THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OPLAN TOKHANG: ITS RELATION TO DRUG INCIDENTS

JIM E. EUSEBIO, MSCrim Faculty Member, College of Criminal Justice EducationCagayan State University, Piat Campus Piat, Cagayan, Philippines

ABSTRACT: Oplan Tokhang is a national law enforcement project that was launched over the country. A Visayan word 'TOKHANG" means to approach and talk. This was launched as part of the campaign to warn drug traffickers and users to stop using drugs. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang in relation to drug reported incidents. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang in relation to drug reported incidents in the Municipality of Piat. This study utilized the descriptive normative research design. This design described the profile of the respondents; the level of effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang, present status of drug surrenderers resulting from the implementation of Oplan Tokhang, crime situation of drug reported incidents and the degree of seriousness of the problems regarding the implementation of Oplan Tokhang. Respondents of the study were the PNP Personnel of Piat Police Station and selected residents of the identified community of the Municipality of Piat using the random sampling method. The main instrument used in gathering the needed data was the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of five parts. The data was tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. The level of effectiveness of the Oplan Tokhang was analysed using the Likert scale. From the emerged findings of this study it is therefore concluded that the law enforcement arm of the Philippine National Police is very effective in enforcing the policy of government on Oplan Tokhang as this is manifested in the absence of crime incidence related to drugs in the locality, however, despite the seriousness of problems confronted, the police forces are still on the go and strongly motivated to do their job of protecting the residents and ensure their safety and to maintain peace in the community. Based from the findings of this study, the following are strongly recommended that the BADAC, MADAC and PNP should conduct regular seminars on drug education among the residents especially the parents to inform them of the disadvantages derived by drug using and to encourage the parents to voluntarily surrender their children who are hooked to drugs and undergo the government rehabilitation programs.

KEYWORDS: Oplan Tokhang, law enforcement project, level of effectiveness, BADAC, illegal drugs, drug rehabilitation program

INTRODUCTION

"We will not stop until the last drug lord… and the last pusher has surrendered or are put either behind bars or below the ground, if they so wish…" -President Rodrigo RoaDuterte (SONA 2016)

For more than decades, illegal drugs are one of the major problems of countries all over the world. The current situation on war against drugs in the world is very horrible that has an effect in the society and economy of the country. Philippines is one of the countries which is affected by illegal drugs. An estimated 100 million Filipinos are living in the country. In 2016 during the reign of President Rodrigo RoaDuterte, about 200 drug personalities were killed due to drug related cases, rather than spending a lot of money and putting persons into prison who are innocent and sometimes being killed. The government should make an effective treatment or program to the users of illegal drug (Sean and Martin, 2013).

A project of the PNP, Oplan Tokhang, is a national law enforcement project that was launched over the country. A Visayan word 'TOKHANG" means to approach and talk. This was launched as part of the campaign to warn drug traffickers and users to stop using drugs.In 2018, the Filipino government re-launched its violent crackdown on drugs. Sao Yang Hew (2018) discusses the unintended consequences of the infamous drug war on the people of the Philippines. Earlier this year, Rodrigo Duterte, the President of the Philippines decided to re-launch the anti-drug campaign known as "Oplan Tokhang". The controversial anti-drug campaign is maintained by Duterte as his top priority since his leadership two years ago (Palatino, 2018) Since his 2016 presidential campaign, Duterte has vowed to kill every drug dealer and user in the country, and subsequently eradicate the use of illegal drugs within the Philippines. His unrelenting and brash approach towards social and economic problems within the country has garnered heavy support within the Philippines, leading him to win a landslide majority within the Senate as President, which makes his proposed policies much easier to be rolled out (Reuters, 2018)

The country's drug war has already invited continuous criticism by human rights organizations against President Duterte. In fact, the ethical issues of Duterte's task force and their excessively violent method of executing individuals for the suspected drug trade halted the anti-drug campaign twice in two years (Palatino, 2018).Despite that, the leader still maintains overwhelming support from his voters, mostly residing in the metropolitan cities. A large proportion of these people are not directly affected by his drug policies and are satisfied by the increased sense of security residing within the suburbs of Manila and Cebu,

places where crime and drug trade used to run rampant without Duterte's aggressive drug policies. Duterte's approach to suspected drug trade may be excessively ruthless, but examinations from an economic perspective reveal the actual implications of the war on drugs and show that his policies could negatively affect his supporters as well.

