

Characteristics of Drug Users and Drug Abuse Policy of Hsinchu County in Taiwan: A Mixed Methods Design

Yan-Yi Chang

Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration,
Chung Hua University, Hsinchu, Taiwan, R.O.C.
No. 707, Sec.2, WuFu Rd., Hsinchu, Taiwan 30012, R.O.C.

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Abstract

The proliferation of Narcotics 3 and Narcotics 4 have been more serious than ever. They are easy to obtain and the fines of the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act are too low. With regard to the use of Ketamine, the age of drug addicts in Hsinchu County have dropped, harming numerous students and causing social problems. Thus, relevant solution is needed. This study used mixed methods to analyze the quantitative statistics collected from the "Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of Hsinchu County Drug Prevention Center" filled out by the Category 3 and 4 drug addicts, and the discussion from the focus group was applied to probe into the legal standards and reasons for drug policy implementation behind the questionnaire. The results of the questionnaire statistics showed that the drug addicts are predominantly males between age 16 and 20 and age 21 and 25, and the most used drug is the Category 3 narcotics Ketamine. Their highest degree was mainly high school or vocational high school, and they are mostly unmarried, live with their families, have a stable job and are supported by families. In addition, most of them took drugs and were first offenders. The discussion of the qualitative focus group discussion showed positive and negative comments on upgrading Category 3 and Category 4 narcotics to Category 2 narcotics. Currently, the courses do not have enforcement power and diversion measures. Specific responsibility and advocacy of drug prevention should be strengthened. The places with high frequency drug use may be appropriately held accountable. In the case of Hsinchu County, the mixed methods of questionnaire and focus group discussion showed that the relevant problems of drug abuse of Category 3 narcotics were also an epitome of national problem which requires the attention of the relevant law enforcement agencies of the Ministry of Justice and central authorities such as Legislative Yuan.

Keywords: Drug Abuser, Drug Prevention Course, Hsinchu County, Mixed Methods, Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act

1. Introduction: The Severity of Category Three and Category Four Narcotics Abuse in Hsinchu County

1.1 Research Purposes

In recent years, the drug abuse situation in Taiwan has become more alarming than ever, where in categories three and four narcotics abuse is now the most rampant problem (Ministry of Education et al., 2015). Hsinchu County is also affected by such abuse, where the age of the abusers is concentrated at the high (vocational) school level. The largest group of abusers of categories 3 and 4 narcotics in Hsinchu County is the group using Ketamine, a category three narcotic, which also happens to pose the greatest impact. Summarizing the main causes of such rampant abuse of categories three and four narcotics we find that, they are easy to obtain and cost less than other drugs, additionally, students have curiosity and easily bend under peer pressure. Therefore, this study focuses on the causes of categories three and four narcotics abuse. To further understand the root causes of categories three and four narcotics abuse, and to explore the formation of their background factors, this study performed an analysis based on the data collected from the "Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County", and organized a focus group discussion paneled by experts and scholars. Every county (city) of the nation is affected by categories three and four narcotics, and it is fair to say that Hsinchu County is no exception. This study provided relevant discussions and offered recommendations specifically on the drug dependency of categories three and four narcotics abusers in Hsinchu County, and attempted to offer relevant solutions to categories three and four narcotics abuse.

2. Research Design and Data Collection

This study adopted the Mixed Method, as proposed by Creswell (2009), which is an explanatory design with its basis on a continuous design in explanation that employs the use of a quantitative statistical questionnaire to collect data for statistical analysis, then a qualitative discussion is conducted to explain the quantitative data of narcotics statistics. A description is listed below:

2. 1. Quantitative Statistical Questionnaire

Firstly, the “Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County” was used for the quantitative research method of this study. Its methodology is rooted on the basis of Positivism, the scientific method of which is built on the cognitive content of experience, resulting in gaining objective knowledge or recognizing phenomenon. In other words, the statistical survey of the questionnaire is objective. It is clear that the variables, such as abusers' ages and types of narcotics being used, are from objective statistical information. The questionnaire adopted in this study is based on the information provided by drug abusers in the “Drug-use Hazards Course Attendance List” under the regulations of the “Penalty Standard and Course-Attending Measures for Drug Abuse Prevention”. Due to the relevant regulations concerning information protection, and the difficulty in obtaining this data, it took from May to September of 2014 to collect this data. The total number of samples collected is 148. The background and attributes of this statistical data are objective data, and may be used as the topic of exploration for the focus group discussion.

