

# BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS FOR EARLY ADULT SUBSTANCE ABUSERS

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## ABSTRACT

Influence of individuals addicted to drugs or alcohol, spreads like a wildfire in the society. Considering the rampant spread of substance abuse, the researcher determined the effectiveness of biopsychosocial interventions for early adult substance abusers in Cebu City. Findings of this study served as bases for an improved biopsychosocial intervention guide.

The respondents were substance abusers who were admitted in a rehabilitation center. The study utilized the case study both using qualitative and quantitative approaches. A standardized interview guide and questionnaire was used to collect information for the assessment of the client. Random sampling was used to come up with five (5) participants who are substance abusers. A Profile Sheet, Interview Guide for the Respondents and an Observation Checklist for the behaviors manifested by the substance abusers before and after the implementation of the interventions were used as tools in the study. The thematic qualitative analysis of data was extensively used to organize pertinent data.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 30-39 years age. Majority (80%) were male. Three (60%) were single. The present intervention was observed to have improved subject's understanding of present psychiatric and physical condition, reduced delusions and hallucinations significantly minimized random flight of ideas and auditory hallucinations and also showed improvement in attention span gradually as well as enhanced capability to share feelings freely and solving emotional confusions. Thus, the intervention aided quick recovery of the subjects.

Biopsychosocial interventions such as strategic/interactional therapies, behavioral self-control training approach, narrative therapy group psychotherapy, brief humanistic and existential therapies and expressive therapies were found to be effective interventions in caring for substance abuse patients to decrease maladaptive behaviors and improve their conditions. The proposed biopsychosocial interventions must be utilized in all psychiatric facility to improve the conditions of the substance abuser patients.

**Keywords:** *Biopsychosocial interventions, substance abuser, prohibited drugs, psychotherapy*

## INTRODUCTION

Individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol, spreads like a wildfire in the society. This outbreak continues to pose a threat not only to the society but also to the one of the basic units of it, the family. The family has been vulnerable to such dysfunction, with one of its members under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Considering the rising number of broken families worldwide, it has been a challenge for Nurse Clinicians to intervene with this situation.

In 2006, an estimated 30.5 million people (12.4% percent) aged 12 or older were reported to be under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Although this reflects a downward trend from 14.2 percent in 2002, it remains cause for concern (<http://www.drugabuse.gov>). Approximately 70,000 Filipinos are using illegal drugs if not alcoholic (Nar Group). Two years ago, there were

lesser percentage of estimated drug and alcoholic users in the country, but it increased throughout the years (Roces, 2006).

The COSAP (Cebu City Office for Substance Abuse Prevention) with the office of City Councilor Augustus Pe Jr., has conducted drug testing on officials and workers of seven barangays and the City Modern Abattoir from January to March. The number of persons found positive for illegal drugs use by COSAP for the first quarter this year already surpassed that in 2007 ([www.sunstar.com](http://www.sunstar.com)). The Dangerous Drugs Board (DDB) statistics recall that the national percentage for drug abusers and alcoholics seeking treatment and rehabilitation for the past years stood at 12.7% and half of the National Population were aiming for recovery (Carreon, 1997).

The present study is designed to find out why there are many cases of substance abusers via applying theories and principles underlying substance abuse. Considering the rampant spread of substance abuse, the present study aims to determine the effectiveness of biopsychosocial interventions for early adult substance abusers in Cebu City. Findings of this study served as bases for an improved biopsychosocial intervention guide.

This study is anchored on the biopsychosocial model theorized by psychiatrist George L. Engel (1977). It is a general model or approach which states that biological, psychological (which entails thoughts, emotions, and behaviors), and social factors, all play a significant role in human functioning in the context of disease or illness. Indeed, health is best understood in terms of a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors rather than purely in biological terms. This is in contrast to the traditional, reductionist biomedical model of medicine that suggests every disease process can be explained in terms of an underlying deviation from normal function such as a pathogen, genetic or developmental abnormality, or injury (DiMatteo, Haskard & Williams, 2007).

