

SOCIAL INTERACTION IN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FORMER DRUG ADDICTS

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Abstract

Narcotics, Psychotropics, and Addictive Substances (NAPZA) remain a significant social issue in Indonesia. Data from the Indonesian National Narcotics Agency (BNN) in 2019 indicated a decrease in the prevalence of drug abuse by 0.03% compared to the previous year, with the majority of users belonging to the productive age group of 15–65 years. This condition has generated broad social impacts, particularly for former drug users (ex-addicts) who are attempting to recover and reintegrate into society. However, the process of social reintegration is often hindered by negative stigma, discrimination, and low levels of social acceptance, which affect the quality of social interactions and economic opportunities available to former addicts. This study employs a literature review method, utilizing chronological analysis, thematic analysis, and document studies as data collection techniques. The findings reveal that social interactions between former drug addicts and the wider community remain relatively limited due to social and psychological barriers, including low self-concept and persistent negative stereotypes. Nevertheless, supporting factors such as individual resilience, family support, and participation in economic empowerment activities can strengthen the process of social adaptation. Economic empowerment initiatives, including skills training, social enterprises, and entrepreneurship programs, have been shown to enhance self-confidence, expand social networks, and improve the self-image of former addicts in the eyes of society. These findings highlight the crucial role of social workers in creating inclusive, supportive, and stigma-free social environments, thereby providing former drug addicts with equal opportunities to participate in community life. Social workers act as facilitators, counselors, and mediators who help build trust between former addicts and their social environment. Through an economic empowerment approach, social workers not only focus on improving financial capacity but also on strengthening personal capacity, work motivation, and social skills development, all of which contribute to individual independence and the sustainability of the recovery process.

Keywords: *Ex Drug Addicts, Interaction Social, Economic Empowerment.*

1. Introduction

Abuse of Narcotics, Psychotropics, and Addictive Substances (NAPZA) is one of the most complex and multidimensional social problems facing societies worldwide, including Indonesia. According to data from the Indonesian National Narcotics Agency (BNN), the prevalence of drug abuse increased by 0.03% in 2019 compared to the previous year, with the majority of users belonging to the productive age group of 15–65 years. This indicates that despite various prevention, eradication, and rehabilitation efforts undertaken by the government and social institutions, drug abuse remains a persistent challenge. The issue of narcotics is not only related to health and legal concerns but is also closely associated with social, economic, and cultural problems that are interconnected within society (Hanifah & Unayah, 2011). Drug abuse has far-reaching consequences for both individuals and communities. For individuals, addiction to addictive substances can result in serious physical, psychological, and social disorders (Sutarto, 2021). At the societal level, drug

abuse is often associated with increased crime rates, social vulnerability, and decreased workforce productivity. After completing medical and social rehabilitation programs, former drug users (ex-addicts) frequently encounter significant challenges during the process of social reintegration. Society often continues to perceive them negatively, labeling them as “failed” or “problematic” individuals. Consequently, former addicts may experience difficulties in being accepted within their families, communities, and workplaces (Majid, 2019).

This social stigma and discrimination have substantial psychological impacts on former drug users. Many experience low self-esteem, diminished self-confidence, and emotional distress due to persistent social rejection (Afrianti, 2023). Such conditions not only hinder the recovery process but also increase the risk of relapse. In reality, successful rehabilitation should not be measured solely by abstinence from substance use but also by an individual's ability to function socially and economically within society. Therefore, recovery should be understood as a continuous process encompassing physical, psychological, social, and economic dimensions. Within this context, social interaction plays a crucial role. Positive social interactions enable former addicts to rebuild healthy relationships, participate in social activities, and receive emotional and moral support from their surroundings (Febrian, 2019). Conversely, negative interactions characterized by stigma and exclusion may deepen social isolation and weaken the motivation to change. Therefore, strengthening social interaction should be considered an integral component of rehabilitation and social reintegration strategies for former drug users. However, effective social interaction cannot be sustained without a stable economic foundation. Many former addicts face economic difficulties after leaving rehabilitation institutions due to unemployment, limited skills, and restricted access to economic resources. In this situation, economic empowerment becomes a strategic approach to supporting their social and psychological recovery. Through economic empowerment programs, former drug users can develop vocational skills, establish independent businesses, and improve their self-confidence through productive activities (Alfiansyah, 2023).

