

The Kandings: A Study on Sex for Drugs in Iligan City

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Abstract. Drug addiction in the Philippines is still rampant and widely perceived to be the root of poverty, injustice, and powerlessness (Simbulan et al., 2019). This phenomenon gave rise to a multifaceted, overlapping problem. One of these issues is the practice of exchanging sex for drugs, which led to the emergence of Kandings. This study dwells on the case of Iligan City. Drawing concepts from the social exchange theory of George Homans and utilizing a qualitative case study, ten key informants were interviewed through snowball sampling, aged 16 and older. Findings shed light on the origins of the term Kanding as perceived by the informants, a term they believed had its roots primarily in the existence of illegal drug trading in Iligan City. Moreover, the informants represent a disadvantaged group with limited resources, which explains the reasons they manifest experiences as reflected in the typologies of Kanding, mainly the sex for drugs Kanding, the Kanding as an intimate partner, the Kanding as a sex worker, and the Kanding for self-gratification. Despite challenges, including stigma, unresolved transactions, and the acquisition of sexually transmitted infections, they engage in this behavior to obtain access to illegal drugs and earn money with drug users as their typical sexual partners. However, the informants maintained their optimism, wanting the best for their families, their children's success, and their strong faith in God to support them in overcoming these challenges.

Keywords: Drug use; Sex work; Social exchange; Kanding.

1.0 Introduction

Substance use is an age-old problem, with addictions such as alcohol and illicit drugs affecting approximately 2% of the global population (Ritchie et al., 2022). The same data shows that substance use is indirectly and directly responsible for 11.8 million deaths each year. In East and Southeast Asia, the drug supply is continuously expanding, with methamphetamine, ketamine, and other synthetic drugs produced. Most of the countries in the said regions reported an increase in drug seizures, except for Hong Kong (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes [UNODC], 2023).

The Philippines, a country in Southeast Asia, also contends with decades of drug problems. Crystal methamphetamine, which is still the country's primary substance of concern, was linked to the bulk of drug-related arrests and treatment admissions, according to a report published by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) in 2023. However, the intensified anti-drug war campaign as a deterrent to crime by the government of former President Rodrigo Duterte from 2016 to 2022 resulted in the deaths of over 12,000 Filipinos (Human Rights Watch [HRW], n.d.).

Simbulan et al. (2019) assert that the complex nature of the drug problem stems from the systemic causes of poverty, injustices, and powerlessness experienced by the Filipino people. The widespread drug problem in the Philippines gave rise to a multifaceted, overlapping problem. One of these is sex in exchange for drugs, which is the primary concern of this study. Sex workers, also known as prostitutes, who were usually women, faced a

shared threat from the imposition of the drug war in the country. The Philippine Commission on Women estimates that there are 500,000 sex workers in the country, many of whom were drawn in and taken advantage of by criminal groups. Out of the 500,000 projected sex workers in the nation, 100,000 are minors (Modino, 2010).

In this connection, Lasco (2017) carried out a local study that examined the relationship between drug use and sex work and how it affected the day-to-day lives of young men. These young men sell refreshments as a front for the informal economy in a port in the Philippines. They believed that making money by selling their bodies was more profitable and that engaging in sex work did not diminish their masculinity with the help of drugs. In addition to improving performance, drugs can give them more confidence when used for sex work. Another local study conducted by Urada et al. (2014) focused on the prevalence of sex work in female bars and spas in the Philippines with the association of substance use, specifically alcohol and *shabu* use with clients. These female employees' experiences of sexual abuse, youth, and lack of higher education were some of the factors that led to these engagements. However, the individuals' participation in sex work increased their chance of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, according to both local investigations. Not only local but also international studies have proven the emergence of this phenomenon. Baseman et al. (1999) developed a study by describing the underground economy that existed between two Houston areas where the trade of sex for drugs or money was prevalent. In this study, the participants exchanged services for personal satisfaction, which in turn led to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Numerous research studies have employed quantitative methods to investigate the phenomenon of drug usage and sexual exchange. However, additional investigation needs to focus on interpretive studies based on individuals' distinct personal experiences (Boyer et al., 2016; Braine et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2006; Homma et al., 2012; Kaestle, 2012; McNeal & Walker, 2015; Nerlander et al., 2020; Orchard et al., 2020; Reid & Piquero, 2013; Van De Walle et al., 2012). Thus, the study utilized qualitative research design to explain the emergence of this precarious phenomenon involving sex and drug use, also known by the local slang term *Kanding*.