Duterte's drug interdiction aims to remove every individual involved in the drug trade, with a focus on procedures and dealers (Raphelson, 2017). Through economic intuition, Duterte's policies would decrease the supply of methamphetamine and hence drive prices up. However, with the nature of addiction, people are not likely to respond to a rise in the price of drugs as much as they would with any other good. The price elasticity of demand for methamphetamine would be relatively inelastic, in which the quantity demanded of the drug changes at a slower rate compared to the change in price. This could result in an increase in total drug revenue for suppliers. This could lead to the surviving suppliers to experience increased welfare and be more capable to commit and conceal more drug-related offenses, mitigating Duterte's efforts to eradicate illegal drug trade.

Duterte's drug war has also prompted external scrutiny by human rights organizations due to extrajudicial killing of individuals within poverty-stricken neighbourhoods (Raphelson, 2017). Most individuals who are executed in the streets during the crackdown are breadwinners of their family, resulting in the difficulty of the remaining family members, mainly poor women and children to financially support themselves (Aldamas, 2018).However, the people living within these neighbourhoods have noted that the rich offenders involved in the drug trade are treated quite differently. They usually become informants for law enforcement after being jailed, instead of being murdered like poorer individuals. This could potentially result in drug dealers continuing their activities after getting released (Wells, 2017).

Aside from that, reports have also shown that many police officers receive money under the table for alleged drug offenders they kill in their crackdowns. Funeral homes are also alleged to pay these officers for bringing these bodies-creating a perverse incentive where these

killings are encouraged, while providing further financial burden for these already poor families as they are forced to get their loved one's remains within these funerals homes(Wells,2017). It is unsurprising that Duterte's drug policies will only aggravate the economic problems already plaguing the Philippines, such as income inequality, given the unlawful exploitation of the lives and economic welfare of the urban poor. Keeping in mind how the usage of methamphetamine is almost used as a substitute for food and other sustenance, this is likely to drive more individuals to methamphetamine usage.

Many who have experienced the "Oplan Tokhang" first-hand have agreed that rehabilitation, welfare and income-generation programs remain the only feasible solution to eradicate drug use in the Philippines. The government can promote economic equity with these programs by alleviating Filipinos for extreme poverty. The poor would be able to afford food instead of relying on drugs for mental and physical sustenance, driving drug prices down. This would then prompt drug suppliers to stop their drug-related activities due to diminishing revenue, an outcome far more desirable for the government and people of the Philippines.

The United States Administration helped the Colombian government by passing a bill giving them a financial help for counter narcotics aid package. Colombian government askeda financial aid from other nations to support their campaign in Colombia on war against drugs in their country. Colombia government was expected to receive 7.5 billion dollars but in the end, they only received a financial aid of $1.0 billion. When the plan was made Colombia is in a state of economic repression and experienced chaos throughout their country. Colombia was made as a machinery of peace, prosperity, and uniting all people in Colombia. The focus of the plan is centered in the improvement of their country in peace process,in anti-narcotics plan and the development of their country. Plan Colombia is the aerial spraying of coca crops in Colombia which would eliminate the production of cocaine in their country and aiding military needs in their law enforcement but when the police force implemented Plan Colombia, thousands of people have died due to drug related cases and

people were traumatized because of the brutal implementation of Plan Colombia (Rheid, 2010).

In the Philippines, Duterte ordered the Philippine National Police to crack down all persons who are involved in illegal drugs. Since his reign, he implemented the plan of OPLAN TOKHANG which resulted to the arrest of many drug personalities involving some other politicians and worst, they were killed in the operations of the police (EuanMcKirdy, 2016). A large number of illegal drug users approximately 39,000 have surrendered to the PDEA and PNP (Courge, 2016).

In an attempt to provide a final solution to the drug problem that is afflicting the Philippines, in the middle of the month of October in the year 2017, Oplan Tokhang was put to a halt by Duterte administration after more than a year-long campaign that left thousands of bodies in its wake, all the while in the end being unable to put a forth to the final solution to the drug problem. It was decided that the responsibility of dealing with the issue of the illicit drug trade was transferred by the Philippine National Police (PNP) to the Philippine Drug Administration (PDEA).Tokhang as an approach to eventually check the spread of drug users in the community is a strategy that has been made as one of the major programs of PNP against illegal drugs. With this, this study was conceived to determine the effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang against illegal drugs.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang in relation to drug reported incidents in the Municipality of Piat. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:

    1.1.   Age

    1.2.   Sex

    1.3.   Civil status

    1.4.   Socioeconomic status

    1.5.   Educational attainment

2. What is the level of effectiveness of the Oplan Tokhang in combating the incidence of drugs in the area of study as perceived by the respondents?