Economic empowerment is essentially a process that enables individuals or groups to gain access to resources, develop their capacities, and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. For former drug users, economic empowerment serves as a mechanism for sustainable social recovery. Participation in productive economic activities, such as vocational training, social entrepreneurship, and community-based employment programs, not only increases income but also helps individuals develop a more positive social identity. Furthermore, economic independence reduces reliance on social assistance while fostering responsibility, discipline, and self-reliance. Moreover, economic empowerment has a dual impact on improving social interaction. When former addicts participate in collective economic activities such as cooperatives, community enterprises, or productive social groups, they gain opportunities to interact with others in an environment characterized by equality and mutual respect. These social relationships often serve as a bridge for reducing stigma and rebuilding public trust. In this regard, economic empowerment can function as an effective medium for strengthening social integration (Prasetyo, D., 2020).

Social workers play a critical role in facilitating this process (Antania et al., 2023). As professionals dedicated to enhancing the social functioning of individuals and communities, social workers act as facilitators, motivators, and connectors who link former drug users with various resources that support economic empowerment. Their interventions should adopt a holistic approach that addresses not only psychological and social recovery but also economic development and entrepreneurial capacity (Widodo, 2020). Social workers also serve as mediators between former addicts and society, helping to create inclusive, stigma-free, and supportive social environments. The involvement of former drug users in community-based economic empowerment programs, such as joint business groups, vocational training, and social enterprises, can also contribute to reducing unemployment and poverty among former users. These initiatives align with social development approaches that emphasize participation, equality, and sustainability. Through economic empowerment, former addicts gain not only financial benefits but also opportunities to restore their self-worth and social identity. Therefore, the relationship between social interaction and economic empowerment is reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. Positive social interactions can create broader economic opportunities, while productive economic activities can expand social networks and improve the public image of former drug users. Consequently, drug rehabilitation policies and programs should not focus exclusively on medical treatment but should also incorporate

socioeconomic components that encourage active participation and independence among former users(Thomas et al., 2014).

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a literature review method. According to Zed , a literature study is a series of activities involving the collection of library data, reading and note-taking, and processing research materials(Sugiyono, 2021). Qualitative research does not aim for statistical generalization; instead, it seeks to develop a contextual understanding of social phenomena based on the meanings, experiences, perspectives, and interpretations presented in the literature. The qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on understanding the social interactions of former drug users and the role of economic empowerment in supporting their social reintegration. Through this approach, the researcher explored various social, psychological, and economic dimensions related to the recovery process of former drug addicts(Creswell, 2015).

Data Sources

The study utilized secondary data obtained from various relevant sources, including:

1. Books related to social work, rehabilitation, social interaction, and economic empowerment.
2. Scientific journal articles and previous research studies.
3. Government reports and official documents from institutions such as the National Narcotics Agency (BNN), the Ministry of Social Affairs, and rehabilitation centers.
4. Documents and archives from organizations involved in drug prevention, rehabilitation, and community empowerment programs.

These sources were used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and to support the validity of the study findings.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three complementary approaches:

1. Chronological Analysis

Chronological analysis was used to classify literature based on the time of publication. This approach enabled the researcher to trace the development of policies, strategies, and perspectives regarding drug abuse treatment and the socioeconomic empowerment of former drug users over time. The analysis revealed a shift in Indonesia's drug-related policies from a predominantly legal and medical orientation during the early 2000s toward a more humanistic and socially oriented approach that emphasizes social reintegration and community-based empowerment. This technique also facilitated an understanding of how social perceptions and empowerment programs have evolved in supporting former drug users(Dachlan, 2019).

2. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to categorize data based on similarities in themes, issues, or research topics. This approach is important because the problem under study is multidimensional, encompassing social, psychological, economic, and public policy aspects. Through thematic analysis, the researcher organized the literature into several major categories, including stigma and discrimination, social interaction, social rehabilitation processes, the role of social workers, and the economic empowerment of former drug users. This approach enabled the researcher to examine the relationships among various issues, such as the connection between limited social interaction and restricted access to employment or economic resources, as well as how economic empowerment programs can enhance self-confidence and expand the social networks of former drug users. Furthermore, thematic analysis helped identify recurring patterns across different studies and determine the key factors influencing the success or failure of social reintegration. This approach was also employed to highlight the contributions of social workers and rehabilitation institutions in supporting former drug users throughout the recovery process. The role of social workers is particularly significant, as they act as agents of change who facilitate the connection between individuals and their social environment through counseling, training, and economic empowerment activities. By analyzing the literature according to these themes, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of effective social intervention strategies and the role of economic

empowerment in supporting the social and psychological recovery of former drug users.(Sutarto, 2021).