Moreover, drawing from the central thesis of sociologist George Homans, social exchange theory suggests that individuals have to follow certain elements and processes to engage in an exchange when costs and incentives are involved. Homans originally defined "social behavior" as an exchange of tangible or intangible activities, more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two people. The term subsequently developed into the most recent one, "social exchange" (Redmond, 2016). The core tenet of social exchange theory is that interactions that result in another person's approval are more likely to be repeated than those that result in their disapproval (Crossman, 2020).

Redmond (2016) discussed the theory elements of social exchange by Homans. The first element of the theory explains the rewards and the value of rewards, which highlights the idea that various people may place a different value on a particular reward. The second element refers to social rewards obtained through social interaction. Pleasure, contentment, gratification, and need fulfillment are all examples of rewards in interactions with others. The third element refers to the costs described by Homans as something valuable sacrificed. It can also be the removal of a reward or punishment. The fourth element is equity and distributive justice, which explains that the more costs we incur, the more we expect the reward. People often deal with simply achieving a "fair" and equitable trade. It is crucial to understand that social exchange theory does not imply that people are always rational or fully aware of the advantages and disadvantages of their actions. The idea of reciprocity is another component of social exchange theory that is relevant to this subject. Homans asserts that when people reciprocate their actions, they are more inclined to behave socially.

This study focused on the underrepresented and understudied phenomenon of individuals who primarily engage in drug usage and sexual exchange in Iligan City, Philippines. These individuals are known by the local slang term *Kanding* and are referred to as having exchanged sex for drugs, specifically methamphetamine, locally known as *shabu*. In addition, the researchers believed that the investigation into the emergence of the term *Kanding* is among the first to provide a thorough understanding of the experiences of those who engage in sexual activity in exchange for drugs in Iligan City. Specifically, by describing their sociodemographic profiles, identifying the origin of the term *Kanding* as perceived by the informants, discussing the types of *Kanding* and their experiences, describing the benefits and challenges encountered as *Kandings*, and identifying their aspirations.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative research design. Specifically, it employs a case study for its central inquiry. According to Creswell (2003), a qualitative approach to research is based primarily on constructivist perspectives. Data collection involves open-ended questionnaires through interviews, which developed into themes. The researchers employed a case study approach with the specific goal of describing and understanding a phenomenon. It involves a methodical examination of a single occurrence or a sequence of related occurrences (Lune & Berg, 2017). The study occurred in several barangays surrounding Iligan City using snowball sampling.

2.2 Research Locale

The barangays in Iligan City with the highest concentration of drug users have been the focus of the study. Data provided by the Iligan City Anti-Drug Abuse Council (ICADAC) during Duterte's administration shows the highest number of drug users in barangays like Saray, Tambacan, and Tubod. There were 466 recorded drug users in Saray, 348 in Tambacan, and 309 in Tubod. Although the researchers relied on snowball sampling, the study's informants all came from the barangays with the highest number of drug users mentioned above.

2.3 Research Participants

In barangays Saray, Tambacan, and Tubod in Iligan City, ten (10) key informants underwent extensive interviews. The key informants of the study refer to those individuals who engage in sex in exchange for drugs or money, also known as *Kandings*. The informants interviewed include former and current *Kandings*. Their ages ranged from 16 to 47 years old. Additionally, the researchers included one (1) important informant who was not a *Kanding* but had over 40 years of experience in the illegal drug trade. The informant was adept at the workings of illegal drug trading in Iligan City. Overall, those who had indications of emotional instability or were under the influence of drugs or alcohol were not allowed to participate in the study. Moreover, the researchers interviewed two (2) personnel from the Iligan Anti-Drug Abuse Council (ICADAC), specifically the resident psychometrician and admin team leader, each of whom had worked for the council for over a year.