3. What is the present status of drug surrenders which resulted from the implementation of the Oplan Tokhang in the area of the study?

4. What are the drug reported incidents in the Municipality of Piat?

5. What are the problems encountered in the implementation of Oplan Tokhang in the Municipality of Piat?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the descriptive normative research design. This design described the profile of the respondents; the level of effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang, present status of drug surrenderers resulting from the implementation of Oplan Tokhang, crime situation of drug reported incidents and the degree of seriousness of the problems regarding the implementation of Oplan Tokhang. Respondents of the study were the PNP Personnel of PiatPolice Station and select residents of the identified community of the Municipality of Piat using the random sampling method.

DATA GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

The main instrument used in gathering the needed data was the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of five parts. Part I generated data on the profile of the respondents; Part II on the level of effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang; Part III on the status of drug surrenderers; Part IV on the crime situation of drugs reported incidents and the last part on the degree of seriousness of the problems regarding the implementation of Oplan Tokhang. Informal interview was likewise conducted to validate the data gathered from the questionnaire. Documentary analysis was made to determine the status of drug surrenderers and reported incidents on drugs in the study area.

DATA GATHERING ANALYSIS

The data was tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. The level of effectiveness of the Oplan Tokhang was analysed using the Likert scale below.

3-Very effective

2-Effective

1- Not Effective

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
30-32	3	30.00
33-34	2	20.00
35-36	1	10.00
37-38	1	10.00
39-40	2	20.00
40-41	1	10.00
Total	**10**	**100.00**
Mean age=32.03 SD=9.65		

Table 1 revealed the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to age. As gleaned from the table, the highest frequency of 3 or 30.00 percentbelonged to the age bracket of 30-32 years of age with mean age of 32.03. It can be inferred that the police forces are relatively young, full of enthusiasm and active.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	6	60.00
Female	4	40.00
Total	**10**	**100.00**

As gleaned the table, there are more male police officers than female police officers. This implies that police personnel are dominated by males as this vocation is more attractive to males than their counterparts.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to civil status

Civil status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	2	20.00
Married	8	80.00
Total	**10**	**100.00**

As reflected from the table, majority of the police officers are married with only 2 who are still single. This data imply that the police officers are matured and responsible enough to perform their mandated functions.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of the community residents according to their age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-20	1	3.30
21-25	4	13.30
26-30	7	23.30
31-35	9	30.00
36-40	5	16.70
41-45	2	6.70
46-50	0	0.00
51-55	0	0.00
56-60	1	3.30
61-65	1	3.30
TOTAL	30	100.00
Mean =35.40SD=5.15		

Table 4 revealed the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to age. As reflected in the table, the highest frequency of 9 or 30.00 percent belonged to the age bracket of 30-35 years of age. The mean age of 35.40 indicates that community residents are in their early adulthood stage.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage distribution of the community residents according to sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	12	40.00
Female	18	60.00
Total	**30**	**100.00**

As reflected in the table, majority of the respondents are females with a frequency of 18 or 60.00 percent which implies that women participation in the community activities are already given emphasis and recognition and in response to gender equality.

Table 6. Frequency and percentage distribution of community residents according to civil status

Civil status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	11	36.70
Married	19	63.30
Total	**30**	**100.00**

Data in Table 6 showed that 19 or 63.30 percent of the community residents are married and 11 or 36.70 are single. This data imply that the respondents are considered to be matured and responsible in carrying out the given roles in the community.

Table 7.Frequency and percentage distribution of community residents according to educational attainment

Educational attainment	Frequency	Percentage
Elementary graduate	5	16.70
Secondary graduate	17	56.70
College graduate	8	26.60
Total	**30**	**100.00**

As reflected in Table 7, more than half of the community residents are secondary graduates. This finding showed that the respondents have undergone formal schooling.

