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## Group social work in psychological support for mentally disordered people in drug addiction rehabilitation: Case of rehabilitation facility no. 2, Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam

Duyen Thi NGUYEN, Dung Dao NGUYEN, Phuong Thi HOANG, Quynh Nhu Thi DOAN and Ly Thi NGUYEN

### ABSTRACT

*This study assessed the status of social work in providing psychological support for people with mental disorders who are undergoing drug rehabilitation at Rehabilitation Facility No. 2, Thanh Hoa province. A mixed-methods research approach was employed, involving a quantitative survey conducted to 102 participants (referred to as students) and in-depth interviews with eight students and three staff members. The results showed that students faced many complex psychological challenges, notably being easily influenced (51.0%) and having low self-esteem and an inferiority complex (38.2%). Their greatest need was for psychological counselling/consultation (57.8%). Although students actively participated in and highly appreciated group activities, their actual effectiveness was limited. The main factors affecting the intervention's effectiveness included staff's professional knowledge (83.3%) and the social environment, especially stigma (87.3%). The study affirms the urgency of professionalizing group social work activities (i.e., standardising intervention procedures and enhancing staff qualifications). It proposes integrated solutions, from professional training for staff to coordination with families and communities to improve the effectiveness of rehabilitation for people struggling with drug addiction.*

**KEY TERMS:** drug addiction treatment, group social work, mental disorders, psychological support, Thanh Hoa.

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## INTRODUCTION

Drug addicts have personality defects, deviations, or have personality disorders, some even have extreme degeneration. Limiting and preventing drug abuse is a highly urgent task for departments, branches, organisations, and the whole society. Implementing the policy of Thanh Hoa province, schools, camps, and centres have been established to detoxify, educate personality, and create jobs for drug addicts. According to statistics as of December 14, 2024, in Thanh Hoa province, there are 6,207 drug addicts with management records, and the number of suspected drug addicts is about 3,000 people. The number of people living in the community is 5,326; the number of people detained in temporary detention camps and temporary detention houses is 172; and the number of people being treated at compulsory drug rehabilitation facilities in the province is 709. Decision No. 1295/QD-UBND dated May 5, 2014 of the People's Committee of Thanh Hoa province on the establishment of "Treatment Center No. 2 of Quan Hoa district, Thanh Hoa province; Decision No. 940/QD-UBND dated March 30, 2017 of the Provincial People's Committee on renaming the Treatment - Education - Social Labor Center No. 2 of Thanh Hoa to Thanh Hoa Drug Rehabilitation Center No. 2" Thanh Hoa Drug Rehabilitation Center No. 2 was established to carry out the tasks of drug addiction treatment, education, and rehabilitation for drug addicts. Although specific achievements have been made in management, vocational training, and health care, intervention work, especially intensive psychological therapy to support people with mental disorders, is still a big gap. Recognising that importance, this study was conducted with the following purposes: Research on the current situation and influencing factors of group social work in providing psychological support to people with mental disorders undergoing drug addiction treatment; Proposing measures to improve the effectiveness of group social work activities in providing psychological support to drug addicts.

## BACKGROUND

According to statistics as of December 14, 2021, Thanh Hoa province had 6,207 individuals with records of drug addiction, with an estimated 3,000 additional suspected cases (Citation Needed). Among these, 5,326 people were living in the community, 172 were in temporary detention, and 709 were undergoing treatment at compulsory drug rehabilitation facilities. Rehabilitation Facility No. 2 in Thanh Hoa, a government-run compulsory treatment centre, was established under Decision No. 1295/QD-UBND on May 5, 2014, and later renamed by Decision No. 940/QD-UBND on March 30, 2017. The centre was tasked with drug addiction treatment, education, and rehabilitation for those struggling with substance misuse. Although it has made specific achievements in management, vocational training, and health care, intervention work, especially intensive psychological therapy to support people with mental disorders, remains a significant gap. Recognising this importance, this study was conducted with the following objectives: to investigate the current situation and influencing factors of group social work in providing psychological support to people with mental disorders undergoing drug addiction treatment, and to propose measures to improve the effectiveness of these group social work activities. The role of psychological therapies has long been recognised worldwide. International conventions have emphasised the need for medical supervision for persons struggling with substance misuse to minimise health risks, while acknowledging that some individuals with an addiction exhibit significant behavioural changes, cannot control their cravings, and can pose a danger to themselves and society. Pioneering studies have demonstrated that psychotherapy, through methods such as role-playing, discussion, and performing realistic tasks, can help people with an addiction improve their self-esteem and develop the social skills necessary to resist harmful environmental influences (Botvin, 2000; Mokwena & Makuwerere, 2021). Later studies continued to clarify the close relationship between severe addiction and mood and anxiety disorders, suggesting that counselling and group activities are opportunities for individuals with an addiction to reflect on their problems, helping social workers find the most effective intervention (Grant et al., 2004; Mokwena, K. E., 2015; Monyakane, 2016). In parallel, methods specific to the social work profession, such as case management, have also been analysed and confirmed as suitable for supporting persons struggling with substance misuse (Inciardi et al., 1994). However, a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report notes that access to intensive treatment services by drug users remains low globally (UNODC, 2015; Motsoeneng, 2018), pointing to the urgent need to scale up and improve intervention models.