2. 2. Qualitative Focus Group Discussion

Secondly, the basis of adopting qualitative focus discussion for this study is rooted in the methodology of Hermeneutic, which theorizes that knowledge, which is rooted in human interpretation, is subjective. The focus group discussion was held on September 12, 2014, with the scholarly participation of professors of the Central Police University as the primary attendants. The discussion began with the first phase of exploration on the quantified statistics of the sources of the drug-abuse problem with further exploration expanding into the analyses of drug-use frequency and family income, as well as the exploration of objective data on the statistical analysis of drug abusers. This study found, amidst the analyses, that the issues must be traced back to the original substance prevention policy and legislative regulations, i.e. the root cause that affects the development of categories three and four narcotics.

Summarizing the above, this study compiled the figure below to explain the social phenomenon of the drug-abuse issues, using the information obtained from the objective quantitative data and the subjective qualitative discussion.

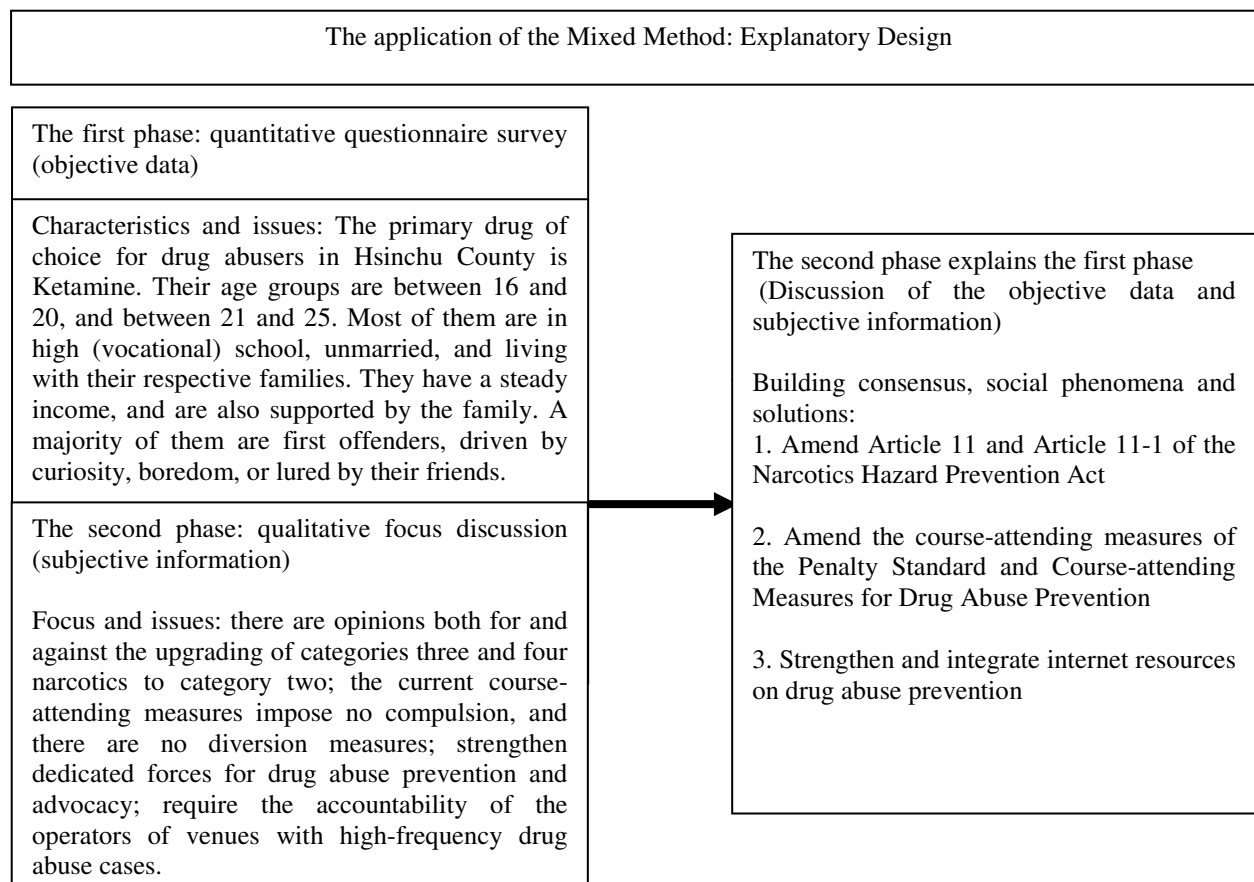


Figure 1. The Application of the Mixed Methods: the Integration of Quantitative Statistical Questionnaire and Qualitative Focus Group Discussion

2.3 Literature review on Drug Abuse Prevention Centers

Firstly, there is very little interest paid to the research topics related to Drug Abuse Prevention Centers in Taiwan, and there are very few researchers in this field.

