and free software for statistical analysis<sup>[36]</sup>. It offers the standard statistical tests used in this paper.

This study utilized descriptive statistics to summarize and interpret the data collected from participants. Descriptive statistics enables recognizing patterns, trends, and variations within the dataset, which allows for a broader understanding of the central tendencies and dispersion of critical variables. It allows presenting the data in a meaningful manner, emphasizing the primary findings and strengthening the overall analysis<sup>[37,38]</sup>. Frequency tables were used to organize and display the survey data in a structured tabular format, which allowed for a clear presentation of the participants' perceptions and responses. The mean (denoted as  $\bar{x}$ ), or average, was used as a key statistical measure to analyze the skills of the core leaders. By calculating the mean scores, this paper quantified the overall level of competence demonstrated by the purok leaders across various skill areas, such as basic investigation, intelligence gathering, citizen's arrest, and other relevant tasks. Below is the mathematical formula for the mean.

$$Mean (\bar{x}) = \frac{\sum X}{n}$$

where:

$X$  represents the values in the dataset

$n$  is the total number of participants

### 5. Results

Question 1: What is the respondents' drug awareness level in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan?

#### *Characteristics of Illegal Drugs*

This paper analyzed the drug awareness of the selected constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan regarding the characteristics of illegal drugs. The analysis was conducted after a seminar presentation to them. **Table 2** presents the drug awareness findings based on the meaning of illegal drugs, appearance of illegal drugs (e.g., marijuana, shabu), and the purpose of inhalants.

**Table 2.** Drug awareness of participants about the characteristics of illegal drugs.

Drug Awareness Indicators	n	%
<i>Meaning of Illegal Drugs</i>		
Any chemical substance which can lead to physical, emotional, mental and attitudinal change.	91	90.09
Medicine that can cure illness.	3	2.98
Do not know	7	6.93

<i>Physical Appearance of Marijuana</i>		
Looks like a tobacco leaf.	17	16.83
Looks like a small cassava leaf.	80	79.21
Do not know	4	3.96
<i>Physical Appearance of Shabu</i>		
Looks like soy sauce.	4	3.96
Looks like alum.	97	96.04
<i>Meaning of Inhalants</i>		
It is being sniffed to feel high.	90	89.11
It is being swallowed to gain appetite.	5	4.95
Do not know	6	5.94

**Table 2.** (Continued).

Descriptive analysis in **Table 2** indicates that there is a generally high level of awareness among participants about illegal drugs, including their characteristics and effects, which can be attributed to effective seminar presentations and previous exposure to related information. Most participants (90.09%; n=91) correctly identified illegal drugs as substances that can cause physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral changes. Regarding marijuana, 79.21% (n=80) accurately recognized its appearance as resembling a small cassava leaf, although some held misconceptions, such as confusing it with tobacco. The study also shows that 96.04% (n=97) of participants correctly identified shabu (methamphetamine) as a substance resembling alum. Lastly, 89.11% (n=90) of participants understood that inhalants are sniffed to achieve a high, indicating that the community members are well-informed about these substances and could assist authorities in identifying drug users. It was evident that the seminars might be effective in enhancing community awareness and knowledge of illegal drugs, which could help in local efforts to prevent and control drug use.

### *Effects of Drugs*

The awareness of selected constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan about the effects of illegal drugs was also analyzed. **Table 3** summarizes the findings from standardized tests after the seminar presentation.