In Vietnam, research has also made significant strides. Initial studies focused on analysing the psycho-social characteristics of people who use drugs. These individuals often have psychological disorders, leading to deviant behaviours and personality degradation, so their recovery depends mainly on the attitude and responsibility of their families and communities (Government, 2011). Going further, Phan Thi Mai Huong (2005) systematised the prominent personality characteristics and social circumstances of drug-addicted youth, pointing out the relationship between these characteristics and addictive behaviour. Based on that foundation, recent studies have focused on the role and intervention methods of the social work sector. Authors such as Bui Thi Xuan Mai (2013), Luong Thi Hoai Thu (2016), and Pham Van Tu (2016) have affirmed that professional interventions like case

management and group social work are essential, especially when social stigma remains a significant barrier that makes it difficult for persons struggling with substance misuse to access services. These studies emphasise that social work helps people with an addiction enhance their knowledge, capacity, and skills, enabling them to reintegrate into the community. More specific studies, such as Ta Hong Van (2015), have identified the needs and difficulties of people with an addiction in the context of methadone treatment, while Pham Van Tu's study (2016) analysed the current situation and application of group social work at a specific Methadone treatment facility.

Although the above studies have provided a rich theoretical and practical foundation, some significant research gaps remain. First, most works in Vietnam, while mentioning group social work, often only affirm its role or describe the general situation, without delving into the construction and testing of a detailed and systematic intervention process. Second, the group of persons struggling with substance misuse with accompanying mental disorders has particularly complex needs. However, few studies focus specifically on applying group social work to this population in compulsory state rehabilitation facilities, an environment with unique regulations and pressures. Third, factors affecting the effectiveness of group social work in public facilities, particularly those related to policy and staff capacity, require further analysis.

From these gaps, this study was conducted with the following main directions: (1) Systematically evaluate the status of group social work at Rehabilitation Facility No. 2, focusing on the group of students with mental disorders. (2) Conduct an in-depth analysis of multidimensional factors (related to the individuals themselves, social workers, operating mechanisms, and the social environment) affecting the effectiveness of these interventions. (3) Propose solutions to develop an intensive intervention process that is feasible and suitable for the practical conditions at drug rehabilitation facilities in Vietnam.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive, in-depth understanding of the problem. The quantitative method was applied through a questionnaire survey technique to collect general data on the current situation, needs, and influencing factors on a large enough sample. In parallel, a qualitative method using in-depth interviews and group discussions was employed to explore and explain the complex experiences, perspectives, and contexts behind the numbers, thereby enhancing the authenticity and depth of the research results.

### Research site

Thanh Hoa Drug Rehabilitation Centre No. 2, located in Cang Village, Phu Nghiem commune, Quan Hoa District, is a public service unit under the Department of Labour, War Invalids, and Social Affairs. The facility has the function of receiving, managing, and treating drug addicts from 11 mountainous districts of the province. The unit focuses on detoxification, withdrawal, health, and functional recovery for students. The main tasks include education on behavioural and personality change, counselling on HIV/AIDS prevention, and organising labour therapy, vocational training, and career guidance to help students reintegrate into the community. In addition, the facility also carries out production activities to improve the material and spiritual life of drug addicts. With a team of dedicated staff, civil servants, and workers, Drug Rehabilitation Centre No. 2 strives to create a friendly, safe environment that provides the best conditions for students to overcome difficulties, fully recover, and return to a healthy life.

### Sampling procedure and participants

The research data collection period at the No. 2 drug rehabilitation centre was from December 2021 to June 2022.

For the quantitative part, a sample of 102 drug addicts undergoing drug rehabilitation at the facility was selected using a systematic random sampling method. Specifically, a complete list of students was prepared, and the sample was drawn using a sequential, spaced selection method until the required sample size was reached. This sampling frame was chosen to ensure that every student had an equal probability of selection, thereby minimising selection bias and increasing the representativeness of the findings for the facility's general population.

For the qualitative component, 11 participants were selected using a purposive sampling method, comprising eight students who were directly participating in group social work activities and three staff members responsible for management and support (including a unit leader). This method was selected to gather in-depth insights from "information-rich" cases—those most actively involved in the group work process. Participant recruitment continued until data saturation was reached, at which point no new themes or significant information emerged from subsequent interviews.

## Data collection and analysis

Data collection tools were developed and standardised to suit the research objectives. The quantitative tool was a structured survey questionnaire. For qualitative data, in-depth interview outlines and group discussion scenarios were used. Additionally, a document analysis was conducted on reports and legal documents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages). Qualitative data were transcribed and thematically analysed.

## Ethical considerations

To ensure the study's trustworthiness, validity, and reliability, ethical considerations were strictly adhered to. All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and provided informed consent before participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, with all personal identifiers removed from the data. The study was conducted with a commitment to "do no harm," ensuring that the interview process did not cause psychological distress among vulnerable participants.

## FINDINGS

### Characteristics of the study sample

The study conducted a quantitative survey of 102 students, a group of vulnerable subjects with the following demographic characteristics: In terms of age, the majority of students are concentrated in the prime working age, with 91.2% belonging to the group from 18 to 42 years old, showing a trend of younger drug addicts. Regarding marital status, up to 50% were unmarried, and 26.4% were divorced or separated, suggesting a lack of social ties and family support. Notably, this group's educational level is limited: 62.8% have only graduated from junior high school, and a tiny proportion holds a college or university degree. This situation is directly related to occupation, as up to 73.5% were doing freelance, unstable jobs, and 7.8% were unemployed before entering the facility. These characteristics create a complex context that requires comprehensive interventions.

### Psychological status and support needs

To successfully detoxify, in addition to the voluntary spirit and determination of the persons struggling with substance misuse, the professional working capacity, sense of responsibility, and humanity of the cadres and social workers supporting them in detoxification work, on the other hand, the family, community, and social policies are also important factors contributing to the success of the detoxification process.