3. Document Analysis

Document analysis is a data collection technique that involves examining various written documents relevant to the research topic. The documents used in this study included official reports from the Indonesian National Narcotics Agency (BNN), the Ministry of Social Affairs, rehabilitation institutions, scientific journal articles, newspapers, and archives from organizations involved in drug prevention and rehabilitation programs. Through document analysis, the researcher obtained empirical information regarding government policies, statistical data, social empowerment programs, and best practices in supporting former drug users. These documents also provided insights into existing challenges, including limited funding, shortages of professional personnel, and low levels of community participation in social reintegration programs. Furthermore, document analysis was employed to examine various economic empowerment models that have been implemented, such as vocational skills training, community-based social enterprises, and Joint Business Groups (Kelompok Usaha Bersama/KUBE) involving former drug users. The analysis of these documents enabled the researcher to evaluate the extent to which such programs contribute to improving social interaction, reducing stigma, and creating employment opportunities for former drug users. Ultimately, document analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the role of economic empowerment in supporting the social reintegration and recovery process of former drug addicts.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from third technique data collection, namely approach chronology, thematic, and study documents then analyzed use method analysis qualitative analysis qualitative chosen. Because study This No focus on measurement statistics or numbers quantitatively, but rather on a more comprehensive understanding deep to meaning, experience social, as well as dynamics connection between ex drug addicts and the environment social analysis. This allows researchers For interpreting data contextual, with notice background social, cultural, and economic factors that influence the interaction process social and reintegration ex- drug users to in life society. In the process, analysis qualitative done through a series step systematic which involves the process of examining, interpreting, and connecting various information from literature, results study previous report official, and documents polic. Every source analyzed for find patterns social, tendencies behavior, and relationships inter-variables that play a role in the process of recovery and functioning social ex addicts. With this, the approach This help researchers understand phenomenon social in a way holistic, no only from one side or one variables single. Process analysis qualitative in study This covers three stage main, namely data reduction, data presentation, and data extraction conclusion. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques.

1. Data reduction is done with filter, select, and focus the most relevant information from various source literature. Stages this important for eliminate data that is overlapping overlap or no relate direct with focus research. In the context of this, researcher selecting literature that is special discuss interaction social ex drug addicts, dynamics of social stigma, and implementation of empowerment programs economy in recovery social.
2. Data presentation is done with method grouping results findings based on theme or category certain, such as theme interaction social, communication, support family, role worker social, and empowerment strategies economy. Presentation this allows researchers for see relatedness inter-theme, identifying trend general, and map connection between theory and practice in the field.
3. Withdrawal conclusion done with formulate interpretation theoretical explanation how factors social, psychological, and economic each other interact in form pattern connection between ex addicts and society. At this stage, researchers also assessed effectiveness

various empowerment strategies economy in support success reintegration social ex-drug users.

Analysis results show that factor supporters main in strengthen interaction social ex drug addicts include resilience individual, support family, participation in activity empowerment economy, as well as support from worker social and community rehabilitation. Resilience individual play a role important in build ability adaptive face pressure social, while support family become source motivation emotional driving sustainability of the recovery process. In addition, the involvement in activity empowerment economy, such as training skills, entrepreneurship social, or group business together, proven give effect double: increase ability economy at a time strengthen trust self and interaction social with public. On the other hand, the factor inhibitors found includes strong social stigma, discrimination society, concept low self-esteem, and lack of access to source power economy. Stigma and discrimination social cause ex addict difficult get chance work, which in the end weaken trust self and narrow down room interaction social they. Therefore that, recovery strategy social no can separate from effort improvement welfare economy through sustainable empowerment.