**Table 3.** Drug awareness of participants about the effects of drugs.

Drug Awareness Indicators	n	%
<i>Immediate effect of using marijuana</i>		
One will be sleepy.	66	65.35
Pulse rate will increase.	19	18.81
Do not know	16	15.84
<i>Immediate effect of using shabu</i>		
Cannot sleep.	94	93.07
Become happy.	5	4.95
Do not know	2	1.98
<i>Immediate effect of using inhalants</i>		
Become aggressive and violent.	51	50.94
Falls asleep easily.	18	17.38
Do not know	32	31.68

The study findings indicated varied levels of awareness among participants regarding the immediate effects of different illegal drugs. A majority (65.35%; n=66) correctly identified sleepiness as the immediate effect of marijuana use, while a smaller proportion recognized increased pulse rate or were unsure. Awareness about the effects of shabu was higher, with 93.07% (n=94) correctly identifying its impact. In contrast, understanding of inhalants was lower, with only 50.49% (n=51) accurately recognizing aggression

and violence as the immediate effect, and a significant portion being uncertain. These results suggest that while there is substantial awareness of some drugs, further education is needed to correct misconceptions and enhance understanding, particularly about lesser-known substances like inhalants.

Question 2: What is the respondents' self-initiated judgement on drug prevention in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan?

This paper analyzed the perceptions of selected constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos Bulacan on drug prevention. Specifically, the questionnaire was broken down into three indicators namely, when they discover illegal drug transactions, when they discover their child use illegal drugs, and the role of the barangay officials. **Table 4** summarizes the findings collected from the participants.

**Table 4.** Drug prevention perceptions of selected participants.

<b>Drug Prevention Indicators</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>When discovers illegal drug transactions</i>		
I will call you up because you are ready to help.	48	47.52
I will just whisper to a policeman because I have to be careful.	5	4.95
I will just let it go because they do not bother me.	1	0.99
I will approach BADAC in our barangay because I have trust in them.	46	45.55
I do not know what to do.	1	0.99
<i>When they discover their child uses illegal drugs</i>		
I will face the problem.	64	63.37
I will improve our relationship in the home.	58	57.43
I will encourage him to discover other interests.	39	38.61
I will try to know his friends.	29	28.71
<i>Role of Barangay Officials</i>		
They should know the magnitude of the drug problem in the barangay.	28	27.82
They should coordinate with the church and the school to strengthen the force against drug abuse.	11	10.89
BADAC should be active at all times.	74	73.27
The barangay should have programs for problematic youth to prevent drug abuse.	71	70.30
BADAC should be given updated knowledge and skills in drug abuse.	34	33.66

Participants were generally proactive and willing to engage in efforts to combat drug abuse in their community. Nearly half (47.52%) would report a drug pusher to group members, and 45.55% would approach the BADAC, indicating trust in community and government support. Most participants (63.37%) would address the issue directly their child was found using drugs, while others would focus on improving family relationships, encouraging alternative interests, or understanding the child's social circle, reflecting a compassionate approach to prevention. Similarly, a majority (70.30%) believe that the BADAC should be more active, with ongoing programs for at-risk youth and better training for its members, and suggest that barangay officials collaborate with schools and churches. These findings imply a need for regular community initiatives, such as training in citizen's arrests, to strengthen local efforts against drug abuse.

Question 3: What is the respondents' perception of purok core leaders' skills in a community environment illegal drug clearing operations in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan

This paper analyzed the skills of the purok leaders based on the evaluation of the selected constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan. **Table 5** presents the summary of the purok core leader skills according to indicators Basic Intelligence and Reporting, Citizen's Arrest, Handcuffing, and categorization.



**Table 5.** Skills of core leaders.

<b>Purok Core Leader Skills Indicators</b>	<b>Mean (<math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
<i>Basic Investigation</i>		
Initial action	85.00	Good
Protecting the crime scene	85.63	Good
Coordination with the police	85.00	Good
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>85.21</b>	<b>Good</b>
<i>Basic Intelligence and Reporting</i>		
Planning	82.50	Good
Steps in gathering information	83.14	Good
Information processing	83.75	Good
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>83.13</b>	<b>Good</b>
<i>Citizen's Arrest</i>		
Techniques of approach to a suspect	90.25	Excellent
Ways of asking question to a suspect	88.63	Good
Safety position against a suspect	89.00	Good
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>89.29</b>	<b>Good</b>
<i>Handcuffing</i>		
Kneeling search	88.25	Excellent
Prone search	82.00	Good
Search facing against the wall	83.00	Good
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>84.33</b>	<b>Good</b>
<i>Categorization</i>		
Categorization Scenario 1	83.58	Good
Categorization Scenario 2	84.87	Good
Categorization Scenario 3	86.52	Good
Categorization Scenario 4	87.20	Good
<b>Composite mean</b>	<b>85.54</b>	<b>Good</b>

