

Arresting or Treating: Effects of Police Actions in Solving the Addict Problem: A Case of Urban District, Zanzibar

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Abstract: This is a descriptive study aimed to assess police actions in solving addict problem. The study was conducted at urban District- Zanzibar. The study used quantitative approach where questionnaire was conducted to 83 respondents out of the study population of 223,033 including police officers, mental hospital workers (methadone section), addicts, ordinary citizens, sober houses managers. Respondents were purposively selected due to their roles and participation on the issue under discussion. Quantitative data was analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28. Descriptive statistics was affected to display frequencies, percentages and mean scores with the support of the SPSS. Interpretation of mean score was as 3.5-4.00 = strongly acceptable, 2.50-3.49= acceptable, 1.50-2.49 = not acceptable and 1.00-1.49 = strongly not acceptable. After analysis, the study concluded that, community did not acknowledge some of the police practices as an appropriate way to halt illicit drug users and addicts. Practices such as police operations, bullying, threats, effecting hash regulations and punishment, detaining and imprisoning, arresting and detention, and frequent visits to health clinics are putative by community. In other side, community accepted police verbal and physical abuses to force admission and confession for fake drug case as suitable ways to halt drug users and addicts. From these amazing results, the study recommended that, police and other stakeholders associated with illicit drug users and addict have to use medication technique as to lessen pinch of the illicit drug issue.

Keywords: Illicit drugs, drug users, addicts, police, police actions, health service, community.

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Introduction

Addiction is a fundamental problem of human's life worldwide (Liu *et al.*, 2017; Wood *et al.*, 2017; Caliskan *et al.*, 2018; Arlappa *et al.* 2019). Globally, about 12.7 million of the world's population inject illicit drugs and 3.4% to 6.6% are addicted because of drugs (Mazhnaya *et al.*, 2016; Gugu & Davison, 2017; Bhat *et al.*, 2017; Kinuthia, 2019). Researchers from different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, political science, social work and economics have been critical in thinking about addict ratification and possible solutions (Gonzalez & Akers, 2017; Mehrolhassani *et al.*, 2019). Addict affects country's economy, personal health, social

welfare and it increases rates of transmitted diseases like human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV) and hepatitis C (Possi, 2018; Mathibela & Skhosana, 2019; Mehrolhassani *et al.*, 2019; Lin *et al.*, 2020; Oladeinde *et al.*, 2020).

USA leads in the addiction problem where 50.1% of American addicts die every year for overdose (Makande, 2017; Reichert, 2017; Kinuthia, 2019). Police as a law enforcer has failed to solve the addict problem (Osborne, 2019; Mehrolhassani *et al.*, 2019). Then the nation initiated more than 138 programs associating free treatment as a solution for addiction (Reichert, 2017; Stockings *et al.*, 2018).

In Mexico, on other hand, police acts left the country to over 100,000 death of drug users. Then, the country introduced the *Narcomenudeo* reform in which police do not arrest individuals found with small amount of drug. Instead, they take such people to health facilities for treatment (Gaines, *et al.*, 2017). United Kingdom adopted unsuccessfully short-term detoxification service called police-led referral program to provide treatment for addicts (Schiff *et al.*, 2017). In Australia, police and court-initiated drug diversion programs where drug offenders were detected and sent to court or drug rehabilitation centers for education and treatment. Yet the program could not solve the addict problem (Forsythe & Adams, 2017).

Ukraine, on the other hand, improved addict's life quality by creating employment opportunities, reducing psychiatric syndromes and minimizing criminal behaviors. Still, the program failed because police acts were contrary to that program (Kutsa *et al.*, 2016; Mazhnaya *et al.*, 2016). The case was different to Ukraine and Georgia where police officers were empowered at any time to detain and get urine test to any individual on grounds of drugs suspicion. This was part of reducing addict and illicit drug uses. Yet, the tactic did not work well since detainees' actions recurred (Bergen-Cico *et al.*, 2017). In Russia, like Georgia, police have absolute power to victimize addict. As result sexual violence and coercion were rooted (Lunze *et al.*, 2016; Wood *et al.*, 2017).