Concerning the aspect of drug abuse within the categories three and four narcotics and drug abuse prevention centers, Sheu et al. (2015) mentioned, “the statistics of the Criminal Investigation Bureau of the National Police Agency, the Ministry of the Interior, show that since the amendment of the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act, there is an annual increase in penalty cases concerning categories three and four narcotics, particularly, in category three narcotics. There were 8,474 cases in 2010, 11,704 cases in 2011, 18,342 cases in 2012, and by 2013, the number had increased to 26,820, showing a rapid growth. A majority of these cases belong to category three narcotic-Katamine; while a few cases belong to category four narcotics.” In other words, the use of Katamine by the drug abusers has created a severe impact on individuals, families, and society as a whole.

Researchers in relevant discussions concerning organization placement and policy design are Chang, Wang, and Wu (2011). In addition, researchers in policy network related studies are Lin (2010), Yen, and Lin (2011). Researchers in the studies relating to the counseling of and following-up on out-of-prison drug abusers are Jan, and Chen (2007), and Tu et al. (2014). From the perspective of functioning, there is the research of See et al. (2012) on the recidivism rate of addiction-rehabilitated persons. Furthermore, in the studies concerning the exploration and analyses of existing operations and future functions, Wang (2010) may be the only representative. Overall, none of the aforementioned literature was conducted with the intent of finding an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of drug abuse prevention in the Drug Abuse Prevention Center in Hsinchu County. Additionally, the aforementioned literature invariably pointed out one of the most important issues, that is, even though the central government has established local drug abuse prevention centers, the shortage of dedicated manpower within the organizations, inadequate budgets, and strenuous circumstances in the execution of these functions contributes to a severe and wide-spread abuse of categories three and four narcotics. Based on these findings, after reviewing relevant research, this study applied the Mixed Methods of quantitative study and qualitative study as the basis for a comprehensive analysis and exploration of the social phenomena of wide-spread narcotics abuse, particularly in categories three and four narcotics, in Hsinchu County.

3. Content Analysis: the Descriptive Statistics of the Quantitative Study and the Focus Group Discussion of the Qualitative Study

Relevant statistical tables, after removing protected information obtained from the "Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County" in accordance with the Personal Information Protection Act, such as: name, ID number, date of birth, cell phone number, permanent address, current address, place of arrest, and primary contact, are listed as follows:

3.1. Analysis of Quantitative Questionnaire Descriptive Statistics: the First Phase

On data collected from the Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County from May to September in 2014, as completed by 148 people, relevant statistical analysis was performed with the following results:¹

Table 1. Drug Use Frequency

Drug Use Frequency	First-time	Second-time	Third-time	Fourth-time (including more than four times)	Blank/Nonresponse	Total
Month						
Total (May to September)	90	31	7	6	14	148

Table 1 shows that there were 90 people who used drugs for the first time, 31 people used drugs for the second time, 7 people for the third, 6 people for the fourth time, and there were 14 people who left this item Blank/Nonresponse. It shows that most of the people were first offenders; however, there were many people who used drugs for the second time, showing a trend of repeated drug use. Next, the statistics table concerning gender is listed below:

Table 2. Gender

Gender	Male	Female	Blank/Nonresponse	Total
Month				
Total (May to September)	129	15	4	148

¹ The original form of the “Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County” does not have English letters next to the selections. These letters are added to the Tables by the author of this study for the convenience of discussion.