#### *Psychological characteristics of people undergoing drug addiction treatment*

The psychology of persons struggling with substance misuse is unstable due to their dependence on drugs, both physically and mentally. People struggling with substance misuse are led by the feeling of pleasure, comfort, and euphoria from drugs, so their minds cannot separate themselves and become dependent on them. Without drugs, they suffer from physical pain, their minds are always uncomfortable, irritable, and sad, so they continue to use drugs to find a feeling of excitement or the feeling they had when they had not used drugs. Drugs or psychotropic substances give drug addicts pleasure and euphoria, but they also reduce their interest, narrow their personality, and cause them to misbehave. People struggling with substance misuse find every way to continue using drugs but use them at higher doses to increase the feeling of pleasure and excitement. When the economy is not secure, they commit theft and robbery from their families and the community to have money to use drugs.

Table 1: Psychological characteristics of people undergoing drug addiction treatment

Psychological problems	Rate (%)
Vulnerable, self-conscious	6.9
Easily manipulated	51.0
Closed life, afraid to communicate	24.5
Pessimistic, depressed, lack of will...	28.4
Self-consciousness, regret, and an inferiority complex	38.2
Stress, anxiety, sadness...	35.3
Live passively	27.5
Memory and thinking ability...	25,

Other	0
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According to Table 1, up to 51% of respondents reported that they are easily led and manipulated by others; 38.2% of respondents expressed feelings of inferiority, regret, and guilt towards society and their family; 35.3% stated that they often live in a state of anxiety, stress, and confusion, struggling to overcome it. This state of mind comes from having to face discrimination and risks in the community; 28.4% are pessimistic and depressed; 24.5% choose to live a closed life. Persons struggling with substance misuse, isolated from the community, have feelings of inferiority, withdraw into a vicious circle of society, and no one accepts or welcomes them back, so they want to avoid everyone.

Persons struggling with substance misuse only interact in relationships with other addicts and relatives, lack experience and skills to handle and cope with problems encountered, so they live passively (27.5%); 25.5% of respondents noticed a decrease in memory and thinking ability. People with an addiction themselves are the subject of the drug addiction treatment and psychological treatment process, so personal will will determine the effectiveness of the intervention support process. People struggling with substance misuse need to be given more confidence in themselves, as well as joy and self-respect from the community.

### *The needs of people in drug rehabilitation*

According to Table 2, 57.8% of respondents wanted psychological counselling and consultation, showing that persons struggling with substance misuse face many difficulties and deadlocks during drug addiction treatment, such as health, psychology, employment, income, and surrounding relationships, relapse issues... Next is the need to learn a trade (43.1%); there is (26.5%) a desire to support the means of production, a desire for the community to give them a chance to rebuild their lives, help persons struggling with substance misuse learn a trade and have a stable career, a desire to contribute their value to society, regain their value, and realise their responsibility to their family and society. During the process of drug addiction treatment, people struggling with substance misuse themselves have learnt a trade.

A group of respondents (35.3%) wants to be communicated to raise awareness, access information and knowledge about their illness, better understand the causes, harms, as well as methods and skills to deal with addiction treatment and relapse prevention situations. The rehabilitation centre is currently offering elementary vocational training classes for Drug addicts, including bamboo and rattan weaving, toothpick making, mechanics, construction, and sewing. The elementary vocational training period is about six months. After completing the vocational training program, the centre has established connections with external units to secure orders for students to practice their profession, generating additional income to enhance the meals provided to students undergoing rehabilitation at the centre.

Table 2: Desired needs of drug addicts

<b>Demand</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Health care	28.4
Counselling/psychological consultation	57.8
Community Integration	24.5
Vocational support	43.1
Support production facilities	26.5
Awareness-raising communication	35.3
Be respected and express yourself	25.5
Join self-help groups	16.7
Other	0

Regarding health care needs: 28.4% of respondents want to receive good health care, when using drugs, the health of drug addicts is reduced in terms of mental and physical strength, and some accompanying diseases such as hepatitis, neurological diseases, and infectious diseases, which are dangerous to life and health, so people with an addiction want to receive good health care. This result refutes the conclusion of research at drug rehabilitation centres in Dong Nai, Hai Phong, and Dien Bien, where the percentage of respondents wanting to receive health care was over 90%. The reason for this difference is that at drug rehabilitation center No. 2, when starting to receive patients, the health care support work pays special attention, care, and treatment to fully meet the wishes of drug addicts, so after detoxification, nearly 100% of drug addicts have good and stable health, so they aim to receive support and help in psychological aspects. In addition to the above wishes, persons struggling with substance misuse also wanted to participate in social activities and support the community when successfully

recovering from addiction.

In 2021, the unit provided career rehabilitation counselling, organised drug addiction treatment, and health recovery treatment for 127 students, ensuring compliance with the treatment regimens prescribed by the Ministry of Health and achieving good results. Organised and promptly treated 75 students with internal diseases, treated 70-80 students with weather-related diseases every day, and provided medication to 45 students with HIV.

### Status of implementation and reception of group social work activities

#### *Level of participation and satisfaction*

The consultation activities were carried out voluntarily, in accordance with the principle of not forcing students to participate. This approach helped persons struggling with substance misuse realise the values and essential benefits of consultation during the drug addiction treatment process.

Table 3: The level of learning and training activities at the centre (Unit% %)

Work	Very often	Frequent	Sometimes	Do not participate
Production labor	14.0	82.0	4.0	0
Thematic activities	70.0	28.0	4.0	0
Sports	62.0	38.0	3.0	0
Culture, arts	48.0	48.0	8.0	0
Advise	38.0	58.0	6.0	0
Other activities	29.0	49.0	19.0	7.0

Observation of Table 3 shows that thematic activities have the highest participation rate, with “Very often” being the most frequently selected response (68.6%). Production labour has an overwhelming participation rate of “Regular” (82.0%). Cultural and artistic activities are distributed almost equally across the two levels, “Very often” and “Regular” (both at 46.2%). Group social work activities in psychological support for drug addicts with mental disorders at Thanh Hoa Drug Rehabilitation Centre No. 2 are carried out frequently through 4 sessions per month on Wednesday evenings through group counselling sessions, individual counselling, and group counselling sessions. In addition, this psychological support activity is integrated into vocational therapy processes, organised for Drug addicts in production workshops, through specialised classes on life values, legal policies, health care, HIV prevention, and relapse prevention. Cultural and sports activities are primarily presented through stage-based forms, designed to make them easily understandable and followable for persons struggling with substance misuse.