The findings indicated that the participants generally perceive the eight Purok core leaders as competent in various skills essential for combating drug abuse in the barangay. The core leaders are seen as needing only refresher exercises in basic investigation, having been previously trained. They received a "good" rating ( $\bar{x}$ =83.13) in basic intelligence and reporting, likely due to prior experience and recent training. Their skills in citizen's arrest were also rated "good" ( $\bar{x}$ =89.29), reflecting their active participation in related activities. In handcuffing techniques, they were rated "excellent" for kneeling searches ( $\bar{x}$ =88.25) and "good" for other methods. Finally, their ability in categorizing the barangay's drug abuse problems was also considered "good" ( $\bar{x}$ =85.54), suggesting they possess adequate skills but could also benefit from ongoing updates and training.

Question 4: How do they perceive the capability of the BADAC in barangay illegal drug clearing operations?

This paper also analyzed the perceptions of the constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan about the capability of BADAC in drug clearing operations in the barangay. **Table 6** presents the perceptions of the selected participants in scale items.

**Table 6.** Capability of BADAC in illegal drug operations in the barangay.

<b>BADAC Capability Scale</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Extremely Capable	1	0.99
Very Capable	17	16.83
Capable	15	14.85
Slightly Capable	51	50.50
Not capable	9	8.90

The findings reveal that most participants (50.50%) perceive the BADAC as only slightly capable of handling illegal drug operations in the barangay. A smaller portion (16.83%) consider BADAC to be very capable, while 14.85% view them as capable but insufficient. A few participants (7.98%) are uncertain of BADAC's capability, and only one participant (0.99%) believes they are extremely capable.

## 6. Discussion

Question 1: What is the respondents' drug awareness level in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan?

Understanding and recognition of the risks linked to drug abuse are essential components for effective prevention strategies<sup>[39,40]</sup>. Educational programs aimed at informing people about the associated risks and equipping them with coping mechanisms have the potential to substantially decrease their chances of engaging in drug use<sup>[41,42]</sup>. Dhiman<sup>[39]</sup> conducted a survey study among female students at Khalsa College for women, Ludhiana, Punjab. The findings indicated that 94.6% of the participants was aware about the concept of "drug abuse." In a Nigerian study conducted by Omale<sup>[43]</sup>, secondary school students exhibit a considerable level of awareness regarding substance abuse, with the primary source of this knowledge being their educational institution. Similar finding was observed among drug awareness of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan constituents. Generally, majority of them (90.09%) correctly identified illegal drugs as *substances that cause physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral changes*. They also had high awareness about the physical characteristics of marijuana, methamphetamine, and use of inhalants. With the drug education imposed across communities, it is evident that these has increased the awareness of the public about the characteristics and effects of illegal drugs. Prior studies have indicated that a critical factor influencing the effectiveness of drug abuse prevention programs is the identification of appropriate strategies for information dissemination and educational outreach<sup>[44]</sup>.

Question 2: What is the respondents' self-initiated judgement on drug prevention in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan?

Analyzing the attitude towards prevention of people can be an essential component of drug prevention strategies and initiatives. In the 2018 Prevalence Survey of National Narcotics Agency of the Republic of Indonesia<sup>[45]</sup>, high school students exhibit proactive attitudes towards drug prevention, with 39.2% reporting drug circulation among to school authorities, 98.10% refusing to purchase drugs, 97.4% willing to offer drugs for free, 98% distributing drugs, 98.3% selling drugs, and 37.7% stating they would report drug use among friends to authorities. Similar findings were observed among the constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan about having their role in drug prevention efforts. For example, 47.52% would report a drug pusher to group members, 45.55% would approach the BADAC. Even when their child was found using drugs, they would directly address the problem (63.37%) such as reporting them to the authorities, while others consider other approaches. These findings reflect the proactiveness of the community members on drug prevention at the barangay level. This is essential as person's attitude towards drug prevention can be linked to their likelihood to participate in educational activities and community initiatives<sup>[14]</sup> and develop drug abuse preventive behaviors<sup>[46,47]</sup>.