Table 2 shows that most drug users were male. There are 129 male, 15 female, while 4 people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. Concerning marital status, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 3. Marital Status

Marriage Month	Single	Married (forthcoming divorce)	Cohabiting	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Blank/ Nonresponse	Total
Total (May to September)	126	13	2	0	7	0	0	148

The data in Table 3 shows that most of the drug abusers were single, 126 persons, followed by a total of 13 people in married status (including people with forthcoming divorce); while there were 2 people in cohabitation, and 7 people who were divorced. Concerning education, the table is listed below:

Table 4. Education

Education Month	Illiterate	Elementary	Junior High	High (vocational) school	College	Graduate and above	Blank/ Nonresponse	Total
Total (May to September)	0	2	31	108	7	0	0	148

Table 4 shows that most of the users, a total of 108 people, had a high (vocational) school level education. It is worthy of attention that 31 drug users had a junior high school level education, while 7 had a college level education. Currently, most of the drug abusers are still at the high school level, followed by junior high school level, showing low levels of education in general. Concerning health status of the drug abusers, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 5. Drug Abusers' Health Status

Health Month	Good	Poor	Diseased-AIDS	Diseased-Liver disease	Diseased-Stomach Problems	Others	Blank/ Nonresponse	Total
Total (May to September)	127	17	0	0	0	1	3	148

Table 5 shows that the majority of the drug users, 127 people, were in good health. There were 17 people who believed that they were in poor health, while one person checked "others". The reason for poor health may be attributed to drug use. Concerning employment status, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 6. Employment Status

Employment Month	Have a long-term steady job	Temporary worker	Unemployed	Others	Blank/ Nonresponse	Total
Total (May to September)	108	15	18	4	3	148

Table 6 shows that the majority of the drug users, 108 persons, had a long-term steady job. There were 15 people with temporary jobs, while 18 people were unemployed, 4 people checked "others", and 3 people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. The most noteworthy item is the number of people without employment. If they had a craving for drugs and no job to support the habit, criminal misconduct can occur, causing danger to society in general. Concerning the financial resources, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 7. Financial Resources

Financial Resources Month	No resources A	Provided by the family B	Provided by friends C	Provided by job income D	Others E	Blank/ Nonresponse	Total	Remark (The code for no resource is A; the code for resources that are provided by the family is B, and so on.)
Total (May to September)	17	6	0	114	5	5	147	One person checked both B and D.

The data in Table 7 shows that there were 17 people without financial resources, 6 people were provided for by their families, 114 people had resources from their jobs, 5 people checked "others", while 5

people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. It shows that the majority of the drug abusers were working. Concerning family income, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 8. Family Income

Family Income	Good	Fair	Poor	Urgent need for assistance	Others	Blank/ Non response	Total
Month							
Total (May to September)	36	74	27	7	1	3	148

Table 8 shows that 36 people rated their family income as good, 74 people rated fair, 27 people rated poor, 7 people rated needing assistance, one person checked “others”, while one person left it Blank/Nonresponse. It is noteworthy that those who rated poor probably had low incomes, and their families were also poor. Concerning family support, see below:

Table 9. The level of family support

The level of family support	Good	Fair	Poor	Others	Blank/ Nonresponse	Total
Month						
Total (May to September)	37	87	17	5	2	148

Table 9 shows that 37 people rated family support as good, 87 people rated fair, 17 people rated poor, 5 people selected “others”, while 2 people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. The 17 people who rated poor family support could likely give up on themselves due to the lack of support, resulting in worse drug abuse behavior. Concerning residence status, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 10. Residence Status

Residence Status	Live alone	Live with the family	Live with friends	Others	Blank/ Nonresponse	Total
Month						
Total (May to September)	16	122	6	2	2	148

According to the data shown in Table 10, 16 people lived alone, 122 people lived with their families, 6 people lived with friends, 2 people checked “others”, while 2 people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. Those living alone or living with friends are the most likely abusers to find companions with whom to use drugs. Whereas, drug abusers who live with their families were most likely be using drugs without the knowledge of their families.

Next, concerning the type of narcotics used, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 11. Type of Narcotics

Narcotics type	Heroin A	Morphine B	Cocaine C	Amphetamines D	Marijuana E	Ecstasy or MDMA F	Ketamine G	Amobarbital or Secobarbital H	FM2 I	RU486 J	Eunodin K	ValiumL	Ativan M	Erimine N	Blank/Nonresponse	Total	Remark
Month																	
Total (May to September)	1	0	0	0	0	0	137	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	141	By adding 7 people who used multiple types of narcotics, the total is 148.