According to a prison officer:

*Drug addiction treatment is a process from reception, withdrawal treatment, then training, vocational training, social education, throughout the time of drug addicts at the facility is the process of counselling, consultation, psychological support for drug addicts to prevent relapse, cope with difficult situations that will be encountered after drug addiction treatment, so that drug addicts have a positive outlook on life.*

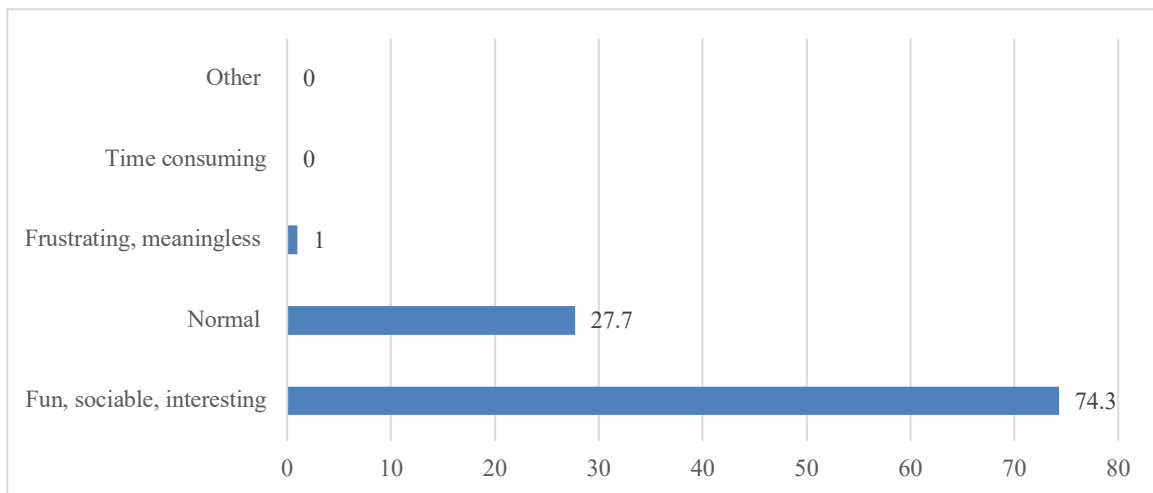


Figure 1: Feelings of a Drug Addict when participating in group social work activities  
 According to Table 4 above, 1 74.3% of drug addicts feel interested in participating in group support activities; 27.7% of drug addicts have normal feelings, 1% feel frustrated and uncomfortable. At the same time, through group activities, they also practice self-awareness, collective awareness, and awareness of others. A male student shared:

*Participating in group activities helps me become more confident and share my ideas. My group has a clear plan for assigning work, and everyone trusts and complies with the group leader's assignments. Our group often discusses any remaining questions and finds the best solution that satisfies all group members' wishes, so we can better understand each other's circumstances and behave in ways that do not harm one another and help each other overcome difficulties.*

**Content and process of intervention**

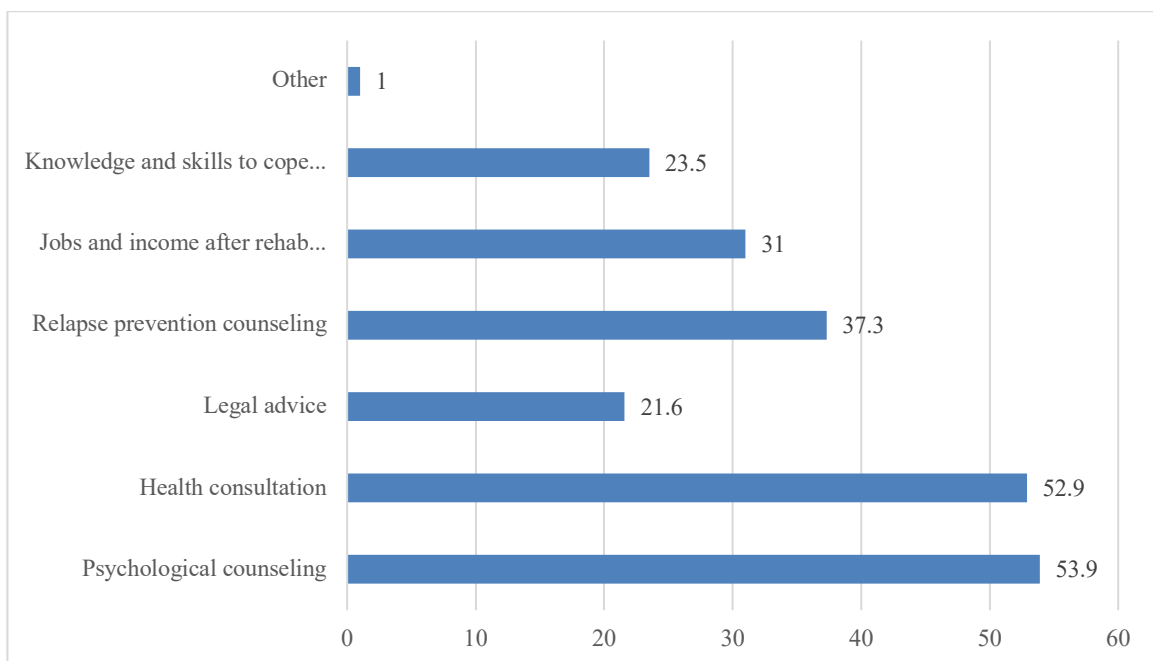


Figure 2: Content of the social worker's consultation

The content of social workers' group counselling for students at Facility No. 2 primarily falls into three categories: health counselling (52.9%), psychological counselling (53.9%), and employment and income after drug addiction treatment (51%). This result is also consistent with the needs and desires of students undergoing drug addiction treatment, as analysed in the thesis above. Additionally, social workers consulted other fields, including legal counselling (21.6%), relapse prevention (37.3%), and coping with difficulties (23.5%).