2.4 Research Instrument

This study used a researcher-made interview guide by conducting in-depth interviews. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviewing is a qualitative research approach that entails conducting lengthy, one-on-one interviews with a limited number of respondents to learn about their perspectives on a topic, program, or situation. The informants, who belonged to the category of those who had sex in exchange for drugs or money, received open-ended questions. Furthermore, the research instruments were examined and verified by the research adviser.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

This study used specific steps to collect the data. To begin with, the researchers created a letter of consent to conduct the study duly signed by the research adviser. Then, the researchers presented a consent form extracted from the MSU-IIT Institute Ethics Review Committee (IERC) for the adult research informants and the personnel from ICADAC.

The same procedure was followed when interviewing minor informants, as indicated in a duly signed consent letter from the research adviser. Subsequently, the parents or guardians of the interviewed minor informants were given an assent form. The researchers guaranteed that no informants were coerced into giving information for the research. Voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality of the data were given priority and value. Lastly, the data were collected and analyzed.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research study followed ethical guidelines. Before conducting the study, the researchers secured a letter of consent to conduct the study congruously signed by the research adviser to be presented to the key informants. Moreover, the informed consent utilized in the interview was extracted from MSU-IIT's Institute Ethics Review Committee (IERC). Since the researchers used snowball sampling to gather informants, the research process was subject-driven, relying on the referrals of the main informants. With this, the informants involved in the study were adequately informed about the research project and were given the right to decide whether to participate or

decline the interview. Moreover, whether they participate or not lies within the participants' decision after thoroughly explaining the research process and describing its potential harms and benefits (Marvasti, 2004).

The same ethical procedure was followed by the researchers for the minor informants but with the inclusion of their parents or guardians. The parents or guardians were adequately informed about the research project and given the right to decide whether the minor informant would be allowed to participate or decline the interview process. An assent form was then provided to the parents or guardians of the minor informants who participated in the study.

Also, the participants' anonymity and confidentiality were preserved by not revealing their names and identities. The informants were also given the right not to show their faces during the photo documentation. The researchers also incorporated pseudonyms for the names of informants throughout the data presentation and analysis. In data collection, the participants were informed beforehand when recording certain information using audio. The recordings were then secured and stored under strict supervision.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Informants

Ten (10) key informants who identified as *Kandings* were involved in the study. The informants comprised seven (7) females and three (3) males. Three (3) out of ten (10) informants belonged to middle adulthood, ranging from 45 to 47; five (5) informants belonged to early adulthood, aged 20 to 38; and lastly, two (2) informants belonged to adolescents aged 16. Barangays Tambacan, Tubod, and Saray in Iligan City were the areas they considered residences. Five (5) of them reside in Brgy. Tambacan, three (3) in Brgy. Tubod, and two (2) in Brgy. Saray. The data also indicates that all of them are single. Nearly all informants' religious beliefs are Christian, except for the sole informant, who follows Islam.

In terms of the informants' educational background, nine of them (9) never completed their tertiary education. Four (4) were in primary school, while the remaining five (5) were in secondary school. Only a single informant participated in a vocational course. In addition, all of them except for a single informant have children ranging from 1 to 6. Concerning the informants' family structures, all were from nuclear families. However, several of them belonged to broken families. Furthermore, the informants are not employed in a stable job. Instead, they make their living as drug runners, restaurant servers, dispatchers, pimps, weeders, garbage collectors, and Trisikad drivers, among other occupations. On the one hand, three informants do not have sources of income.

3.2 Origin of the term *Kanding* as Perceived by the Informants

This section discusses the informants' perceived origins of the term *Kanding*, which include the existence of drug trading and the *Kandings* in the realm of prostitution.

Kanding and Illegal Drug Trading

Illegal drug trading was present in Iligan City long before the drug policies of former President Rodrigo Duterte took over the Philippines in 2016. The researchers interviewed a single key informant to discuss the illegal drug trading in Iligan City, which is believed to be one of the reasons why slang terms emerged in the drug discourse.