Table 11 shows that one person was using A, F and G at the same time; one person was using A and G; one person was using D and G; one person was using A and D; while one person selected categories two and three narcotics without revealing drug types. One person was using A, D and G at the same time, and one person was using D, F and G. There were a total of 7 people using multiple types of drugs. The majority of people were using Ketamine, the category three narcotic, with a total of 137 people. There was one person using Heroin, and three people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. The Table shows that the most common type of drug being abused is still a category three narcotic, Ketamine.

Concerning the methods of administering drugs, there are inhalation or ingestion, injection and others, as listed below:

Table 12. Methods of administering drugs

Methods of administering drugs Month	Inhalation or ingestion	Injection	Others	Blank/Nonresponse	Total
Total (May to September)	108	10	13	17	148

Table 12 shows that a total of 108 people chose the inhalation or ingestion method to use drugs, followed by 10 people using the injection method. Thirteen people checked "others", while 17 people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. Concerning their age when using drugs for the first time, the statistical table is listed below:

Table 13. Age of 1st time drug-use

Age of 1st time use Month	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	Blank/Nonresponse	Total
Total (May to September)	1	69	44	6	7	3	18	148

Table 13 shows that one person checked the 11-15 age group, 69 people checked the 16-20 age group, 44 people checked the 21-25 age group, 6 people checked the 26-30 age group, 7 people checked the 31-35 age group, 3 people checked the 36-40 age group, totaling 130 people, excluding 18 people who left this item Blank/Nonresponse. The majority of these users are in the age group between 16 and 20, followed by users in the 21-25 age group. The statistical data shows that the drug-use population is getting younger.

Concerning the records of rehabilitation or institutionalized rehabilitation, there were the categories of observation rehabilitation, compulsory rehabilitation, and medical institutions for rehabilitation, as analyzed in the table below:

Table 14. Records on rehabilitation or institutionalized rehabilitation

Record Month	Observation rehabilitation n A	Compulsory rehabilitation n B	Medical institution rehabilitation n C	Serving prison terms D	No record E	Blank/Nonresponse	Total	Remark
Total (May to September)	5	1	1	0	131	5	143	By adding 5 people who had multiple drug rehabilitation records, the total number of people is 148.

Table 14 shows that there are 131 people without records, revealing that a majority of the drug abusers do not have any records, but only police arrests due to their use of category three or four narcotics, rather than category one or two. In addition, 5 people had an observation rehabilitation record, one person had a compulsory rehabilitation record, one person had a medical rehabilitation record, while 5 people left this item Blank/Nonresponse. There were 5 people who had multiple rehabilitation records including prison terms (One person had one Record A and two Record Ds. One person had two Record As, two Record Bs, and three Record Ds. One person had one Record A, and two Record Bs. One person had two Record Ds. One person had one Record A, and one Record D.)

Concerning the reasons for using drugs, there are: curiosity, lured by friends, depression from work, unhappy marriage, pleasure seeking and others. The statistical table is listed below:

Table 15. Reasons for using drugs

Reason Month	Curiosity A	Lured by friends B	Depression from work C	Unhappy marriage D	Pleasure seeking E	Escape F	Show-off G	Boredom H	Feeling hopeless about the future I	Stimulation J	Stimulating sexual power K	Ignorance about drugs L	Ignorance about laws M	Blank/Nonresponse	Total	Remark
Total (May to September)	86	6	3	1	0	3	0	7	2	2	0	3	3	7	123	By adding Twenty-five people who indicated that there were multiple reasons for using drugs, the total is 148.

The data in Table 15 shows that 3 people had reasons A and B; one person checked reasons A, B and H; one person had reasons A, B, H, I, J, L and M; two people had reasons A and L; one person had reasons E, H and J; one person had reasons A and L; one person had reasons A and B, one person had reasons A, B, C, D, J and M; one person had reasons A and C; one person had reasons A, D, F, and I; one person had reasons A and B; one person had reasons A and F; one person had reasons B, D, and F; one person had reasons I and M; 7 people had reasons A and B; and one person had reasons A and H, totaling 25 people who had multiple reasons for using drugs. The most popular reason for using drugs is "curiosity" with 86 people, followed by "lured by friends" with 6 people, "depression from work" is checked by 3 people, "unhappy marriage" - one person, "escape" - 3 people, "boredom" - 7 people, "Feeling hopeless about the future" - 2 people, "Stimulation" - 2 people, "Ignorance about drugs" - 3 people, "Ignorance about laws" - 3 people, and 7 people left this item Blank/Nonresponse, a total of 123 people in addition to the 25 people who had multiple reasons. Lastly, concerning protective probation, the table is listed below:

Table 16. Protective probation

Month	Protective probation	Yes	No	Blank/Nonresponse	Total
Total (May to September)		11	118	19	148

The above mentioned table shows the majority of people, 118, did not have protective probation, followed by 11 people with protected probation experience, and 19 people who left this item Blank/Nonresponse.