The process of psychological counselling and support for people with mental disorders undergoing drug addiction treatment at the Drug Rehabilitation Centre is a continuous cycle throughout the student's drug addiction

treatment process.

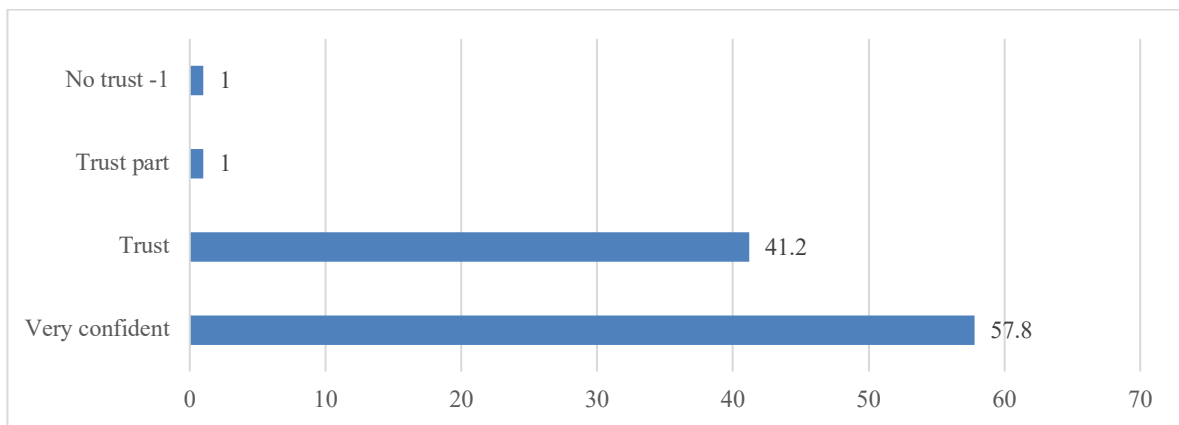


Figure 3: Students' feelings when participating in therapy consultation

According to Figure 3, up to 98% of respondents felt very confident and trusted the psychological counselling service provided by social workers. This result demonstrates that the Social Worker has performed an excellent job in their role and responsibilities, showing empathy and successfully assisting in counselling drug addicts. With the experience and commitment of a social worker, the counsellor has built a good relationship and interaction with persons struggling with substance misuse.

A student shared:

*Before, I thought very negatively, I lived as a burden to my family and society, especially the image of a father to my children was broken, many times I thought negatively, however, thanks to the counselors' encouragement, motivation, helping me believe optimistically, looking at the problem in a better way, so I tried to get drug addiction treatment and learn a trade so that when I left the center, I could make up for the mistakes I had made.*

### Factors affecting group social work for people with psychological disorders in drug addiction treatment

There are many factors affecting group social work in psychological support for people with an addiction. Within the scope of this analysis, the thesis focuses on analysing four aspects of influence: the person struggling with substance misuse, the social worker, the implementation mechanism, and social environmental factors.

#### *Factors related to the person with an addiction themselves*

Persons struggling with substance misuse are the main subjects of group activities in psychological support, so the personal factors are the first factor that plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of the support process of the social workers.