Asian countries like Hong Kong originated task forces against addicts, which led Beat Drug Fund to promote community awareness, counseling centers, outreach programs for schools and substance-abuse clinics (Tam *et al.*, 2016; Tam *et al.*, 2018). Different to China, Philippines and Iran had adopted compulsory military style where addicts were detained without health care, hard work, torture and island exile. Later on, they adopted community-based drug dependence rehabilitation, then take home methadone maintenance treatment model. This program incorporated illicit drug users, police, government agencies and health care officials (Liu *et al.*, 2017; Liu & Hsiao, 2018; Zhang & Qiu, 2018; Yang & Xia, 2019) contrary to Malaysia where Cure and Care Centers were launched to provide free treatment services to addicts and illicit drugs users (Khan *et al.*, 2018).

In Africa, there is a dearth of literature discussing police acts and other approaches alongside addicts (Hechanova *et al.*, 2018; Moghanibashi-Mansourieh

et al., 2018; Osborne, 2019). Limited literature explained effects of illicit drug and addiction. In West Africa, for instance, addict caused social harms, stigma and spread of drug markets (Nelson, 2018). In southern Africa, addict contributed to psychological disorders, social problems and increase of crimes (George, 2017; Gugu & Davison, 2017; Makande, 2017; Reuter, 2017; Muswede & Roelofse, 2018; Kinuthia, 2019; Oladeinde *et al.*, 2020). In East Africa, the case was the same as Western and Southern Africa (Gathumbi & Cheloti, 2016; Gugu & Davison, 2017; Possi, 2018; Nanyondo, 2019). In Tanzania, particularly Zanzibar, addict cases increased each year. Both, police and Health authority took different actions to solve addict problems. Health authority providws medical assistances to the addicted while Zanzibar police takes different measures such as arresting addicts, keeping them under custody and taking them before the court of law to answer their charges. Yet, with all these efforts, addiction still remains a big challenge in Zanzibar (Mussa, 2019). This study therefore, intended to establish acceptability of police measures as intervention to solve addict problems.

Literature Review

Researchers identified two approaches to fight against illicit drug and addict. The first one is to use legal and criminal perspective and the second one is the health care perspective. These two perspectives are contradicting each other since each one uses different approach to solve addict and illegal drug uses (Liu & Hsiao, 2018; Zhang & Qiu, 2018; Tam *et al.*, 2018; Yang & Xia, 2019). In a study about Chinese female drug users' experiences and attitude with institutional drug treatment, Liu and Hsiao (2018) realized that, police force and other anti-drug authorities are more concerned with legal and criminal perspective. The illegality of drugs provokes the police to use force as a means to finish the problem. Insidiousness of drug inspires health workers and related officers to use the health care approach to cure addicts and illegal drug users. Health personnel view addiction as a disease like other illnesses.

Osborne (2019) concluded that, addiction from illicit drugs is a disease like other disease of mental illness. Therefore, health cares are needed to renovate someone from addiction and illegal drug uses. Unfortunately, many police officers do not understand that addiction is a mental illness disease. As a result, they continue to blame and

stigmatize addicts. Obviously, majority of police officers view drug dependence as criminal act rather than chronic disease, which needs medical care. Police believe that imposing harsh regulations and punishment towards illicit drugs is the only solution to solve the problem. In addition, police officers believe that the use of methamphetamine, methadone, buprenorphine and the like are the most abused drug and not fit to curb addict problems, instead they increase and intensify the drug epidemic. Police consider that combating illicit drugs can only be prevented by detaining and finally imprisoning the addicts.

The study of McLean (2018) contended that police believed that there is a very close connection between illicit drug use, addiction and commission of crime such as robbery, stealing, sexual abuse and physical assault. In many cases, criminals are likely using illicit drugs to support their criminal acts. This makes addicts to be at risk of daily confrontation and arresting by police. Therefore, police officers make arresting and detention as part of intervention to halt drug users and addict.