Summarizing aforementioned statistical data relating to the drug-use habit in Hsinchu County, the majority of drug abusers were male of the 16-20 age group, followed by the 21-25 age group, using ketamine, a category three narcotic. The majority of drug users' were in high (vocational) school, unmarried, lived with their families, had a steady job, and were supported by their families. In addition, their primary method of drug use was inhalation or ingestion, with ketamine as the primary choice for drug use. Most of the drug users were the first time users, and their primary reason for using drugs was curiosity, followed by boredom and lured by friends. Most of the drug users did not have rehabilitation or institutionalized rehabilitation experience, neither did they have protection probation records. This study found that the cause for the spread of ketamine abuse in Hsinchu County is consistent with the research conducted by Sheu et al. (2015), concerning the widespread use of category three and four narcotics.

In general, conventional research will formulate analyses and conclusions after obtaining statistical results from a survey. According to the philosophy of applied mixed methods, it is necessary to find the root

cause behind the reasons that formulated the statistics in the quantitative survey analysis. This is why a qualitative focus discussion is needed to explore the background causes, which generated the statistics. Therefore, this study utilized focus discussions, wherein experts and scholars discussed the reasons for the drug abusers' characteristics in Hsinchu County and the background factors that contributed to these characteristics, and thus formulated the basis of discussion of the mixed methods.

3. 2. Content Analysis of the Focus Group Discussions: the Second Phase

Next, this study continued its exploration within the context of Hsinchu County's quantitative statistical analysis, and found that the solutions to drug abuse do not rely simply on attending the course and filling out the "Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County". The reasons behind the expanding abuse still lie in the flaws of legal norms and policy formulation. Therefore, this study invited experts and scholars from the Central Police University to discuss issues relating to the most prevalent drug abuse in Hsinchu County - categories three and four narcotics. A brief description is listed below:

- (1). The raising of the narcotics classification issue: concerning the suggestions of raising ketamine to category two, some commentators suggested that the facts, that ketamine is cheap, easy to obtain, and if possession is found to be less than 20 grams, criminal penalties can be avoided, all contribute to the rampant use of ketamine. As such, the "Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act" also contributes to the ketamine abuse. While opposition suggested that there are too many emergent narcotics under categories three and four, rendering the act ineffective in control and reducing its power to discourage categories three and four narcotics abuse.
- (2). Issues relating to the course: concerning the perspective of a lack of compulsion or enforcement, current legal actions are limited to administrative fines and course attendance, even if the abusers are repeat offenders. Furthermore, there are no effective strategies for cases where abusers chose not to attend the course, resulting in a continuous rise of drug abuse cases due to the lack of an effective deterrent. For those drug abusers who attended the course, instead of getting rid of the habit, they become acquainted with more drug abusers and gain an alternative source for furthering their drug abuse experience.
- (3). Dedicated forces for drug abuse prevention and advocacy: the Drug Abuse Prevention Center has no granted legal power, and there is no relevant regulation authorizing case coordinators to restrict drug abusers. Another problem is the lack of appropriate community intervention. Meanwhile, the majority of the heads of counties/cities do not place emphasis on the functions of a Drug Abuse Prevention Center. In terms of advocacy, the slogans used are generally too rigid, and unable to motivate drug abusers.
- (4). Issues relating to imposing accountability on operators of high-frequency drug-abuse venues and hotspots: currently, the owners of high-frequency drug-abuse venues, such as night clubs, KTVs, internet cafes, motels, and arcades, have no imposed accountability or joint liability, so little in fact, that most of the drug dealers are distributing drugs with impunity within these venues.

4. A Discussion on Taiwan's Categories Three and Narcotics Four: the Application of the Mixed Methods of Quantitative Questionnaire and Qualitative Focus Group Discussion

This study compiled the results from the afore-mentioned questionnaire completed by the drug users and the opinions collected from the focus discussion attended by the experts and scholars into three major items listed below:

4. 1. Amend Article 11 and Article 11-1 of the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act

First, the data of the quantitative questionnaire, "Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County" shows that there is a trend for an increasing population of ketamine drug use, and a decrease in the age group. The problems of the rampant use of and the hazards of ketamine have become a primary issue in Hsinchu County. The course questionnaire of Hsinchu County shows that a majority of the drug users were driven by curiosity.