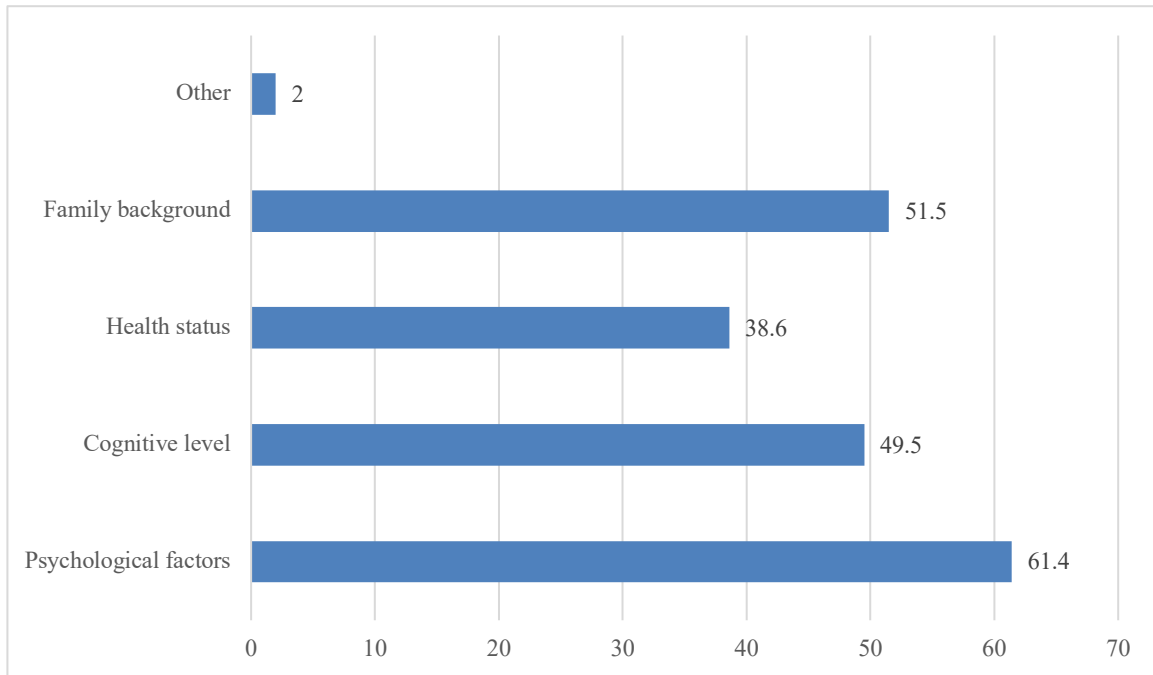


Image 4: Factors related to drug addiction affecting group social work activities

Several factors related to the addiction itself, including psychological characteristics, cognitive level, health status, and family circumstances, affect the effectiveness of psychological support for persons struggling with substance misuse. According to the survey results, up to 61.2% of respondents stated that psychological factors have the most significant influence on the process of group social work support, followed by educational level (49.5%), family (51.5%), and health factors (38.5%). Psychological factors are a common, popular characteristic of Drug addicts because of the avoidance, self-consciousness, and reluctance to share their stories with others. Therefore, Drug Addict has isolated and separated itself from the group and the community. Some persons struggling with substance misuse engage in acts of sabotage, do not cooperate when social workers engage them, do not comply with the regulations of the group and the centre when participating in treatment, do not proactively seek support services, and have inadequate awareness of the meaning of group social work. These are the difficulties of group social work in providing psychological support.

**Social worker factors**

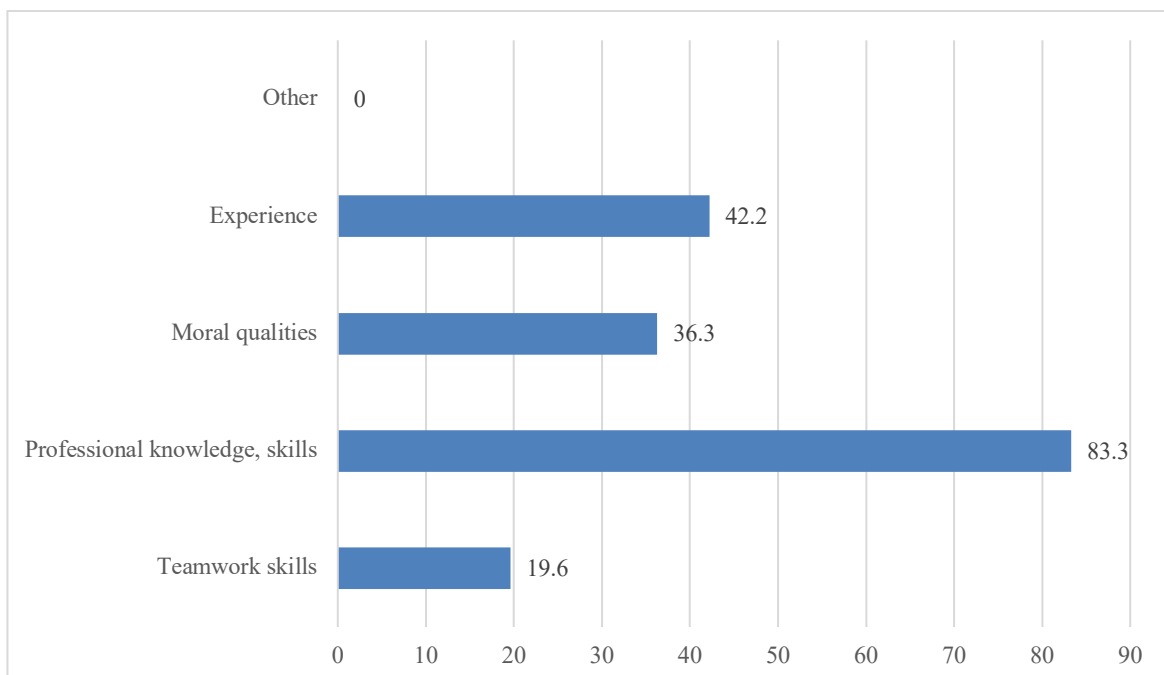


Figure 5: Factors related to social workers affecting group social work activities

Moral qualities and teamwork skills are essential factors in the process of orienting and leading group social workers in providing psychological support to drug addicts successfully. 83.3% of drug addicts said that the professional knowledge and qualifications of social workers affect psychological support for drug addicts, because group social workers in providing psychological support to people with mental disorders is not only a job with compassion and a good heart, but also requires professionalism, skilful experience, and skills. The experiences of social workers account for 42.2%, and moral qualities for 36.3%. Social workers need to sympathise with the difficulties, be tolerant of the complexes, mistakes, and injuries that drug addicts face. Drug addiction treatment facilities are places with a special working environment, and social workers need to sympathise; without empathy, they will not be successful. At Thanh Hoa Drug Rehabilitation Centre No. 2, a shortage of social workers with the requisite skills, experience, and professional working methods persists, hindering the provision of practical assistance, advice, counselling, and psychological support.

*Factors related to the implementation mechanism*

In 2021, in terms of activities and tasks, the facility managed 222 students (including 211 compulsory drug rehabilitation students and 11 voluntary drug rehabilitation students). Also in 2021, the facility organised 84 thematic activities and maintained a strong legal education program, disseminating rules and regulations to students.