Lyndsy, a 58-year-old woman who has been a drug user for 40 years, shared her knowledge concerning the illegal drug trading in Iligan City, in which she had previously participated. She classified the individuals into four categories who took part in the drug market, which include the drug lords, sources, pushers or runners, and *Kandings*. *Drug lords* are the ones who produce illicit substances such as marijuana and *shabu* from the so-called Sources. According to Lyndsy, drug lords have factories for drugs located mainly in Lanao del Sur and Ozamiz City in Mindanao. She asserted that there were no drug factories or drug lords in Iligan City. Since the Sources are seen as the next in line of authority behind the drug lords, transactions may occur in their presence. *Sources* are those who purchase substantial quantities of drugs from drug lords to resell in the neighborhood. Sometimes, the drug lords supply them with drugs, and the sources then return the exact quantity that they agreed upon. The Sources also repackage the drugs into smaller portions and then sell them at a significantly higher price for profit. Furthermore, people who distribute drugs to users are referred to as *Pushers*, also known as *Runners*. They purchase drugs in the form of consignments from the sources. On rare occasions, they purchase the drugs straight

from the sources and resell them. On the one hand, the term *Parok* or *Parokyano* represents the clients of the pushers or runners. These are regular individuals who are dependent on illegal drugs such as methamphetamine, locally known as *shabu*. Lastly, the *Kanding*, also known as *Swap Kiki* or *SK*. They are regarded as people who sell their bodies for drugs or money. Most of the *Kandings* are women and are guaranteed to be drug users.

In this study, the researchers focused on the slang term *Kanding*, which also played a part in the illegal drug trading in Iligan City. According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), slang is exchanged among individuals familiar with and belonging to the same social circle. Furthermore, it indicates that the slang terminology is utilized informally.

Findings suggest that most of the informants did not know the origin of the slang term *Kanding*, except for Joy and Lyndsy, who claimed that the term was created by drug addicts, *"From what I have known, it was created by crazy drug addicts."* Furthermore, many informants believed the slang term *Kanding* was commonly used in Barangay Saray, Iligan City. Others also heard it in spaces like jails and marketplaces. Below is an excerpt from Lalay's interview when she was asked about the slang term's place of common usage, *"It is Saray. Barangay Saray is top 1 in [Iligan City]."*

Although the informants had a limited understanding of the origin of the term *Kanding*, Lyndsy and Gracia, two key informants, asserted that the term "Kanding" or "goat" in the English language originated from the gregarious nature of goats. Goats were known to be sociable animals who would undoubtedly follow a person around who had food. In this situation, when a person goes with anyone who is arbitrarily provided drugs and money in exchange for sex, the analogy between the goat animal and the goat human is made. Lyndsy said, *"Drug addicts created the term. Goats are bound to follow you if you bring along food."*

Moreover, most of the informants shared that "Swap Kiki or SK" is the term they knew other than *Kanding*. It is an act when a woman "swaps" her vagina for valuable items, specifically drugs and cash. The term existed within the subculture of drug users and addicts in the community, particularly in some areas of Iligan City where illegal drugs are rampant. Only Mari has likened the term *Kanding* to the common slang terms of prostitutes, such as *pokpok* and *burikat*. She said, *"From what I know, the terms burikat and pokpok are synonymous with Kanding."*

The "Kandings" in the Realm of Prostitution

Various responses were gathered regarding the definition and usage of the term *Kanding*. As mentioned above, these are the individuals who participate in sexual exchange by offering monetary and drug rewards in exchange for their bodies. They use the terms "Kanding" or "goat" to describe their behavior—considering that they, as *Kandings*, had to satiate their desires to use illegal drugs and further economic needs. Chay-Chay shared that *Kandings* engages in sexual encounters in exchange for drugs and monetary rewards, *"I engaged in sex exchange to resolve my needs for drugs and money."*

In addition, certain individuals, specifically Jay, asserted that being a *Kanding* is not limited to women alone but also applies to men, *"[Men] can also be called Kanding because there are gays who want their service."* The informants also made further classifications by describing *Kandings* as having several sexual partners. Janet asserted that *Kandings* have different sexual partners, *"The term Kanding refers to the practice of having multiple male sexual partners. You can switch partners every hour. It may consist of approximately four males throughout the day or night."*

All except for a sole male informant asserted that the terms *Kanding* and sex worker or prostitute are synonymous. Since both transactions necessitated the use of their bodies to obtain drugs and money. An excerpt from the informants' responses reveals that the term "Kanding" is synonymous with either a sex worker or a prostitute. Jane stated, *"I think there are similarities between the two since they will be compensated with drugs, just as you mentioned with money. Therefore, I believe it is comparable [relating to Kanding and prostitutes]."*