Second, concerning the experts' and scholars' focus group discussion, there are various aspects to be considered on policy decisions and regulation formulations due to the nature of the issues and the effectiveness of solutions. For example, the complexity of substance prevention policy of some scholars proposed that the classification of ketamine should be upgraded from a category three narcotic to a category two, while some scholars suggested a contrary idea, that ketamine should not be upgraded to category two narcotic. The reason for opposing the idea of upgrading ketamine from a category three to a category two narcotic is that there will be new emergent narcotics replacing ketamine. Therefore, upgrading category three narcotics to category two narcotics is a solution that is too slow to be effective.

The overall analysis of using the mixed methods of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods shows that the trend of increased drug use population indicates a very serious problem, i.e. what is prompting the rampant use of category three and four narcotics? This study deduces that the provisions of Article 11 and Article 11-1 of the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act may be the cause. Therefore, this study recommends that

amendments to Article 11 and Article 11-1 of the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act must be made. The penalty should not just cover attending a course and paying an administrative fine for category three or four narcotics drug users, when found to possess less than 20 grams of drugs. A judge should be given more discretionary judicial power over the said penalty stipulations. Even if drug users are found to be in possession of less than 20 grams of drugs, but are already addicts, they should still be bound by the punishment and compulsory rehabilitation regulations. In addition, if the course attending order is replaced by the freedom-depriving penalty, or if ketamine is re-classified as a category two narcotic, where the abusers shall face the same compulsory rehabilitation and rehabilitation intervention, the prevention efforts will be more effective.

4. 2. Amend the Course-attending Measures of the Penalty Standard and Course-attending Measures for Drug Abuse Prevention

First, the information gathered from the “Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County” shows that many drug users have attended the courses, and that ample information is gathered, so we may understand the reasons why the drug users were attracted to using drugs, their age groups, family finance, and others. In the focus discussion phase of the study, experts and scholars are found to be in agreement that the current administrative courses are ineffective, and that a more concrete course method should be adopted. There should be family support, in addition to the attendance of the drug users by themselves. For example, more responsibilities should be placed on the guardians, where parents are required to attend the course. If a family cannot function, the function of social resources must be introduced.

Second, the ineffective deterrence of current penalties on categories three and four narcotics cases, which only impose an administrative fine and course attendance, is related to the stipulations of the Penalty Standard and Course-attending Measures for Drug Abuse Prevention, where drug users are not required to assume more responsibility. It is not deemed as a burden, or an obligation, by the drug users, that they are only required to pay administrative fines and attend courses.

The overall analysis of using the mixed methods of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods shows that although drug abusers of categories three and four narcotics are required to attend a course, there are no alternatives if the drug users fail to attend, or if they are repeat offenders. By observing the method of such a course, it is fair to deduce that the regulations rendered in the “Penalty Standard and Course-attending Measures for Drug Abuse Prevention” do not provide any power of deterrence. Therefore, this study recommends that there should be more classifications and alternatives provided, courses should be held in smaller groups, and the curriculum should be more diversified in order to achieve tangible effects. This study recommends that alternative methods should be offered for repeat offenders. Meanwhile, the parents of the drug users should also take on corresponding responsibilities, such as compulsory attendance at the courses along with the offenders.

4. 3. Strengthen and Integrate Network Resources on Drug Abuse Prevention

First, concerning the “Drug Prevention Course Questionnaire of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center of Hsinchu County”, it seems that the people who organize the drug prevention course are still the members of the local Drug Abuse Prevention Center. If the course is deemed to be ineffective, it is bound to be a blow to the morale of the members in the local drug abuse prevention center, and to the determination of police in seizing drug abusers of categories three and four narcotics.

Second, the analysis of the focus discussion reveals that the integration scheme of the drug prevention network has fallen into disarray and that each agency is acting on its own accord. The Drug Abuse Prevention Center of the local government has no legal authority, and so, the center cannot truly implement tracking and counseling. To truly implement effective tracking, it is still up to the efforts of the police. However, the never-ending cycle of arresting drug abusers of categories three and four narcotics may lead to police fatigue in effectively enforcing the law. Meanwhile, to avoid wasting or uneven distribution of available resources, local Drug Abuse Prevention Centers should establish a list of resources that are available within their respective jurisdictions in order to help provide such resources and services that are in close proximity to each case. However, such a scenario is facing some difficulties, because the establishment of a resource list within the jurisdiction involves the cooperation of police, health, and education authorities.