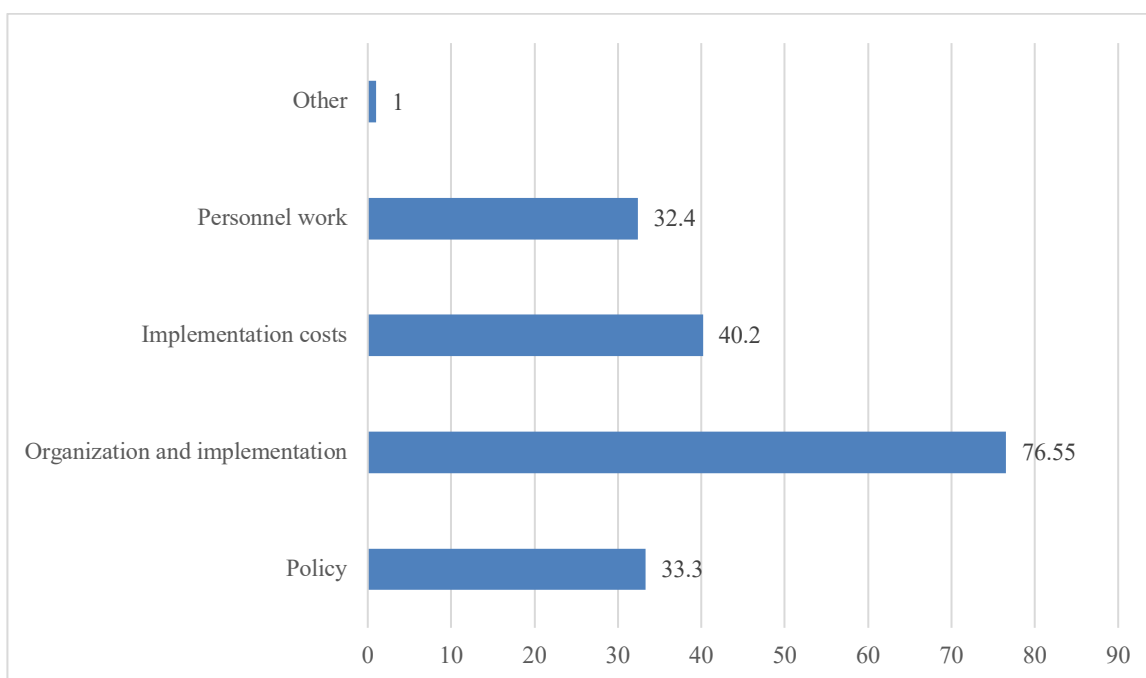


Figure 6: Factors related to the implementation mechanism affecting group social work activities

According to statistics, factors related to implementation mechanisms have a significant influence on group social work activities in psychological support for Drug Addicts 76.5% of respondents said that the implementation organisation factor has an impact; 40.2% said that the funding factor has an influence, and the staff work and policies have an effect on group social work for Drug addicts. According to Decree 80 and Decree 94 of the Government regulating the regime and policies for voluntary drug addicts and forced drug addicts, the beneficiaries of drug addiction treatment support are addicts from poor households, policy families, meritorious people, and social protection families. With this policy, the registered drug addiction treatment period is 3 months or 6 months, with the inconsistency in drug addiction treatment time between groups of subjects, which is a big challenge for group social work activities for Drug addicts at the grassroots level.

### *Social environmental factors*

The digital environment plays a crucial role, directly influencing the development, formation, and behaviour orientation of persons struggling with substance misuse.

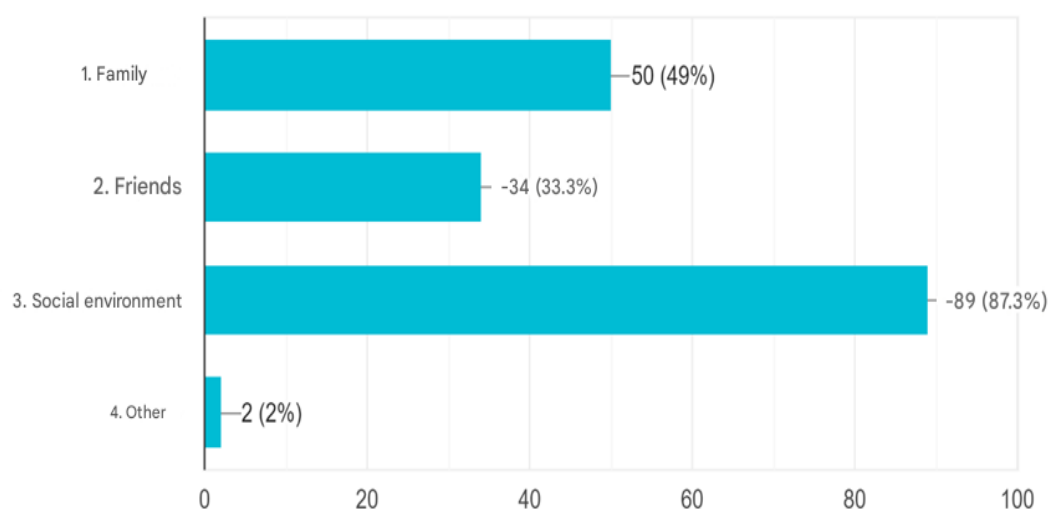


Figure 7: *Factors related to the living environment affect group social work activities.*

The data showed that 87.3% of respondents believed the social environment influences their group social work, 45% admitted their family influences them, and 33.3% believed their group of friends influences them. Family is a source of spiritual support in the recovery process of drug addicts and offers acceptance and love. In that case, it will help the drug addict complete the basic treatment program well and is also an excellent motivation for the drug addicts to change their perception and behaviour to return to family and society. On the contrary, if the family and social community always avoid blame, shame, and pressure, then the drug addict will find it difficult to complete his treatment goals.