In contrast, the sole male informant, LL, disregarded the idea of labeling himself as a prostitute or sex worker since he rarely does sex transactions. He said, *"I never thought of myself as a [prostitute]. I never did. Besides, I do not do the act [frequently]."*

The majority of them identified as sex workers because they believed that engaging in multiple sex with multiple partners was an indication of being a sex worker. It should also be highlighted that the majority of the informants

have shared some emotional intimacy with their sexual partners in the trade, particularly women. Although four (4) informants neglected to disclose that they had shared sexual intimacy with their sexual partners, LL, one of the four informants, claimed that he had no deep emotional connection with his relationships. In addition, the provision of money and drugs depends on an agreement reached by both sides, and it is usually done implicitly.

3.3 Types of *Kanding* and Their Experiences

This section discusses the different typologies of *Kanding* and their experiences. Mainly the sex for drugs *Kanding*, the *Kanding* as an intimate partner, *Kanding* as a sex worker, and for self-gratification *Kanding*.

Sex for Drugs Kanding

The *Kandings* are people who participate in Iligan City's illegal drug trading and have sex with random men, who are typically drug users, in exchange for money and illegal drugs. In connection, all of the key informants were drug users before their first engagement in sexual exchange. All of them are current drug users who have used methamphetamine, often known locally as *shabu*. The duration of illegal drugs used by informants is as follows: three (3) of the ten key informants have used illegal drugs for over 20 years. Four (4) informants have been using illegal drugs for more than five years, while three (3) informants have been doing so for less than a year. Therefore, engaging in deviant activities was part of their way to acquire illegal drugs, specifically their experience of sex exchange.

Most of them asserted that having sex with individuals was one of their motivations for acquiring drugs. In an excerpt from Jay's interview, he began having sex with gay men after becoming addicted to drugs, which were introduced to him by friends, *"I started having sex with others when I got addicted to drugs. My friends influenced me."*

Other factors concerning the informants' motivation for using drugs that led them to engage in sex exchange are discussed in the following themes: *broken homes and family abandonment, peer and family influence, and emotional dejection*.

Some informants attributed their first exposure to illegal drugs to broken homes and family abandonment. Chay-Chay, Lalay, and LL have lived in a dysfunctional family, which has driven them to try using illegal drugs. Moreover, their parents abandoned Jay and LL at an early age. The following are excerpts from the informants' responses to broken homes and family abandonment.

LL was abandoned by his parents at the age of four, leading him to use illegal drugs.

"When I was young, my mother left me. She left me and went to Cotabato! I have a sibling, but he had a different father. I always searched for my mother at the age of four. She left me. My father left me, too!"

Chay-Chay began using illegal drugs when her parents separated.

"Our family is falling apart. My mom was also looking for something else, and then I was with friends. I got into that [vice] because I wanted to try it. Then, when I try, that is what I am used to, but if you do not know how to control it, you will go crazy."

Peer and family influence top the list of the informants' responses as motivations for using illegal drugs. Seven (7) key informants claimed that their peers, or "barkada," motivated them to use drugs, while three (3) claimed that their family or relatives influenced them to do so. The following are excerpts from the informants' responses to peer and family influence.

Janet was forced by her co-dancers at Big Brother, a bar in Iligan City, to try using drugs for the first time. This was her first exposure to drug use in her whole career as a bar dancer.

"My fellow co-dancers here in Iligan forced me to use drugs. They will pour beer on me if I do not do what they want. I learned a lot during my time at Big Brother [bar]."

Gracia admitted that she felt pressured by her husband's siblings, who were known to be drug users. She tried taking drugs to identify with them.

"Before, my partner was a drug addict. He is also addicted to women. His family was also drug users, and I was the only one who did not use drugs when I first came to their family. Then her sibling invited me to try taking drugs, and I tried."

Five (5) key informants mentioned that they experienced feelings of dejection or were depressed. Jay, Lalay, LL, Mari, and Joy have shared the intense discouragement they felt in life that made them choose the path of being dependent on illegal drugs. The following are excerpts from the informants' responses to experiencing emotional dejection.