Question 3: What is the respondents' perception of purok core leaders' skills in a community environment illegal drug clearing operations in Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan?

Vicente et al.<sup>[48]</sup> believed that the efficacy of crime prevention is reliant upon the collaborative efforts of individuals, communities, businesses, and various governmental groups, necessitating a coordinated approach to formulate and execute strategies aimed at addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior. The community leaders, led by Barangay captains, should successfully implement a locally-based initiative aimed at encouraging vigilance within the community and discouraging engagement with any groups perceived to have malicious intentions<sup>[49]</sup>. Consequently, these leaders must possess the necessary skills to mobilize the community, encourage collaboration, and effectively communicate strategies that align with the broader goal of crime prevention. This paper analyzed the skills of the purok leaders in terms of basic investigation, intelligence and reporting, arrest, handcuffing, and categorization specifically for drug-related crimes. The constituents rated the eight Purok core leaders as competent in skills essential for combating drug abuse in the barangay, rating them "good" in basic investigation, intelligence, citizen's arrest, and categorization skills, and "excellent" in certain handcuffing techniques.

Question 4: How do they perceive the capability of the BADAC in barangay illegal drug clearing operations?

Ardepolla<sup>[50]</sup> suggests that the barangay (community) drug clearing program is fundamentally based on principles of cooperation, reverence for human dignity, comprehensive strategies, and a whole-of-nation approach. These elements are identified as the most effective frameworks in dealing with the drug issue in the barangay. The primary goal of this is to mitigate the drug issue within the country through the elimination of drugs from the general population, distancing individuals from the temptation of illicit substances, and diminishing the effects of the drug problem at the barangay (community) level<sup>[1,51]</sup>. Findings of this study indicated that generally, BADAC initiative was slightly capable in having barangay illegal drug clearing operations. This means that there should be clear developments on the implementation of drug prevention initiatives in the Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan. The implementation of training sessions, seminars, orientations and reorientations are expected to assist the BADACs in sustaining high-quality service delivery and upholding the drug-free image of their respective barangays<sup>[1]</sup>. Furthermore, it is essential to communicate to the community that the Barangay Drug Clearing Program BDCP includes not only the support for individuals adversely affected by illegal drugs but also the proactive measures aimed at preventing individuals from participating in illegal drug use and related activities<sup>[1]</sup>.

## **7. Conclusion**

The findings suggested that the constituents of Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan generally possess a high level of drug awareness, particularly regarding the characteristics and effects of various substances. This heightened awareness can be attributed to community-based educational programs and information dissemination efforts, which have effectively informed the public about the risks associated with drug use. Similarly, the constituents displayed a proactive attitude toward drug prevention, demonstrating a willingness to report drug-related activities and participate in initiatives aimed at reducing drug abuse in their community.

The study highlighted the importance of continuous community engagement and education to enhance drug prevention efforts at the barangay level. The proactiveness of the respondents indicated a readiness to support local leaders and organizations, such as the BADAC, in their initiatives. However, there was a need for ongoing training and development of both community members and leaders, particularly in areas like basic investigation, reporting, and categorization, to maintain and strengthen local efforts against drug abuse.

The study is limited to the perceptions and self-reported behaviors of the respondents within Barangay Bagong Bayan, Malolos, Bulacan, and may not fully capture the diversity of attitudes and experiences across other communities. The findings were based on survey data, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability or recall bias. Future research could expand to include other barangays and utilize mixed methods to gain understanding of drug awareness and prevention efforts in different contexts.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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