

Restoring the Sanctity and Dignity of Life Among Low-Risk Drug User Surrenderers

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Abstract

The proponents of this research developed their interests to look into every good points a community-based relapse prevention program being implemented by a particular local community among low-risk drug-users surrenderers. This included appreciating the design of the program and how it impacted the participants and the community of Barangay Salapan, San Juan City. All these being viewed from the underlying principles of restorative justice, in the pursuit of describing how the sanctity and dignity of human life is being restored using the five stages of appreciative inquiry as method of analysis. The rehabilitation program being implemented by the local community and supported by the local government provided a silver lining for the victims of the prohibited drugs. Initially, it helped redeem their lost personal sense of dignity, social respect and acceptance, and become a productive and significant individual members of their particular families and their beloved community. It was emphasized that the restoration of the sanctity and dignity of life demands greater openness, volunteerism, respect sincerity and discipline from each of the persons involved in the rehabilitation program. It was noted also that all the sectors of the local community should be united and unselfishly support the program regardless of political color or affiliation, religious background, economic interests and social biases, so that the sacredness and dignity of life which is very primal as a value will be constructively attained.

Keywords: Sanctity and dignity of life, Drug Rehabilitation Program, Appreciative Inquiry, low-risk drug-users, Restorative Justice

Introduction

There has been a heightened appreciation of the sanctity and dignity of human life in the past decades. With the advent of so many developments in the areas of science and technology, and new discourses in philosophy, anthropology, law and politics, the sacredness of human life and its inherent value of dignity became hot issues of fierce debates. This is even true in the Catholic Church. For many decades now, the Church has taken the issue of the sacredness and dignity of human life as one of the most significant current topic of theological, philosophical, anthropological, and moral discourses. In fact, a lot of Catholic social teachings were written to clarify and provide the faithful an official teaching on these issues. The Catholic Church proclaimed that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is considered to be as the foundation of all the principles of Catholic social teachings.

In our modern society, the sanctity and dignity of human life has been under direct attack and being threatened by various issues like abortion, euthanasia, war and terrorism, cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty (USSCB, 2018). And more recently, according to Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si* new forms of social aggression has risen. These are illegal drug trafficking and the growing illegal drug use by young people (2015, #46). His Holiness exclaimed that all these destroy the quality of life and society. This in

Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has reported that so far, there have been 1,308,708 who have voluntarily surrendered and professed their willingness to undergo a rehabilitation program. Notwithstanding, there have been 3,200 drug personalities who have been killed in police-led anti-drug operations, excluding those killed by vigilantes or other entities. 7KLV EORRG\ RXWFRPH KDG FDXVHG WKH JRYHUQPHQW¶V HIIRUW WR illegal drugs problem in the country under closed scrutiny from local and international human rights advocates.

In order to help the national government on its anti-illegal drugs campaign, local government units (LGUs) have been mandated to participate in Oplan Sagipas initiated by the Dangerous Drug Board (DDB). The LGUs, through Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Council (BADAC), has developed a community-based treatment and rehabilitation services and interventions for the surrenderers under its low-risk category. DDB statistics shows that the low-risk category or mild substance use disorder comprise 90% of the surrenderers. After assessment and evaluation of the surrenderers, those under its low risk category are sent back to their respective communities and instructed to attend the community-based rehabilitation program and will then be monitored of their progress. This kind of intervention on the part of low-risk drug-users surrenderers of which the local community has participation seems to be very appealing and easy to accept by many civic organizations and religious groups locally and abroad. Something that has not yet been publicized by mainstream media. Nonetheless, this kind of intervention somewhat jibes with the findings of recent studies showing that the stakeholders of the local community, primarily the basic cell of the society - whether it be the family-, the extended family, significant others, friends and neighbors, have great contributions to the behavior and decisions of the drug user. More to this, they are also the ones who are gravely affected by the behavioral consequences of the drug-user. Thus, it is but essential to involve the stakeholders in restoring the dignity of life and freedom of the drug-user surrenderers which can start with mending trust and healing relationships in the family and in the community (Caday, F., 2017; Yip, P., et al, 2011). In reality, the Oplan Sagipprogram shares with this contention.

It has been almost two years now a community-based rehabilitation program was implemented by several local government units through their respective barangays. It is in this juncture that the proponents of this research developed their interest to look into the program, the effects it had with its attendees, and appreciate every good points the program as a whole had impacted to the low-risk drug-user surrenderers and its entire immediate community. All these being viewed

from the perspective of Restorative Justice as the pursuit of restoring the sanctity and dignity of human life using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach.