Lalay cannot express how devastated she was when her father died. She did not understand her circumstances and felt lonely and hopeless.

"It is a result of my family's separation. My father's passing made me lose hope for the future. I am unable to articulate my feelings. In this life, I wish to be by myself. I do not think I will get better. I am not sure I understand."

Joy shared how her world collapsed when she learned about her father's death.

"Yes. I was on a mental block. After the death of my [Papa], my world collapsed."

Kanding as an Intimate Partner

While profound emotional connections between sex workers and their partners are uncommon, both sides have the opportunity to form intimate relationships during transactional sex. Moreover, some Kandings had profound emotional connections with their partners in this study. The following are excerpts from the informants' responses concerning the profoundness of the sexual relations between the *Kandings* and their sexual partners.

Chay-Chay was saved by her sexual partner, who eventually became her boyfriend. He urged her to change by not having sex with different men.

"My now-incarcerated boyfriend will prevent me from having any more sex exchanges. As long as I cease to be a Kanding, he can look for money. If you continue to do that, you will lose people's respect."

Janet also shared that she had several sexual partners she had a relationship with. Although her approach differed from Chay-Chay, Janet committed to a relationship with some partners to fulfill her basic needs. Her partner provided money to pay for her rent and food. She also mentioned that if he does not provide for her, she will not have sex with him.

"Yes, I have a partner in which they served as my weekly and monthly maintenance. I have a weekly budget."

In contrast, LL and Joy dismiss the idea of having an emotional connection or relationship with their sexual partners. Specifically, LL who asserted that despite his years of experience in sex exchange, he dismissed the idea of having a deep emotional connection with his sexual partners. Furthermore, Jay, Jane, and Gracia did not disclose the status of their sexual relationships.

Kanding as a Sex Worker

Sex work, as defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.), is a person whose work involves sex acts. The typology of sex work *Kanding* focuses on the duration and frequency of the *Kandings'* engagement in sex exchange. They are concerning the informants' duration of being a *Kanding*. Two (2) of the ten key informants have been a *Kanding* for at least 20 years. One (1) informant has been a *Kanding* for over five years, while the remaining seven (7) have been doing so for less than five years.

She was concerning the informants' frequency of being a *Kanding*. Janet, Chay-Chay, and LL had multiple partners in a single day or week. Janet adds, *"Usually, it is three or four,"* referring to her daily sexual partners of at least

three to four men. Chay-Chay, on the other hand, says, *"In a single day, I can have at least three"*, referring to her three sexual partners per day, who were usually referred to by a *bugaw*. Lastly, LL shared that when he was active in the sex exchange, he could have at least four gay sexual partners per week.

Jay and Johnrex, on the one hand, had frequent sexual partners who would contact them on specific days, usually on weekends. Their sexual partners were gay men. Jay adds, *"I do have my contacts. I have a frequent partner every Saturday"*, referring to her frequent partners every Saturday. Jay also sometimes seduces gay men on the roadside as well, during a drinking session. Moreover, Johnrex shared that his usual partners are 32-year-old men who contact him weekly.

Moreover, a few informants have occasional transactions. Jane, Mari, and Joy become *Kandings* when the need arises. Jane added, *"It depends on my cravings for drugs."* However, for Lalay, her transactions depend. Sometimes, she initiates the transactions, which usually involve her acquaintances, she adds, *"But sometimes I offer [sex] on the advice of my friends."*

For Self-gratification Kanding

The typology of self-gratification Kanding focuses on Kanding's satisfaction both when taking illegal drugs and fulfilling their basic needs, which can be attained through sex exchange. Most of them are economically vulnerable.

Six (6) of the informants stated that they participate in sexual activity to meet their basic needs. It should also be noted that none of them had a permanent occupation, and they failed to earn their education.

For nine years, LL had been a Kanding. Due to his failure to finish his education, he fell into poverty and turned to drug usage and sex exchange. Mari offered her body for cash. Acquiring drugs was not her priority; she needed money to feed her children. Moreover, others commented on how simple it is to get money by having sex with other people. Others were also satisfied with their acts, while the other informant engaged in the sex trade for revenge.