Factors related to social workers, living environment, and implementation organisation do not determine the success of group social work; psychological support for drug addicts is an essential factor contributing to success.

Psychological support for drug addicts is only practical when it addresses personal factors and influencing factors, individual factors of drug addicts, family and social environmental factors, and requires a tolerant view, reducing stigma and alienation, considering drug addicts as sick people who need help, so that they can return to the community.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study results have provided a comprehensive and in-depth picture of the current situation and the multidimensional challenges in implementing group social work at Thanh Hoa Drug Rehabilitation Centre No. 2. Firstly, the findings show that students' greatest need is psychological counselling (57.8%) and that psychological factors (61.2%) have the most significant influence, thereby underscoring the urgent need for intensive psychological interventions. Quantitative data reveal that students undergoing drug rehabilitation face severe internal struggles, most notably the state of being easily manipulated and drawn in by others (51.0%) and enduring profound low self-esteem, regret, and guilt (38.2%). This is entirely consistent with international studies, which consistently emphasise the inseparable connection between severe drug addiction and co-occurring mental disorders, such as mood and anxiety disorders. Pioneering global research has long demonstrated that psychotherapy, particularly through group dynamics such as role-playing and peer discussion, plays a pivotal role in helping these individuals rebuild their self-esteem and develop the necessary resilience to combat toxic environmental triggers. In the specific context of Vietnam, these findings align with the observations of Phan Thi Mai Huong (2005), who systematised the prominent personality deviations and psycho-social vulnerabilities of drug-addicted youth, while directly linking these characteristics with addictive behaviour. Therefore, merely treating physical dependence (detoxification) without addressing these deep-seated psychological wounds will

render the recovery process fundamentally incomplete and highly susceptible to relapse.

Secondly, while the need for psychological support is exceptionally high, the implementation team's capacity remains a substantial barrier to effective intervention. The fact that 83.3% of students consider social workers' professional knowledge and qualifications the leading factor affecting their recovery indicates a significant gap in the availability of professional human resources. Currently, group activities and counselling sessions at the facility are primarily led by concurrent managers rather than by well-trained specialists in clinical social work or psychotherapy. This local challenge reflects a broader global issue highlighted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which notes that access to intensive, evidence-based treatment services for drug users remains alarmingly low worldwide, thereby pointing to an urgent need to scale up intervention models. In Vietnam, researchers such as Bui Thi Xuan Mai (2013), Luong Thi Hoai Thu (2016), and Pham Van Tu (2016) have consistently affirmed that professional interventions-such as structured case management and specialised group social work-are essential prerequisites for effective recovery. However, the reality at compulsory state rehabilitation facilities often reflects a gap between policy expectations and practical capacity, where staff lack the specialised skills necessary to navigate the complex dual diagnoses (substance addiction and mental disorders) of the students. Group social work in this environment requires not only compassion and empathy but also a high degree of professionalism and solid technical expertise.

Thirdly, the social environment, especially community stigma, is identified as one of the most formidable barriers to successful recovery and reintegration, affecting 87.3% of the respondents. This finding suggests that psychological interventions cannot operate in a closed environment, focusing solely on the individual struggling with substance abuse; instead, they must be systematically extended to the family and the broader community. The closed, isolated, and passive living conditions (27.5%) reported by the students often stem from a profound fear of rejection and the harsh prejudices they anticipate facing after leaving the rehabilitation facility. Previous domestic studies also corroborate this, emphasising that social stigma acts as a massive barrier, making it difficult for recovering individuals to access community services or find stable employment. Furthermore, as highlighted by government strategies (Government, 2011), the sustainable recovery of drug users heavily depends on the proactive attitude, acceptance, and shared responsibility of their families and communities. Without the family acting as a source of spiritual support and a community willing to give a second chance, the achievements made during group therapy at the facility will quickly be eroded by external pressure and contempt.

In summary, the intersection of these three dimensions-complex psychological needs, limited professional capacity of the staff, and a social environment rife with stigma-creates a highly challenging context for drug rehabilitation work. Merely addressing physical dependence is completely insufficient. An effective recovery process requires a paradigm shift towards professionalised group social work, aiming to simultaneously heal individual mental disorders, enhance the clinical capacity of facility staff, and actively engage the community to tear down the walls of stigma.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

Based on the discussion above, the following implications are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of group social work:

- There is an urgent need to build a systematic group social work process consisting of four stages (preparation, initiation, intervention, evaluation, and conclusion). This will help standardise the support activities.
- The facility should prioritise strengthening staff professional training. Social workers need to be equipped not only with compassion but also with specialised skills in counselling and group therapy.
- Solutions must involve close coordination with families and implementation of communication activities to reduce stigma in the community. The social worker must act as a community liaison and advocate, not just a therapist.

## CONCLUSION

The study "Group social work in psychological support for people with mental disorders undergoing drug rehabilitation at Thanh Hoa Drug Rehabilitation Centre No. 2" has systematised the theoretical basis and deeply analysed the current situation of the problem. The results have confirmed that drug addicts at the facility are facing many complex psychological issues and have a great need for professional psychological support services. Although group activities have been implemented and yielded initial positive results, numerous challenges remain related to influencing factors, including staff professional capacity, organisational mechanisms, and, most notably, the social environment, which remains heavily prejudiced. The study findings are not only a practical test but also provide substantial scientific evidence, serving as a basis for proposing feasible solutions. The application of a

standardised group social work process and synchronous solutions aimed at people with addiction, facility staff, families, and the community is expected to significantly improve the effectiveness of psychological support work, contributing to helping people with an addiction recover sustainably and reintegrate successfully into society.

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