Table 8.Frequency and percentage distribution of the community residents according to occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Pharmacist	2	6.70
Vendor	4	13.33
Housekeeper	6	20.00
Driver	5	16.70
Helper	3	10.00
Farmer	5	16.70
Barangay police	2	6.70
Barangay Councilor	2	6.70
Electrician	1	3.33
Total	**30**	**100.00**

As shown in Table 8, community residents are engaged in varied occupations with most of them serving as housekeepers, followed by equal no of 5 as drivers and farmers while a few are into other occupations such as pharmacists, vendors, barangay police, barangay councillors and being an electrician. It can be inferred that somehow, the community residents have a decent source of income to provide the needs of the family.

Table 9.Summary of the Item Mean on the Effectiveness of Oplan Tokhang as assessed by the PNP and the community residents

Indicators	Philippine National Police		Community Residents	
	Weighted Mean	Adj. Value	Weighted Mean	Adj. Value
Oplan Tokhang encourages drug users to voluntarily surrender	2.60	Very effective	2.83	very effective
Oplan Tokhang makes the drug user feel safely	2.50	Very effective	2.57	Very effective
Oplan Tokhang is a measure for self- rehabilitation among drug users	2.80	Very effective	2.70	very effective
Oplan Tokhang reduces the number of drug users in the area	2.70	Very effective	2.67	Very effective
Oplan Tokhang develops self-confidence among drug users to deal with police force	2.40	Very effective	2.35	Very effective
Overall mean	**2.60**	**Very effective**	**2.62**	**Very effective**

The Oplan Tokhang as the campaign against illegal drug use, gathered data revealed that both the PNP and community residents consider edits effectiveness as "very effective" in encouraging drug users to voluntarily surrender, makes the drug users feel safe, a measure for self-rehabilitation, reduces the number of drug users in the area and self-confidence among drug users to deal with the police forces with weighted means of 2.60, 2.50, 2.80, 2.70 and 2.40 as rated by the police forces while community residents likewise rated these indicators "very effective" with corresponding weighted means of 2.83, 2.57, 2.70, 2.67, and 2.35 in that order.An over-all mean of 2.60 among the police forces and 2.62 among the community residents further indicates that Oplan Tokhang was assessed very effective in the control of drug use in the Municipality of Piat.

Table 10.Problems on the implementation of Oplan Tokhang

Problems	Philippine National Police		Community Residents	
	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Value	Weighted Mean	Adjectival Value
parents are uncooperative	2.20	Very serious	2.20	Very serious
Drug user refuse to surrender	2.70	Very serious	2.57	Very serious
Cannot locate the place of suspected drug user	2.80	Very serious	2.70	Very serious
Lack of manpower to cover the area	2.60	Very serious	2.67	Very serious
Rehabilitation centers are limited	2.80	Very serious	2.35	Very serious
Overall mean	**2.62**	**Very serious**	**2.62**	**Very serious**

The Oplan Tokhang as a nationwide means to control drug use, there are 378 drug users in the Municipality of Piat under the Oplan Tokhang program. Of the number, only 175 were given certificates for having completed the period of observation and have undergone community service. The remaining 203 are still in the process of observation and close monitoring. As to the crime incidence due to drug use, there are no cases of persons apprehended due to drugs, no person inquested through drug pushing and drug use, no person was killed due to drugs and no recorded crimes committed due to drugs.

PROBLEMS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OPLAN TOKHANG

Results showed the encountered problems of the law enforcers in the implementation of Oplan Tokhang were the uncooperative parents, refusal of drug users to surrender, cannot locate the place of suspected drug users, lack of manpower and the lack of rehabilitation centers were found "very serious" by both the PNP and the community residents.

CONCLUSIONS

From the emerged findings of this study it is therefore concluded that the law enforcement arm of the Philippine National Policeis very effective in enforcing the policy of government on Oplan Tokhang as this is manifested in the absence of crime incidence related to drugs in the locality, however, despite the seriousness of problems confronted, the police forces are still on the go and strongly motivated to do their job of protecting the residents and ensure their safety and to maintain peace in the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based from the findings of this study, the following are strongly recommended that the BADAC, MADAC and PNP should conduct regular seminars on drug education among the residents especially the parents to inform them of the disadvantages derived by drug usingand to encourage the parents to voluntarily surrender their children who are hooked to drugs and undergo the government rehabilitation programs.

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