

Challenges and Coping Strategies among Clients in the National Blue Ocean 3 (NBOS3) Program

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Abstract

This paper discusses the challenges and coping strategies among clients under the National Blue Ocean 3 (NBOS3) program monitored by the *Agensi Anti Dadah Kebangsaan* (AADK). The NBOS3 AADK applies the work therapy using agriculture approach as a treatment to ex-offenders in the government rehab centres. This is a qualitative study using an interview approach. The data was gathered through eight (8) clients from the Cure and Care Rehab Centre (CCRC), Dengkil, Selangor Darul Ehsan. Findings showed that, clients faced three themes of challenges which are; a) psycho-social, b) working environments, and c) job demands. To address these challenges, the clients used two types of coping strategies; a) emotional-focus strategy, and b) problem-solving strategy. The results of the study highlighted the importance of social support and internal values in the social networks among clients in the rehabilitation programs. In addition, stakeholders such as Cure and Care Rehabilitation Centre (CCRC) could create a working committee among the clients themselves in executing the NBOS3 program, thus strengthening their inner values. Future study could identify the effectiveness of social support and internal value among clients under the NBOS3 program. Through the findings, a holistic module that integrates positive social networks, internal values and work therapy could be develop to strengthen programs in the rehab centres.

Keywords: work therapy, client, rehab centre, coping strategy, challenge

1. INTRODUCTION

Current drug abuse activities could provide an overview of the effectiveness of drug addicts programs used in the rehabilitation centre. Fauziah et al. (2017) viewed that, rehabilitation program should focus on the internal aspects of the drug addict itself, alongside with other programs. In other words, the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs should be holistic which incorporates the internal values of the drug addict and the exposure towards the physical activity.

For individuals who engaged in drug abuse, it has been regarded as a complex situation where aspects such as environment, social support, or individual personality are among the contributors to the problem (Nen et al., 2017). Upon completion of rehabilitation program, former drug addicts have to deal back to the society which closely ties with negative stigma. The negative stigma does not only overshadow the opportunity to be accepted in the society, but also their chance into being employed. These obstacles could lead them to become relapse. To overcome these issues among former drug addicts, Hassan and Hamid (2017) viewed that, the recovery approach and policy should consider strengthening inner strength or self-driven modules for the clients during the recovery programs. In such, through these modules, it will help the clients (former drug addict) to prepare themselves. Various self-driven modules have been tested to help the clients during their stay in the rehab centre. For example,

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study conducted by Murad et al. (2016) found that, spiritual approaches helped clients in the rehab centre. In other study conducted by Ghani and Adam (2014) found similar result.

In recent approach, Manning et al. (2017) suggested that, work therapy could have a positive impact on the process of recovering the drug addicts. In work therapy approach, drug addicts are not only given exposure and knowledge related to certain skills during the recovery period, but it also helps them to avoid memory over drugs. At the same time, they also provide them with skills that can help their survival after leaving the rehabilitation centre (Robertson, 2016). In other words, the work therapy acts as a double sword edge. In line with this, Ghani et al. (2015) agrees that, it is important for the clients to be enforced in the work therapy as it does not only provide the workforce skills for them, but to develop their own internal values at the same time.

In Malaysia, the work therapy through agriculture approach has been implemented through the National Blue Ocean Strategy 3 (NBOS3) under the *Agensi Anti Dadah Malaysia (AADK)* starting 1st December 2011. The program involves agricultural projects such as the chili, melon rock, palm oil, pineapple and oyster mushrooms. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss the challenges and coping strategies used by client during their involvement in NBOS3 AADK program.

2. METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative case study approach. Data was gathered using interview method. The interview was conducted at Cure and Care Rehabilitation Centre (CCRC) Dengkil, Selangor Darul Ehsan. A total of eight (8) clients was involved as the informants of this study. Informants are selected based on the main criteria in which the clients who have are involved in the AADK NBOS3 program for a period of at least three months. The selection of clients based on the criteria is intended to enable them to provide information regarding their experience gained in the program. An interview session was conducted for one hour. In the interview session, clients' experience throughout the AADK NBOS3 program was the topic of discussion. The session was recorded. The data was analysed using thematic approach. This paper discusses the challenges faced by clients in this program. In addition, the findings also discussed the coping strategies used by the informants to address the challenges faced by them.

3. RESULTS

There were eight (8) clients under the NBOS3 AADK program involved in the interview session for this study. The clients are ranging in between 23 to 45 years from three races; five Malays, two Indians and one Chinese. For clients, this is their first experience in NBOS3 AADK program. During the interview sessions with clients/informants, three main themes was found related to challenges during their involvement in the program. The three themes are psycho-social challenges, work environments and job demands. To address these challenges, these clients applied two coping strategies; emotional-focus strategy and problem-solving strategy.