In connection to arresting and detection of addicts and drug users, Jorgensen (2018) asserted that police arresting and detention against illicit drug users and addicts elevate the risk of being more addicted. Before arresting and detention police used to make frequent visits to health clinics where drug users and addicts attend for health care. The visiting aimed to acquire information about drug users, drug sellers and drug transportation. Police used the information to make raid and arresting. Because of this situation, many illicit drug users and addicts hesitated to attend health centers to avoid police arrest. For that matter, police practices did not reduce drug use.

In the same pace of police acts, George (2017) added that police arresting and detention create insecurity, fear and confusion to addicts and to the community in general. In the process police operation against addicts, police used to do bullying, threatening and hurting. The beating usually starts at the time of arresting up to detention cells. Because of that police practices, addict and drug users were seriously injured and normally left behind without any kind of health services. While that happens, many addicts and drug users are arrested by the police and are detained for up to 72 hours. Other spend a couple of days at the police station without any charge or being send to court.

Most of the police station cells are in poor conditions and are overcrowded. In the cells, women were more victim for abusing language and sometime sex.

Rafful *et al.* (2020) in their study further added that police verbal and physical abuses intensify pinch among the addict and drug users. Police used to tell addicts and illicit drug users that did not deserve to get medication and food since they had nothing to contribute while they are outside. In addition, they deserve no clothes or phone services as per police regulations. Further than that, addict have to do all the cleaning at the police station including offices and blankets.

Similarly, the study of Gimbel and Muhammad (2018) asserted that, as a result of arresting, police officers force addicts and drug users to admit and make confession of fake drug case. These practices are common at many police stations where most of addicts are asked to sign a consent for admission while they are still in intoxication. Some are forced to sign the consent under threats of being indefinitely detained if they do not sign. Other just sign to avoid staying longer at the police cells. Most of the police cells have no toilets and because of over crowdedness, addicts suffer all the time while in cells.

Rafful *et al.* (2020) in their study further reported that in normal circumstances, all police stations have a cell where criminals or suspected persons are locked. This is the same to drug users and addicts who are locked to the same cell even before nothing has been proven. In most cases, addicts are locked in the cell until the most severe addict symptoms have passed. The length of stay in cells is between 4 days to over a month. Since drug users and addiction are so prevalent, cells became overcrowded. Some cells are so congested in such that people spent the first night standing up because of no space to sit down. This situation changes after some addicts have been taken to court.

In the study area, Mussa (2019) asserted that, drug users and addicts cause a big challenge in the Zanzibar Island as police in Zanzibar used to apply force in combating the problem. Random arrest and detention of drug users and addicts were widespread in most part of Zanzibar Island. Therefore, this study sought to establish the good approach to solve the challenge of addicts and drug users in Zanzibar.

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive and quantitative study. The study was conducted at urban District- Zanzibar as the area has many addict cases compared to other area around the Island. The study population was 223,033 including police officers, mental hospital workers (methadone section), addicts, ordinary citizens and sober and houses managers. The study was conducted to 83 respondents by using Simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques to obtain the representation from the study population.

A structured questionnaire was used to gather information from the field. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 was used to analyze quantitative data and to establish the validity of the study. Furthermore, through the SPSS, descriptive statistics was affected to display frequencies, percentages and mean scores.

Secrecy and privacy were guaranteed in accordance with ethical standards prior to data collection in that respondents did not specify their names in the questionnaires. Furthermore, data collection permit was acquired from appropriate authorities in Zanzibar. The following scale of mean score interpretation was used: 3.5-4.00 = strongly acceptable, 2.50-3.49= acceptable, 1.50-2.49 = not acceptable and 1.00-1.49 = strongly not acceptable.

Results and Discussion

This section provides results and discussion. The study sought to establish the acceptability of the police actions in solving the uses of illicit drugs challenge.

Results indicate that community members had different perceptions on the police actions toward addicts and illicit drug users as revealed in Table 1.