Through analysis in-depth qualitative, this research makes an effort give comprehensive overview about how interaction social ex drug addicts can strengthened through approach empowerment a holistic, participatory, and independence-oriented economy. The approach this look at that the recovery process no can stop at rehabilitation medical or psychological only, but must covers aspect social and economic interdependence related. Rehabilitation sustainable social demand existence chance real for ex addict for return active, productive, and accepted in structure social society. In the context of this, empowerment economy functioning as instrument important for restore sense of worth self, strengthening trust yourself, and build bridge interaction social between ex addicts and the environment surrounding area. Approach empowerment the economy in question in study this no only limited to give access to work or business capital, but also emphasizes the improvement process capacity individuals and communities. Training programs skills work, development business micro, as well as mentoring entrepreneurship social become an integral part of the recovery process socio-economic.

Through activity this, ex addict no only get ability for fulfil need his life in a way independent, but also obtain room social for interact, work the same, and build connection each other believe with society. When the ex addict capable show abilities and contributions real in field economy, negative stigma attached slowly start eroded, and trust public can grow return in a way experience. More far, results analysis also shows that empowerment economy capable create positive domino effect to various aspect life ex drug addicts. With own work or business, they get stability financially which is direct reduce risk back to behavior deviate consequence pressure economy. In addition, the involvement of in activity economy productive foster a sense of responsibility responsible, disciplined, and independence. Aspects this is element important in strengthen interaction healthy and equal social with member public others. In the situation more social inclusive, ex addict own opportunity more big for participate active in activity community, organization social, as well as activity strengthening religious integration social they. Approach this also highlights connection close between theory social, policy government, and practice field run by the institution social and worker social. From the perspective theory social, interaction social is base formation structure society, whereas empowerment economy become means actualization role social individual in context economy productive. Meanwhile, from side government policy through the Ministry of Social Affairs, BNN, and other institutions rehabilitation has develop various based programs community for support reintegration social ex addicts. However, the effectiveness policy it is very dependent on the involvement of active community and support cross sectors, including the business world, institutions education, and organization religious.

Worker social own role central in bridge theory and practice those. They no only on duty give counseling or rehabilitation psychosocial, but also plays a role as facilitator empowerment economy. Workers social help identify potential individual, building trust self, as well as connect ex addict with source power relevant economics. With a humanistic and based approach participation, workers social can create ecosystem conducive social for the recovery process and independence economy ex-users. With this, the use of method studies literature and analysis qualitative become means important for understand in a way comprehensive connection between dimensions social and

economic in the process of recovery ex drug addicts. Analysis results not only describe situation factual, but also provides base conceptual for development of intervention models integrative social. Research this offer recommendation strategic so that the rehabilitation and reintegration program social in Indonesia more emphasize empowerment economy as a sustainable strategy, which does not only pressing number relapse but also build an inclusive, empathetic, and just society social.

3. Result and Discussion

Former drug addicts are individuals who have experienced dependence on narcotics, psychotropic substances, and other addictive substances and have undergone rehabilitation programs to recover from addiction. Despite completing rehabilitation, many former drug users continue to face social challenges, particularly in the form of stigma, discrimination, and social rejection. Such negative perceptions often lead to low self-esteem, feelings of inferiority, social withdrawal, and an increased risk of relapse.

Social Interaction

The findings indicate that the social interactions of former drug addicts differ significantly depending on the groups with whom they interact. Relationships among former drug users tend to be more positive because they share similar life experiences, challenges, and recovery journeys (Zetta & Rachim, 2021). These common experiences foster empathy, mutual understanding, trust, and emotional support, creating a sense of belonging that helps them cope with the difficulties associated with recovery and social reintegration. Within these peer relationships, former drug users often feel more comfortable expressing their thoughts, feelings, and personal struggles without fear of judgment or discrimination. As a result, communication among former drug users is generally more open, supportive, and constructive. In contrast, interactions with the broader community are often characterized by suspicion, prejudice, and social exclusion. Former drug users are frequently associated with criminal behavior, moral failure, or social deviance due to the negative stereotypes that persist within society. These perceptions often lead to discriminatory attitudes and unequal treatment, making it difficult for former drug users to establish positive social relationships and gain acceptance within their communities. Many former drug users encounter challenges when seeking employment, participating in community activities, or rebuilding relationships with neighbors and other community members. Such conditions not only limit their opportunities for social participation but also negatively affect their self-confidence and sense of self-worth. Furthermore, the persistence of social stigma can create barriers to effective communication and meaningful social engagement. Former drug users may become reluctant to interact with others because they fear rejection, criticism, or negative labeling. Consequently, some individuals choose to withdraw from social activities and limit their interactions to people who share similar experiences. This situation can reinforce social isolation and reduce opportunities for developing broader social networks. Therefore, the social functioning and reintegration of former drug users are often hindered by negative public perceptions, highlighting the importance of community acceptance, social support, and inclusive social environments in facilitating successful reintegration into society.