3.1 Challenge: Psycho-Social

Through the interview, we found that clients faced challenges in their own emotional context. Negative emotion such as laziness was highlighted as one of the challenges perceived by the clients. Furthermore, besides their own feelings, the relationships with other clients and officers could also be seen as a challenge to the clients in this study. Specifically, clients' emotion and relationship with other people are the two sub-theme classified under the theme of psycho-social.

a. Clients' Emotion

In the interview, informants reported that, emotional aspect played an important role during the execution of NBOS3 program. For example, Informant 6 stated that, negative emotions could also affect their productivity while doing the agriculture project;

"While doing this project, sometimes our mood is not okay. When the mood is good, we can do the work faster. But if the mood is not okay, then we cannot force it." (Informant 6)

b. Social Networks with Other Clients and Officers

Apart from dealing with their emotional challenges, we found that, these clients are facing challenges with other individuals in their social networks too. Through the interview, the client shared that, sometimes it is hard to get people to follow the task given;

"For examples like today, I told other friends," you got to fertilize the crops", but he said no"(Informant 6)

3.2 Challenge: The Working Environment

In the interview, informants stated that, while executing this project, they have to deal with the weather. Interestingly, they perceived that, their emotions were also affected by the weather. Based on this, weather challenges becomes a sub-theme under this theme.

a. Weather Challenges

Interviews with the clients found that, they perceived weather could affect their feelings;

"Sometimes we have to continue with the work in farm even though the weather is too hot. When the weather is hot, I could say that, so does our feeling. "(Informant 2)

3.3 Challenge: Work Demand

Before going into practical, the clients will learn the agriculture skills theoretically. From the interview, they admitted that, implementation of agriculture knowledge into practical could be perceived as a challenge for them. Apart from that, they are also dealing with bug problems. Two sub-topic emerged from this theme are as follows;

a. Applying Agricultural Knowledge to Practical

For these clients, one of the obstacles that they faced while executing the program is applying their knowledge into practical. However, they did admit that failure to apply proper agricultural knowledge will lead to negative impacts on crops;

"When you over fertilise like that, it's hard for us to regain control back because the plant will not be stable. Once you done, the plant will wilt, turn yellow. If one plant is affected, so will the others. For example, if there are 2000 plants, all 2000 will get effected."(Informant 6)

b. Bug Attack

Clients who made the NBOS3 program a success also faced the challenge with bugs and insects during farming;

"Caterpillars and such are not a problem but white flies have become the biggest challenge for us. Sometimes we see a healthy plant but when we look at the plant beside it, we find holes. (Informant 7)

3.4 Coping Strategy to Address the Challenges in NBOS3 Program

In solving a problem or conflict, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) proposed two types of coping strategies, which are emotional-focused and problem-solving. The emotional-focused strategy consists of six styles: social support, self-control, keeping distance, positive reassessment, acceptance of responsibility and avoidance. Furthermore, Sanders et al. (2007) stated that, coping strategy using problem-solving method is by modifying situations that perceived as stressful. The two strategies of enforcement are dependent on the type of problem encountered. In this study, we found that, clients implemented these two types of coping strategies to address their challenges.

i. Emotional Focused Strategy: Social Support

In the interview, the clients mentioned that, they perceived other people in the CCRC (rehab centre) as their family. They believed that any problems can be solved through co-operation among family members while executing their work based on task-allocation with a sense of mutual support.

"We use the concept of family, either you are the clients or the officer. We do all the work together. We work together, doing all the fertilizing, watering, removing grass as well as cleaning."(Informant 6)

Furthermore, besides the family concept expressed by clients, the clients also mentioned that they work hand in hand with other members in the agriculture activity regardless what position they held in the rehab centre. This is informed by Informant 5 who believes that the head of NADOS3 AADK (known as Ramrod) is also working together to carry out the agricultural task;

"Even if he is a Ramrod, he (referring to Informant 6) still has to work with us. This is the family concept. Even though he is our leader, but he works together with us."(Informant 5)

ii. Emotional Focused Strategy: Acceptance of Responsibilities

In the interview, the client also shared that the sense of responsibility does exist within them especially for individuals who serve as group leaders. For Informant 7, advices received from the officer will make him become more cautious in the action taken;