Lalay, LL, and Mari underlined the sense of satisfaction that comes with using illegal drugs. Lalay felt at ease when using drugs, and she felt alleviated from all her worries. Furthermore, taking drugs made LL feel happier and less fatigued. Finally, Mari wanted to have fun and forget her concerns about leaving her family behind. The following are excerpts from the informants' responses to experiencing self-gratification.

"In my first attempt [used], I ask what kind this is? Other people say it tastes good, cools your brain, and can eliminate your problems". - Lalay

"I started using drugs when I was five in Bagsakan at Tambacan. I have been using drugs for 32 years until now when I have free time. I used drugs to enjoy myself and get rid of body fatigue." - LL.

"It is like having a war shock. I was brokenhearted after I left my family. I want to have fun so that your problem will disappear. You will be having fun." - Mari.

3.4 The Sexual Partners

There are always two parties involved in sexual transactions: the sellers and the buyers. Usually, the people who sold sex referred to them as "prostitutes" and the clients as "johns." In this section, the researchers present findings concerning the sexual partners of the *Kandings* in the study. Parker (2004) defined the Johns as the customers. The Johnsons are the ones who fueled the business of prostitution and pornography. He discussed the four types of prostitution customers: users, sadists, necrophiles, and child molesters. Most of them took pleasure in violence or inflicting harm on young people.

In this study, the usual sexual partners of the *Kandings* are drug users. Their primary motivation was to acquire sexual pleasure. It can also be noted that one of the reasons for the emergence of the *Kandings* was the presence of illegal drug trading in Iligan City. One crucial characteristic of the *Kandings* was the fact that they were drug users

first before engaging in the act of sex exchange. The informants also acknowledged engaging in sexual activity with acquaintances or random men. However, they insisted that their partners were drug users, as they offered cash and drugs in return for the encounters.

Jane, on the other hand, shared that her usual partners were drug users because they were usually the ones who needed *Kandings* to satisfy their sexual desires. She remarked, *"It is the drug users who needed the Kandings the most."* Furthermore, the male informants in this study had gay males as sexual partners. Jay, LL, and Johnrex had sexual encounters with gays. They were normally contacted by their regular partners and convened at a certain time and location. Sometimes, they initiate the exchange by luring gays by the roadside or during a drinking session. Jay shared, *"I usually stay by the roadside or be with them at a drinking session. I also have contacts for my frequent customers every Saturday... I sold myself to the gays."*

Parker (2004) further discussed the role of the pimps in prostitution: if the Johns are the ones who consume prostitution and pornography, the pimps are the ones who enable it. They sold or referred prostitutes to the Johns for consumption, and in return, the pimps were compensated with little to no amount given to the prostitute. He also classified the pimps into three general types: media pimping, business-level pimping, and street-level pimping. Pimping in the media and at the corporate level brings in more money than pimping on the streets. The media pimp sells pornography and other fantasies that eventually harm people. On the other hand, business-level pimps capitalize on the sex industry by owning bars and strip clubs, which attract Johns. Lastly, street-level pimps are referred to as small-time criminals with a high need for sadistic gratification, and they are typically drug and alcohol addicts. They also went by the moniker "the sex industry's foot soldiers."

In this study, some informants have experienced being referred by a pimp or *bugaw* who falls under the category of street-level pimping. This method favors the pimps or *bugaw* since they benefit from the women they recommend, whether it is drugs or money, depending on their agreed-upon terms. Chay-Chay and Lalay were preyed on by the pimps or *bugaw*. The following are excerpts from the informants' responses to experiencing being preyed on by pimps or *bugaw*.

"There is a person who will contact me and say, 'I have someone to refer to you so that you can have money. I would say, 'Yes, just text me.' Then the pimp who referred me will be compensated." - Chay-Chay.

"I tried being referred by a pimp... I also tried being sold by my boyfriend. There was a man from Tambacan who forced me to use drugs. My boyfriend also forced me to go with the man to a lodge. I told my boyfriend that he should come with me. At the lodge, my boyfriend left me with the man, telling me he would buy something. I waited for him for so long, but eventually, I was used by the other man."

- Lalay

3.5 Benefits and Challenges Encountered as *Kandings*

This section discussed the benefits and challenges encountered by the *Kandings*. The benefits include *money and drugs*, while the challenges include *stigmatization, unsettled transactions, and the acquisition of sexually transmitted infections (STIs)*.