Communication

Communication is conditions main occurrence interaction social. Communication can interpreted as form exchange information from one individual to individual others, or from individual to group, and can happen between group (Gunawan, 2016). Communication not only means talking, but in the form of assumption from parties mentioned. Communication is the most important process occurrence interaction social, meaning interaction social not possible happen without the existence of a communication process. As a ex-drug addicts, communication tend done only to fellow addict or ex-addict only. Ex drug addicts usually experience interaction with the other party tends to colored with violence because existence rejection from society. Society views negative ex-drug addicts so that cause communication between ex-drug addicts with public not enough good. Former drug addicts usually own good communication, because that thing as fellow ex-drug addicts who must undergo prison sentence make them do deep communication because existence feeling same fate. However, when return to society many have poor communication with society, because public own bad assumptions about ex drug addicts. Society usually own bad views on exes drug users so that cause communication that occurs no good. Communication in the form of

expression somebody based on thought and feelings. Feelings that are shared by the community about ex drug addicts are bad thoughts. This generally causes communication that occurs between ex drug addicts with public not enough good. Communication is a process in convey information in form meaningful symbols from thoughts and feelings in the form of ideas, information, hopes, as well as appeal as guidance carried out by someone to others, well in a way direct through media and through face advance, with own objective certain. In this case, it can concluded that communication that occurs between ex drug addicts with fellow enough well, thing the because existence feeling same fate, whereas communication that occurs with public no too harmonious, because existence rejection from public.

Social Contact

Social contact is the second essential condition for the occurrence of social interaction. Without social contact and communication, social interaction cannot be established effectively (Lendriyono, 2017). In this context, social contact refers to the relationships formed between former drug addicts and various social groups, including family members, friends, and the wider community. As a socially vulnerable group, former drug users are often subjected to negative labeling and social stigma, which significantly affects the quality of their relationships with others. Consequently, the social relationships formed by former drug users are often characterized by tension, distrust, and limited acceptance. The findings indicate that many former drug users experience difficulties in rebuilding relationships with their families. Family relationships, particularly those involving parents, are often strained due to unresolved conflicts that occurred before or during the period of drug abuse. Although former drug users may have completed rehabilitation programs and returned to society, emotional wounds and family conflicts frequently remain unresolved. As a result, social interactions between former drug users and their family members may continue to be less harmonious, limiting the emotional support needed for successful recovery and reintegration. In addition to family-related challenges, former drug users also encounter difficulties in establishing positive relationships with the wider community.

Negative stigma and social sanctions imposed by society often become significant barriers to social acceptance. Many community members continue to associate former drug users with criminal behavior, irresponsibility, or moral failure, despite their efforts to recover and rebuild their lives (Irianto et al., 2022). These perceptions contribute to social distancing and reduce opportunities for meaningful interaction between former drug users and community members. Furthermore, the persistence of negative stereotypes often results in various forms of social discrimination. Former drug users may be excluded from community activities, face difficulties in obtaining employment, or be treated unfairly in social settings. Such experiences can weaken their self-confidence and discourage them from actively participating in social life. Consequently, the social contact established between former drug users and society often remains limited and less effective. Therefore, the findings suggest that social contact among former drug users is strongly influenced by the quality of relationships they maintain with their families and communities. The existence of unresolved past conflicts, combined with negative social stigma and discrimination, continues to hinder the development of positive social relationships. Strengthening family support, promoting community acceptance, and reducing social stigma are essential steps in creating a more inclusive environment that facilitates the successful social reintegration of former drug users.