"He will not scold others. He will only be talking to me to advice others, as I am the Ramrod. When I advise my team, I will make sure that it won't happen again."(Informant 7)

iii. Emotional Focused Strategy: self-control

Through the interview, it was found that the clients also implement a self-regulatory strategy of self-control where it is closely related to the individual's ability to control thoughts, emotions and behaviour while in unpleasant situation. For clients, overcoming a strong mental problem is necessary;

"Our mental need to be strong, we have to be patient. For example, if we are interested, we will try hard to produce results. We have to do the work patiently, slowly. We have to, if we want a better result in this program."(Informant 2)

iv. Emotional Focused Strategy : positive reassessment

Through the interview, the client concluded that, the negative emotions that existed during the NBOS3 activity were often resolved through reevaluation. Informant 6 viewed that, they are individuals who has their own role in making the NBOS3 project a success. For them, the effort should come from themselves;

"These things can't be forced. To success of this project comes from us." (Informant 7)

v. Problem-solving strategy: try and error method

Informants also shared their view on farming issues. Whenever they faced issues concerning the farm such as pest attacks, they and their officer will implement the try-and-error method;

"For white flies, we and the officer will plant corn around the chili trees. So the insects will attack the corns, but not the chili. The idea is proven to be a success."(Informant 7)

4. DISCUSSION

This research found out that, clients in the NBOS3 AADK program faced challenges within themselves, social network and work environment. Clients' emotion plays an important part in the work-therapy. As suggested by Srivasta and Tang (2015), individuals that have interest and high determination to make things work, will try to overcome the situation through the respective action strategy. On the other hand, clients who do not have any previous exposure in agricultural activities, the interest towards the NBOS3 AADK program can be cultivated through social support.

Furthermore, this research managed to uncover that clients faced challenges in applying the knowledge related to agriculture into practical. Specifically, for these clients, the challenges in NBOS3 AADK were in measuring the fertiliser parameter as well as attacks from pest. To overcome these challenges, clients in this program reported that, social support as one of the keys to address the issues. From the interview, good relationship with their officers as well as with other clients could be seen as their social support in the rehab centre. Furthermore, this study found that the term of “family concept” could help in cultivating positive values among clients, hence lead to strengthening their self-esteem. Similar to the view of Wegmen et al. (2017), social support among the community of the rehabilitation centre is important where it does not only help them communicate in a healthy manner, but it is also a platform to cultivate self-confidence. For drug addicts who receive social support, especially from their own group in the recovery program, this situation has a big potential to help clients overcome the addiction problem.

Besides that, in this research, the clients’ negative emotions such as feeling lazy and tired are some of the challenges in executing the agricultural activities. This situation also lean support to the social support in the social network of the rehabilitation centre as their coping strategy to overcome these challenges. For the NBOS3 AADK clients, the use of the coping strategy depends on the issues they faced. For example, clients applied a strategy that used positive communication between themselves and the officers to solve issues regarding crops. This situation is in line with the views of Bireda and Pillay (2018) who sees openness in discussion is important to solve problems particularly when it involves group activities. On the other hand, for the drug addict group in this research, they also show that communicating openly and being ready to discuss is one of the contributors toward the success of the recovery program.

Aside from that, clients under the NBOS3 AADK program seems to apply coping strategy through the acceptance of responsibility. Through the interview, clients were aware that the success of the NBOS3 AADK project depends on the commitment coming from the clients and the officers. From this result, it showed that, the sense of responsibility towards a project or program has been cultivated through the work therapy when the clients were involved in the project. Through the sense of responsibility towards an act, this situation could foster a self-driven commitment to solve problems faced by the drug addict. For drug addicts, the recovery program which includes physical skills and good support could foster positive internal values to help them curbing the addiction problems (Ibrahim et al. 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

In short, this study has identified the challenges among clients under the NBOS3 AADK program. At the same time, our result found that these clients adapted coping strategies to address the challenges. This study has identified a conclusive support on the understanding on work therapy using agriculture approach in helping drug addicts to develop their working skills and inner values. Through these approaches, clients in the rehab centre were not only given knowledge and skill to run an agricultural project, but in the same time strengthening their interaction in the networks. The conclusions presented here may be applicable to assist stakeholders in providing more appropriate module in the work therapy. This study suggested that, by having supportive environment and knowledge sharing among clients and CCRC officers, these elements could help clients to be more confident in themselves, thus leading them to a well-functioning person. The challenge for future studies will be on the effectiveness of work therapy among clients who have been released from the rehab centre. Clients not only will be facing more challenges in the context of society, but also in the job demand. Therefore, the answer to the significant effect of work therapy in curbing their addiction and the implementation of working skill after being release from the rehab centre awaits in the future research.

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