The biological component of the biopsychosocial model seeks to understand how the cause of the illness stems from the functioning of the individual's body. The psychological component of the biopsychosocial model looks for potential psychological causes for a health problem such lack of self-control, emotional turmoil, and negative thinking. The social part of the biopsychosocial model investigates how different social factors such as socioeconomic status, culture, poverty, technology, and religion can influence health (McLaren, 2002).

It is believed that personality plays a role in alcoholism and drug abuse. Probably the most popular psychoanalytic view twenty to forty years ago was that substance abusers have a dependent personality, probably created by an unusually great dependence on their parents in childhood (Vaillant, 1983).

Alcoholism is a serious health problem throughout the world. The number of people with an addiction to alcohol surpasses the number of addicts of other drug (Goldberg, 2005).

Yet, it is not fully understood what determines a person's disposition to alcoholism. Alcohol is far the biggest drug problem. More people are killed or disabled by it, and become psychotic by abusing alcohol than all of the

become psychotic by abusing alcohol than all of the other drugs put together. To define the alcohol problem more clearly, consider the following facts: (1) Alcohol accounts 11 million accidental injuries each year; (2) Forty percent of the admissions to mental hospitals and more than 50 percent of the arrests each year due to alcohol; (3) Alcoholics have a suicide rate 6-15 times greater than of the general population and alcoholic depression is the number one cause of suicide (Greenfield, 1998).

Substance abuse may affect the brain or cognition of the person. Cognitive status refers to the patient's intellectual capability including testable area as memory, language, math, abstraction, recalling, writing and orientation to time, place and people. Mental illness affects the person's functioning and thinking process, greatly diminishing a persons' social role and productivity in the community. International data shows that about one percent of the population is affected with severe mental and neurological disorders and another 4-5% suffers from mild to moderate neurological problems.

The rationale of this study is to make sense of such bewildering problems as hallucinations, paranoia, depression, and anxiety seems an incredible challenge. Changing the lives of substance abusers is not accomplished through the application of one dominant psychological theory, but through the integration of perspectives in this diverse field into a befitting approach-the biopsychosocial model.

Substance abusers can be given with different approaches to effectively manage their conditions. They need assistance especially from the health caregivers to handle their situation and positively cope with the effect of abuse. Richly illustrated with the result of the study, biopsychosocial intervention is unique in describing this proposed intervention guide and in providing a highly practical guide to effective intervention. With its superb integration of individual and family modalities, this proposed outcome guide will definitely help the substance abusers.

The proposed work aims to improve the condition of substance abusers to return in the mainstream of society completely rehabilitated.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilized the case study both using qualitative and quantitative approaches. A standardized interview

guide and questionnaire was used to collect information for the assessment of the client. This was used to construct a picture of the responses of the client. Moreover, this research involves the collection of detailed descriptions of existing variables to assess current conditions and to make a more intelligent plan of care for the improvement of the condition of the subjects.

The research study was conducted at Banaglaum situated at Tintay, Talamban Cebu City. This Psychiatric Facility caters clients with various mental disorders, including substance abusers.

### Subject specifications

All of the respondents or one hundred percent (100%), five out of five, were in the age bracket of 30-39 years. Majority of them or eighty percent (80%) were male, four out of five respondents. Only twenty percent (20%) were female or one out of five. Three of the respondents out of five or 60% were single. One out of five or 20% was married and widowed. Three of them or 60% were in college level and two were in high school. One hundred percent (100%) or five of the respondents were Roman Catholic.

The respondents of the study are known substance abusers. Five (5) of them were the main subjects, also gathering classified data from immediate caregivers and significant others. The respondents were substance abusers for more than 3 years aging from 18 years old to 40 years old. The reasons for their admission are mostly due to substance induced psychosis and other ill-effects of substance abuse.

The gathering of data and collection of provocative facts was done through observation and interview of the internal and external factors having the pattern of Stevens and Smith's Biopsychosocial Theory. The researcher observed the clients pertinent behavior and other manifestations of substance use and also referred reports from Psychiatrists and as well as the patient's chart. Part I is an interview with the subject of the study as to the health assessment and mental status utilizing a mental status examination in Psychiatry based on Biopsychosocial theory as a guide and as well as with the significant others. This part contains an observation checklist for the pertinent findings before and after the implementation of the interventions. Part I also includes Marjorie Gordon's Functional Health Pattern as part of the assessment.