Social Interaction in Economic Empowerment

The study results show that the pattern of social interaction among former drug addicts is greatly influenced by the level of social acceptance and the opportunities available for their economic empowerment. In general, the social interactions of former drug users tend to be more open and positive when they interact with fellow former users because of their shared experiences and sense of common destiny. Within these groups, empathy and emotional support emerge, helping them rebuild self-confidence and strengthen their recovery process. On the other hand, relationships with the broader community are often hindered by stigma and negative stereotypes that portray former drug users as a social threat. As a result, many of them experience difficulties in obtaining employment, face rejection in social environments, and are often marginalized within their communities. These conditions directly affect their social functioning, as individuals who lack healthy social interactions tend to withdraw from society and lose motivation to lead productive lives (Xiao, 2018).

In this context, economic empowerment plays an important role as a gateway to restoring social trust and strengthening interactions between former drug users and society. Through productive economic activities such as vocational training, microenterprises, and joint business group programs, former drug users are provided with opportunities to demonstrate their abilities, discipline, and sense of responsibility. Success in economic activities becomes a means of proving their capabilities, helping to reduce stigma and create opportunities for healthier social interactions. When former drug users participate in productive activities alongside community members, social relationships that were previously weak or damaged can gradually be rebuilt on the basis of cooperation, trust, and equality. The aspect of communication is also closely related to economic empowerment. Effective communication serves as a primary bridge in building cooperation and trust between former drug users and the wider community. In practice, economic empowerment encourages the creation of positive two-way communication through workplace interactions, training programs, and collaborative business activities. Through continuous communication based on real and productive activities, society can directly observe positive behavioral changes among former drug users, allowing negative perceptions to gradually diminish. For former drug users themselves, successful communication within productive environments can enhance self-confidence, negotiation abilities, and social skills, all of which are essential for strengthening their social functioning.

Furthermore, in terms of social contact, the findings indicate that relationships between former drug users, their families, and the wider community are often characterized by emotional distance and a lack of trust. Under these circumstances, economic empowerment can serve as a mechanism for restoring social relationships. Economic activities involving family and community support, such as family businesses, cooperatives, or community-based enterprises, create opportunities for positive interaction and collaboration. When family members actively support the economic activities of former drug users, feelings of togetherness, mutual trust, and motivation to repair previously damaged relationships begin to develop. Similarly, community members who witness the positive economic contributions of former drug users are more likely to develop accepting attitudes and reduce discriminatory behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that economic empowerment has a significant influence on improving the quality of social interaction, communication, and social contact among former drug users. Economic empowerment is not merely concerned with increasing income but also with restoring dignity, strengthening personal capacities, and creating inclusive social spaces. Through a participatory and independence-oriented approach, former drug users can transform from marginalized individuals into productive, accepted, and empowered members of society, both socially and economically.

Factors Influencing Social Interaction Among Former Drug Addicts

Supporting Factors

Several factors contribute to successful social interaction and reintegration among former drug users. First, individual resilience plays an important role in helping former addicts cope with social stigma and discrimination. Individuals with strong resilience are better able to manage emotional challenges, maintain motivation, and adapt to social changes. Second, family support serves as a crucial source of emotional, social, and practical assistance. Acceptance and encouragement from family members help former drug users rebuild self-confidence and maintain their commitment to recovery. Third, support from rehabilitation communities and peer groups provides a safe environment where former drug users can share experiences and receive emotional encouragement. Such support networks foster a sense of belonging and strengthen social reintegration (Annafi, 2012; Septiningsih, 2017).

Inhibiting Factors

Despite these supporting factors, several obstacles continue to hinder social interaction among former drug users. The most significant barrier is social stigma. Negative labels attached to former addicts often persist even after rehabilitation, making it difficult for them to gain social acceptance and access employment opportunities. Another obstacle is low self-concept. Feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy frequently reduce self-confidence and discourage individuals from participating in social activities. Additionally, family disharmony can negatively affect the recovery

process. Ongoing family conflicts may weaken emotional support systems and increase vulnerability to social isolation.