The overall analysis of using the Mixed methods of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods shows that drug abusers simply ignore the Drug Abuse Prevention Center, which is also deduced by other relevant research reviews, with the primary reasons attributed to the facts that only the police have statutory power, and that the members of the prevention center do not have legal authority. Therefore, this study suggests that members of the Drug Abuse Prevention Center should be provided with a certain level of power, such as being able to order urine screening. Meanwhile, the proportion of rating scores should be expanded when police are exercising tracking and enforcing laws on the high-frequency drug-use venues. It is important to also take precautions that strengthening the joint liabilities of these venues in question may cause “non”-business venues to become drug use hotspots, such as: parks, alley ways or uninhabited areas, resulting in the further spread of

drug use, and deepening the issues that require more police patrols in these areas.

5. Conclusions: Drug Problems and the Application of the Mixed Methods

This study applied the mixed methods to ascertain quantified data through the use of statistical analysis on the drug prevention course questionnaire. The quantified data were then used in the focus discussion to conduct legal and policy explorations. Using these two methods to collect relevant information is effective in overcoming inadequacies of either aspect, while it also reveals the severity of drug-abuse with categories three and four narcotics in Hsinchu County. First, the questionnaire for the categories three and four narcotics drug prevention course shows that: more males in Hsinchu County were drug abusers than females; their primary education level was high (vocational) school; their primary financial resource was their steady jobs; most of them had the characteristics of not being married; they were supported by their family; most of them lived with their family; most of them started using drugs out of curiosity. Along with a curiosity that eventually led them to addiction, they also believed that just using drugs for a few times would not be addictive, particularly with categories three or four narcotics. But the horrifying effects of narcotics are such that, when a drug user starts with category four narcotics, he will be slowly led to category three narcotics. When the addiction becomes stronger, it will require more powerful drugs to overcome the urge. This is when drug users start using category one or two narcotics, or start using drugs that combine all four categories. Second, the primary age group of drug users is between 16 to 20, while the primary drug of choice is a category three narcotic, ketamine, one of the most frequently used narcotics.

Next, the experts and scholars of the focus group discussion explored the issue of elevating the classification of categories three and four narcotics to category two controlled narcotics. Those who approved of the idea believed that such a measure could impose deterrence effects on drug abusers, because categories one and two narcotics are associated with punishment; while those who opposed to the idea believed that elevating ketamine to category one or two would only leave its vacancy to be filled by new emergent narcotics. Next, the focus discussion explored the function of drug abuse prevention courses. It concluded that the course s did not deter drug abusers dependency on drugs; on the contrary, many drug abusers became acquainted with more drug users in the course and gained more knowledge in administering drugs, rendering the course as an alternative "experience" communication venue. Meanwhile, the focus discussion also explored the issues concerning: that the penalty applied for drug abuse of categories three and four narcotics has no compulsion force; its supportive measures; corresponding measures on the ineffectiveness of the course ; resource integration; dedicated forces for drug abuse prevention programs; and high-frequency venues for drug abuse and their accountability.

The content of discussion also indicated that due to the increasingly complex nature of problems derived from drug abuse, that these issues are no longer manageable by the Drug Abuse Prevention Center alone. In other words, although this study may be focusing on the drug-abuse problem analysis of just Hsinchu County, the findings also show the inadequacy of legal regulations and policy formulation. In terms of Hsinchu County, both the questionnaire and the focus discussion clearly indicate a rampant use of category three narcotics. Such a phenomenon, abusing category three narcotics, is also a microcosm of national drug abuse issues, which urgently await the relevant law enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Justice, the Legislative Yuan, and other central government agencies to amend the "Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act" and the "Penalty Standard and Course-attending Measures for Drug Abuse Prevention". The future research direction in this paper will be addressed. We suggest to amend the Narcotics Hazard Prevention Act. We propose to increase the burden of the illegal drug use, for example medical counseling and etc. And, the Drug Abuse Prevention Centers are the mission-based organizations, no full-time staff, and no budget. Building the formal organizations are necessary.

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