Upon approval of the transmittal letter, the researcher started to gather 5 possible patients in Banaglaum who were admitted for substance abuse. Respondents were taken from the line list of substance abusers given by the chief nurse. The researcher made sure to obtain an informed consent and the explanation of confidentiality of information prior to conducting a face-to-face interview with the respondents. The researcher started to do assessment and render care to the clients. The length of care was based on the good prognosis manifested by the client.

The researcher utilized the interview type of data collection. Please refer to Figure 1. More specifically, the type of interview that was used is the in-depth or the qualitative interview wherein a process of interview was made. An extensive probing was conducted mostly containing open-ended questions. The researcher also utilized a systematized modified tool derived from mental status examination in Psychiatry which also assesses the overall well being of the client during the course of the interview.

Each question was explained well, making sure that the clients answer to questions is with utmost efficiency and accuracy. After each interview, the questionnaire was gathered and checked. The thematic qualitative analysis of data was extensively used to organize pertinent data.

The respondents of the study were subjected to different types of biopsychosocial interventions which are deemed appropriate to their conditions. These include: (1) strategic/interactional therapies which attempt to identify the client's strengths and actively create personal and environmental situations where success can be achieved; (2) behavioral self-control training approach that focuses on the substance abuser and his attempts to reduce or stop substance abuse either on his own or with the aid of a therapist; (3) narrative therapy emerges from social constructivism, which assumes that events in life are inherently ambiguous, and the ways in which people construct meaning are largely influenced by family, culture, and society; (4) group psychotherapy which is defined as a meeting of two or more people for a common therapeutic purpose or to achieve a common goal; (5) brief humanistic and existential therapies done by the therapist used a vast range of approaches to come up with therapeutic goals and intervention strategies; and (6) expressive therapies, utilizes artistic expressions

as its core means of treating clients. These interventions have been used in other health care setting to assist substance abuser during rehabilitation process.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Patient E.C. was admitted for the first time on June 15, 2009 because of excessive talking. Two weeks prior to admission, he became disturbed and destroyed many things and belongings. After the intervention, he is oriented in person, place and time and was able to understand more on his present psychiatric and physical condition. His suspiciousness and aggressiveness decreased.

Patient V.B has auditory hallucinations and delusions of grandeur. Upon seeing and interviewing Mrs. V.B, she answers some of questions but shows residual effects of drug use. During interventions, her delusions and hallucinations have significantly disappeared during the course of the therapy and stay in the unit. Her flight of ideas has declined gradually and answers in straightforward, rational manner.

Client G.P. has aggressive behavior and hostility. Upon the interview and physical assessment, client G.P. answers questions well but manifests flight of ideas at times. He is easily distracted to stimuli and constant focus of the conversation was needed to maintain continuity as the client manifest flight of ideas. The client showed signs of (+) alteration in perception and with (+) auditory hallucinations. He is reality oriented but has flight of ideas and looseness of association. The client with the aid of the therapies and medications has been able to improve his condition. His flight of ideas minimized and as well as his auditory hallucinations which is his concern.

Patient A.S. was admitted due to behavioral changes and has been using drugs since he was 15 years old. He started to show psychosis. Upon assessment, client A.S. is incoherent in answering questions. After intervention, the client's attention span has improved gradually. He begins to show trust to the health team which makes it easier for the interventions to set in. His concentration has improved and his distraction has been minimized. His attention span lasted longer than before and listens more to therapies.

Patient J.G. manifests hostility and aggressiveness at times. He is in suicide, homicide and escape precaution.

He is noted to be suspicious and unfriendly. After interventions, he was able to share feelings freely and got points in solving it on his own. The client's behavior and attitude has improved. His suspiciousness and hostility was minimized. His aggressiveness was lessened and is seen talking with other clients. Please refer table 1.

An improved biopsychosocial intervention guide was proposed from the findings of the study. The intervention guide schema was followed duly taking note of the assessment of the 5 substance abusers clients, namely the situational appraisal, Gordon's Functional Health Pattern and Mental Status examination before and after the biopsychosocial interventions. The results are reflected in the schema.