Implications for Social Work Practice

Furthermore, social workers play an important role in strengthening the economic independence of former drug users through empowerment-based interventions. Economic difficulties are among the major challenges faced by individuals after completing rehabilitation, as many former drug users experience limited access to employment opportunities due to social stigma and discrimination. In this situation, social workers act as facilitators who connect former drug users with vocational training programs, entrepreneurship initiatives, community-based enterprises, and employment opportunities that support long-term recovery. By helping individuals acquire practical skills and economic resources, social workers contribute to the development of self-reliance and reduce dependence on external assistance. Another important function of social workers is advocacy. Former drug users often face structural barriers, including discrimination in the workplace, unequal access to social services, and negative treatment within their communities. Social workers advocate for the rights and welfare of former drug users by encouraging inclusive policies, promoting equal opportunities, and ensuring that rehabilitation services continue beyond the completion of formal treatment programs. Through advocacy efforts, social workers help create social environments that are more supportive of recovery and reintegration.

In addition, social workers facilitate collaboration among various stakeholders involved in the rehabilitation process. Effective social reintegration requires cooperation among families, rehabilitation institutions, government agencies, community organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector. Social workers serve as coordinators who bridge communication among these stakeholders and encourage the development of integrated support systems. Such collaboration is essential for ensuring that former drug users receive continuous assistance in addressing their social, psychological, and economic needs. Community participation also represents a critical component of successful reintegration. Social workers encourage community involvement through support groups, community development programs, volunteer activities, and social inclusion initiatives. These efforts provide opportunities for former drug users to engage in meaningful social interactions and demonstrate their positive contributions to society. Increased community participation can reduce prejudice, foster mutual understanding, and strengthen social cohesion between former drug users and community members.

Moreover, social workers contribute to relapse prevention by monitoring progress, providing ongoing support, and helping individuals develop healthy coping strategies. Recovery from addiction is a long-term process that requires continuous adaptation to social and environmental challenges. Regular mentoring, counselling, and follow-up services help former drug users maintain motivation, address emerging difficulties, and strengthen their commitment to a drug-free lifestyle. Through these interventions, social workers support not only individual recovery but also the development of stable social relationships and productive community participation. Therefore, the role of social workers extends beyond rehabilitation services and encompasses empowerment, advocacy, education, community development, and social integration. Their multidimensional interventions help former drug users rebuild their lives, strengthen their social functioning, and achieve sustainable independence. As a result, social workers are key actors in promoting successful recovery and creating inclusive communities that support the long-term reintegration of former drug users.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion presented in this study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the social interactions of former drug addicts who have returned to society after completing rehabilitation programs and serving legal sanctions.

1. Communication between former drug users and the wider community tends to be less effective due to the persistence of negative stigma and social prejudice. Social interactions are generally more common among fellow former drug users because of their shared experiences and mutual understanding. In terms of social contact, relationships with family members are often affected by unresolved conflicts that originated before rehabilitation. Consequently, social relationships between former drug users and their families frequently remain strained. Furthermore, the

negative labeling attached to former drug users often extends to their families, resulting in discriminatory treatment, social exclusion, and limited opportunities for social acceptance and reintegration.

2. The social interactions of former drug users are influenced by both supporting and inhibiting factors. Supporting factors include individual resilience, family support, peer support, and community acceptance. Resilience enables former drug users to cope with stigma, manage emotional challenges, and maintain motivation throughout the recovery process. Family and community support provide emotional security and encouragement, facilitating successful social reintegration. Conversely, negative social stigma remains the primary barrier to social interaction. Persistent stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes often contribute to low self-esteem and reduced self-confidence among former drug users. If these challenges are not addressed adequately, they may increase the risk of frustration, social withdrawal, and relapse.
3. Former drug users should be viewed as individuals in need of support, guidance, and empowerment rather than social exclusion and discrimination. Therefore, efforts to prevent relapse and promote successful reintegration require comprehensive social support systems. In this regard, social workers play a crucial role as educators, facilitators, and advocates. Through educational interventions, social workers can provide knowledge regarding drug awareness, personal development, and spiritual values to strengthen the recovery process. In addition, social workers can facilitate skills development programs, including communication and public speaking training, to enhance self-confidence and social competence. These interventions contribute to improving the social functioning of former drug users and support their successful reintegration into society.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of strengthening social support, reducing stigma, and promoting empowerment-based interventions to enhance the social functioning and quality of life of former drug users. A collaborative approach involving families, communities, rehabilitation institutions, and social workers is essential to creating an inclusive environment that supports sustainable recovery and social reintegration.

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