On a community-based rehabilitation literature

Published in the International Journal of Research - Granthaalayah, explores how a community-based transformational rehabilitation plan in Tanauan, Leyte, was crafted by the stakeholders to heal and restore the self-worth of the 396 surrenderers. The general objective was to enable the participant to understand the process of healing and recovery from their old lifestyles and embrace the new life of moral recovery. He exposes in the article that the act of volunteering for the transformational rehabilitation program shows an eagerness of surrenderers to renew their lives. The program is said to be effective based on the feedback from the surrenderers and their families because it really addressed the inner core of their problems. The holistic approach and gradual realization from the self, to the family and to the community made them truly commit to mend their ways.

Cooperrider, D. and Whitney, D., (2005), in their research entitled *A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry*, emphasizes that when everybody is respected, valued and given worth, people, groups, communities respond in a more constructive, positive, life-affirming ways, even spiritually. Human relationships flourish ³ *Does people see the best in one another, when they share their dreams and ultimate concerns in affirming ways, and when they are connected in full voice to create not just new worlds but better worlds. Perhaps our inquiry must become the positive*

A lot may have been written about the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church on the sanctity and dignity of human life, including the many factors that threaten and can destroy it, and the possible interventions that may restore it through the years. But still, very few literatures (if not, none at all) tackle the issue on the restoration of the sacredness of human life and its intrinsic value of dignity as a subject matter. By considering, inquiring into and analyzing a community-based rehabilitation program given to low-risk drug user surrenderers in the country can such be appreciated. This brings to us the uniqueness of this research and its contribution to the academe and the society at large.

Conceptual Model and Operational Framework

The Judeo-Christian tradition has been very loud with its basic and yet very important teaching on the restoration of the sanctity of human life and its inherent value of dignity. The Book of Genesis first

x Negligence of the needs of the broader community. CST and RJ both stresses that the common good considers the needs of the victims, the accountability of the offenders, and the need to repair and restore relationships within the entire

FRPPXQLW\ 5- URRWV RQ ELEOLFDO VKDORP †SHDFH·
ZKLFK LQYROYHV *RG¶V †XQLI\LQJ ORYH· WKDW VDYHV

and redeems all relationships.

CST and RJ share are underlying paradigms of building a more just and humane society. They are complementary frameworks that, when combined, create a powerful lens for examining and articulating interpretations about the restoration of the value of human life and dignity.

The entire research will be guided by this operational framework:

their low-risk drug user surrenderers, and other participants of the local KKDK and by one of the friends of the researchers.

The concerned barangay was presented with a letter of request to conduct an interview about its community-based rehab and intervention program being implemented with some of the locals (low-risk drug user surrenderers with their relatives or friends). Before the personal interview was conducted, the identified respondents were informed about the nature of this research. Their consent to take part in it and the possibility of its publication was asked from them. The researchers also honored the right of the respondents to remain anonymous if in case they would like their identity protected. Each respondent was designated with a certain code to hide his or her identity. The researchers also followed the ethical

Inquiry is the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic capable in economic, ecological, and human terms (Cooperrider, & Whitney, 2005). For this research, the implicit intention is to provide a third party non-participant objective evaluation of the researchers on how the sanctity and dignity of life of the low-risk drug-users surrenderers in Barangay Salapan, San Juan City was restored. This was made possible through considering the intervention initiated by the local community led by the barangay officials in coordination with the city authorities especially the office of the Vice-Mayor.

Definition Stage

A new addition to the Method of analysis. This concerns clarifying on what the researchers are to inquire into and learn more about.

In this study, the researchers gave focus on the core value of restoration of the sanctity and dignity of life. This positive value is to be appreciated from the very life experiences of the low-risk drug-users surrenderers in Barangay Salapan, San Juan City, who participated in the relapse prevention program implemented by the barangay in coordination with the City of San Juan. There were actually an estimate of more than three hundred surrenderers in the watch list of the said barangay. One hundred forty of them were enrolled in KKDK. Low-risk drug users are assessed by the Anti-Drug Abuse Council (ADAC) of the local government that uses the Alcohol, Smoking and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST) that was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). Once referred by the concerned ADAC, they undergo intervention through the Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse Campaign (BADAC). The researchers managed to meet and interview several graduates of the intervention, their relatives and friends, and local officials including the facilitator of the KKDK program.

Discovery Stage

This stage peculiarly cites the best experiences of the people with the program, the things they deeply most value, the core, life-giving factors in their experiences, and even what they hope for in the future.