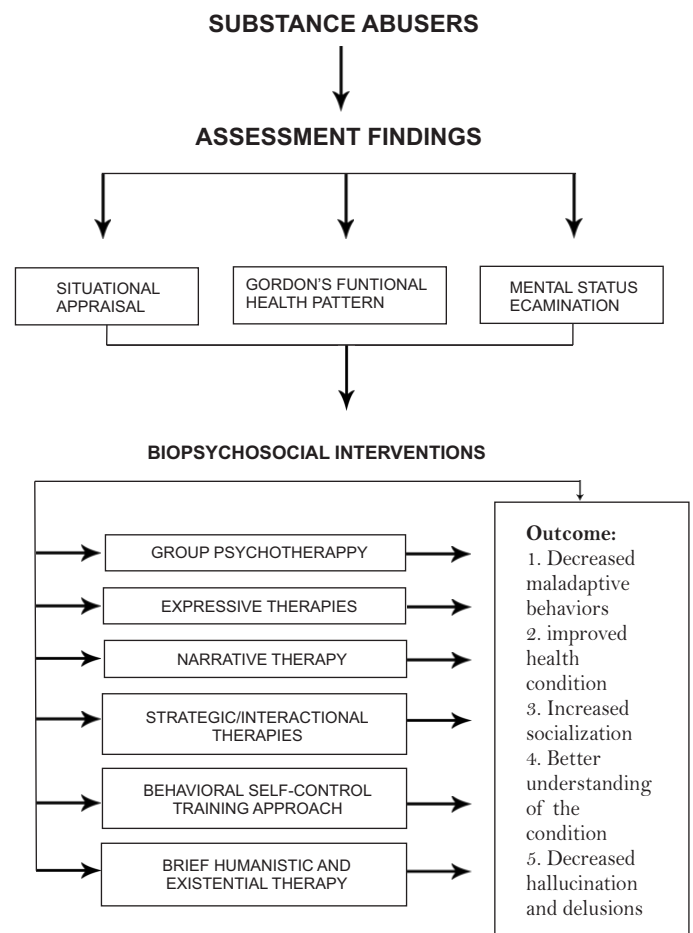


Figure 1: Improved biopsychosocial interventions proposed for early adult substance abusers

Table 1: Proposed Biopsychosocial Intervention for Early Adult Substance Abusers

Area of Concern	Biophysical	Psychological	Social
1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sessions	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Narrative Therapy</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Increase participation of the activities instituted and decrease maladaptive behavior.</p>	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Behavioral Self Control Training</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The patient was active and participative in activity and expressed emotions.</p>	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Strategic and recreational activity</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The patient was seen interacting with other patients and is friendly towards other.</p>
3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> Sessions	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Art Therapy</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The patient expressed behaviors and feeling on the activity</p>	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Group Psychotherapy</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The patient develop positive attitude towards others and displayed reduction of violent actions</p>	<p><b>Strategy/activity:</b> Expressive Therapy</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The patients are participative and were active during the activity reduction in maladaptive behaviors were noted</p>
5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> Sessions	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Dance Therapy</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> The patient's misbehaviors are diminished with an outlet</p>	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Music Therapy</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Patient was able to relax and manage stress and uneasiness.</p>	<p><b>Strategy/Activity:</b> Brief Humanistic and Existential activities</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Decrease hallucination and delusion of the patient</p>

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Biopsychosocial interventions such as strategic/interactional therapies, behavioral self-control training approach, narrative therapy, group psychotherapy, brief humanistic and existential therapies and expressive therapies were found to be effective interventions in caring for substance abuse patients to decrease maladaptive behaviors and improve their conditions.

The following recommendations were drawn out from the findings of the study:

1. The proposed biopsychosocial interventions must be utilized in all psychiatric facility to improve the conditions of the substance abuser patients.
2. Adequate funding must be given to the psychiatric facilities to help the substance abusers recover.
3. Rehabilitation must be done to all substance abuser so that they may function and become useful in the society.

4. Proper care and support must be given to the patients and their family.
5. Future studies must be done that look into the lives of substance abusers

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