Table 1: Acceptability of Police Actions in Solving Addict and Illicitly Drugs Users

SN	Item	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
1	Police operations, bullying, threats, and hurting against addicts helping to stop the use of illicit drug.	1.4904	.63849	Strongly not acceptable
2	Imposing hash regulations and punishment by police towards illicit drug and addicts is the only solution to solve the illicit drug problem	1.5865	.74535	Not acceptable
3	Police combating illicit drug can only be accomplished by detaining and finally imprisoning the drug users and addicts	1.9231	.89976	Not acceptable
4	Police arresting and detention is an only possible point of intervention for drug users and addict regardless there arresting and detention is not amount to drug.	1.9519	.65921	Not acceptable
5	Police observation and frequent visits to health clinics that drug use and addict participating to get health care is helping to stop illicit drug use.	2.0673	1.00739	Not acceptable
6	Police verbal and physical abuses decrease uses of drug among the addict and drug users.	2.5288	.97500	Acceptable
7	Police forcing admission and confession for fake drug case assist to stop illicit drugs.	2.9135	1.00591	Acceptable

Results from table 1 indicate that respondents considered the first statement strongly not acceptable. The statement was whether police operations, bullying, threats and hurting against addicts help to stop the use of illicit drug. This result strongly implies that police harassment, intimidation as well as mistreatment are not a solution to solve and halt addicts and illicit drug users. Instead it creates fear, injustice and mistrust between police and community at large. George (2017) in the study about Educators experiences on the prevalence of drugs and intervention programs within schools in the Phoenix area found the same results.

The results from table 1 also considered the next four statement not acceptable. One items was about imposing hash regulations and punishment by police towards illicit drug users and addicts as the only solution to solve the illicit drug problem. The next statement was whether police combating illicit drug can only be accomplished by detaining and finally imprisoning the drug users and addicts. The next was whether police arresting and detention is the only possible point of intervention for drug users and addicts. Another statement was whether police observation and frequent visits to health

clinics that drug users and addicts attend help to stop illicit drug use. These study results imply that, harsh treatment, punishment, detention and imprisonment, police arresting and frequent visiting to addict health care are not exclusively the solution of combating drug users and addicts. They can be used together with other strategies to solve the drugs users and addicts. The same study results were found in the Jorgensen's (2018) study about Badges and Bongs: Police officers' attitudes toward drugs. The study realized that harsh treatment and regulations as well as frequent police visiting to health care can be implied carefully and with a good intention. There is a need to improve them and mix with other measures in order to solve the facing challenges of illicit drug users and addicts.

Respondents agreed with the last two statements in the table. Particularly, they agreed that police verbal and physical abuses decrease uses of drug among the addicts and drug users. Finally, respondents agreed that police forcing admission and confession for fake drug cases assist to stop illicit drugs. This study results suggest that verbal and physical abuse, forcing admission and confession for fake drug cases are solutions and can stop the challenge of drug users and addicts. The results imply that community in general are fed up with the acts done by the addicts and illicit drug users. The community are not ready to see the addicts and drug users in their community. The finding from the study differ from those by Gimbel and Muhammad (2018) and Rafful *et al.* (2020) that verbal and physical abuse, forcing admission and confession for fake drugs help nothing in the process of solving and halt illicit drug users and addicts. Instead they confuse and create damage not only to illicit drug users and addicts but also to community at all.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that the community did not consider some of the police practices as proper ways to address the illicit drug users and addicts. The community did not accept police practices such as bullying, threats, executing harsh regulations and punishment, detaining and imprisoning, arresting and detention and frequent visits to health clinics to detect drug abusers and addicts. The community accepted some practices such as police verbal and physical abuses as ways to decrease the use of drugs. Finally, respondents considered that police forcing admission and confession for fake drug cases assist to stop illicit drug. These measures are taken

as a soft way of moving out illicit drug users and addict from the community.

The study recommends that police and other stakeholders associated with illicit drug users and addicts have to revisit measure taken to solve illicit drug users and addicts. The use medication technique as mean to reduce pinch of the illicit drug issue is highly recommended. Medication service from health centers seem to be soft and voluntary way rather than police practices which normally use force and involuntary technique.

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