Upon scrutinizing all the narratives from the people who got involved in the KKDK program in Barangay Salapan, several themes had surfaced as positive experiences. The following statements, *gusto ko ng magbagong buhaygusto ko at kaya kong magbago, nantusa katotohanan na hindi kaya magbagong nisa napapanahon na siguro at nagsawa na rin ako sa ganung systema, para mabago ang takbo ng*

importantly, from what they have experienced, they have rediscovered
WKH YDOXH RI RQH¶V OLIH

Dream Stage

The creation of a dream that is anchored in the life-experiences that they have had is what this stage is all about. By using the findings and stories from the discovery stage there will be an articulation of a compelling, memorable and ambitious picture of their desired future. Deviating a little from the traditional nature of this particular stage where the participants of the program are the ones articulating their envisioned dreams, for this study, the proponents of this research are the ones articulating their envisioned dreams. This will be done by digging deeper on the narratives of the participants of the program, where the dreams are possibly hidden. This is a sort of innovation on the Appreciative Inquiry Method of Analysis.

What can we draw upon from the positive experiences of the participants of KKDK program? Revisiting the transcribed narratives. What seemed to be the envisioned future of the participants was basically the restoration of what used to be the quality of life enjoyed most especially by the surrenderers-participants of the community-based relapse prevention program implemented by the barangay Salapan in the

Table 1.
Best practices of the program based from the narratives of the people

Best practices of the program based from the narratives of the people	Significant values
barangay na ang humikayat sa amin, dahil programa ng gobyerno..from Ateneo kasi galing y modules namin	Collaborative initiative of the Community, learning institution, and the government
yung programa kasi namin hindi sya yung pinu QD μLNDZ PDJEDJR ND¶ \XQ self FRQILGHQFH QLOD QD ND kumbaga, ang nakita namin dun, lumakas ε SDQDQDZ QLOD VD KODKayaCkng PDJEDJR ¶ «	Rebuilding self-confidence Positive self-concept Commitment to change
na-explain sa kanya na hindi iharass yung mga kliyente, kakausapin ng maayos, kakausapin parang kaibigan	Proper, friendly, and non-coercive orientation
kaya yung module namin ay once a week lang sya yung iba talaga may trabaho, hindi sa public, m SULYDWH ZRUN «	Client availability considerate and modular program
pinapipili naman sila maam, kung umaga, tanghal KDSRQ « 7XHVGDI\ 7KXUVGDI\ DW)ULGI	
tuloy-tuloy talaga maam, kasi kahit graduate na si PLQRPRQLWRU SD Utan@ pibce@pe \XQJ SDJEDEDJR « VD LVDQJ	Long term process of monitoring, Physical and psychological intervention
EHVHV VD LVDQJ EXZDQ «U-D FRXQVHOLQJ SR \DQ PDDP «	
kumakaisap na po dyan ay yung mismo SV\FKRORJLVW « tapos, after naman nung program, inooffer narr	

non-coercive mood observed in helping the surrenderers, more so the reinforced level of confidence seen among them to personally pursue rehabilitation and change themselves. A certain level of freedom and tolerance was observed on the part of the surrenderers by the implementers that is seen to have enabled them to be helped more efficiently by the program, and they (the surrenderers) have taken concerned people, seems wholistic because it addresses not just the personal-psychological life of the surrenderers but their familial, social, spiritual and even economic grasp of it as well. The possibility of restoring the sacredness and dignity of life of the low-risk drug-users surrenderers were initially restored.

Destiny Stage

Destiny is about empowering people to experiment with and improve upon their designs. It is in this AI stage that the determination of additional concrete ways to experience the dream is done. Thus the researchers, in this case, suggest some innovations on the program. Should there be more homegrown-trained members of the community that would serve as facilitators, it would be easier in carrying out the specific activities of the rehabilitation program. This will be a great help in absence of the facilitators who are nonmembers of the community. There should be greater positive awareness of the entire community regarding the rehabilitation program so that there will be a more cohesive communal support that would be given to the future participants. This can be done by distributing to each household, a copy of the primer of the rehabilitation program, this will let them know the appropriate disposition that is needed in relation to the participants of the program. Knowledge is moral and can be supported in bringing about real change. At least an appropriate orientation on the program can be shared in the local academic institution. All these must be done to create an environment of respect and love within the local community towards the participants of the program. The local community must conduct, if possible, a community-wide children is orientation on the reality of the prohibited drugs especially focusing on its ill effects. A house-to-house orientation can be done. Children, who are so innocent and vulnerable, will prevent themselves in becoming victims of prohibited drugs and probable future participants of the rehabilitation program. Remember, an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Since the rehabilitation program is being supported also by the local government, there must be a pledge of assurance that there will be continuity of the program by whoever is seated as officials of the local government. This will eliminate doubts from the community and the participants about the consistency of the

References