Benefits Encountered as Kanding

Sexual exchanges committed by the informants came with rewards and costs. The usual responses of the informants regarding their rewards with the exchange are money and drugs. All except for the sole informant, Gracia, exemplify the reward involving drugs, implying that the chance of receiving drugs is high in each transaction. They have diverse experiences with how they engage in the trade, including whether they used the drugs before, during, or after the sex. Still, it is more likely that they used the drugs after the sexual exchange because they highlighted the issue of unsettled transactions.

Furthermore, all except Jane and Gracia received both drugs and money throughout their exchanges. Jane only received drugs in all of her transactions; she said, *"It is pure drugs since we are talking about Kanding. It is just drugs."* Whereas Gracia only received cash, she said, *"I have tried that [being a Kanding], but there were no drugs. He only gave me money."*

The availability of drugs and money compensated to the *Kandings* indeed depends on what they agreed on before they had sexual intercourse. The usual responses they had when asked about the amount of money their sexual partners gave ranged from 300 PHP to 2,500 PHP. The number of packed drugs given to them also varied, ranging from 500 PHP to 1,000 PHP, but the usual amount of drugs given to them was 500 PHP – this is the lowest price of *shabu* since the onset of Duterte's presidency.

It can be noted that the compensation for male *Kandings* is much lower than that for female *Kandings*. Jay, LL, and Johnrex have stated that they typically receive between 150 PHP and 300 PHP in cash from gay men. The drugs, however, are valued at approximately 500 PHP.

Moreover, the female *Kandings* in this study also had varied experiences with their sex transactions. Younger female *Kandings* tend to have higher compensations compared to the older *Kandings*. Both Chay-Chay and Lalay, who were younger than the others, acquired more drugs and cash than the others. However, at present, both stopped engaging in sex transactions despite having more compensation.

Chay-Chay's transactions always involve money and drugs. Her sexual partner's average budget was 2,000 PHP, but on occasion, she was given 1,000 PHP in cash and 1,000 PHP in medications. However, she chose money over drugs. She said, *"There is always money and shabu, but I prefer to choose the money. For example, they have a 1,000 PHP to 2,000 PHP cash budget. On one hand, Lalay had a different approach. She wanted food, drugs, and money on her sex transactions. The maximum amount of money that she could get ranged between 2,500 PHP and 500 PHP worth of drugs. She said, "I am different from others. I want complete compensation, such as food, money, and drugs. Usually, the maximum reward I can have is 2,500 PHP, and for the amount of drugs, it is usually 500 PHP."*

In contrast, older *Kandings* also have varied experiences. Janet and Joy have been *Kandings* for more than 20 years. To this day, they still engage in sex transactions, but their compensation and expectations are much lower than those of the younger *Kandings*.

Janet prioritized the presence of drugs in her transactions. For her, it does not matter who her partner is if they have drugs with them. The compensation also varies per transaction. Sometimes, she receives 500 PHP in cash and 1,000 PHP in drugs. There were further occasions when she paid for a lodging room and was then provided drugs.

Furthermore, Joy can only get 500 to 1,000 PHP in cash in her transactions. There are also times when she engages in sex to pay her drug debt. She mentioned, *"Usually, it is 500 PHP, but sometimes 1,000 PHP. That is the highest amount I can get."*

Challenges Encountered by Kanding

All of the informants experienced *stigmatization* from the community and themselves. Some of them shared the perceived stigma they felt from the community, which included being disrespected and labeled as dirty. The following lines are excerpts from Janet, Chay-Chay, and Jane's sentiments of perceived stigma from their community.

"Ah, it is shameful. They will treat you with disrespect." – Jane.

"People were treating me disrespectfully because they believed I had multiple partners, so I ended the act of having sex. My child has been affected as well." – Chay-Chay.

Furthermore, some informants experienced self-stigma by considering themselves filthy. Others were ashamed of what they did, particularly having sex with people. Others saw it as cheap and damaging to their reputation.

"It is dirty work, but I had no choice but to do it. In my opinion, it is preferable than stealing for the vice alone." – Jay.

In contrast, the two male respondents stated they had experienced perceived stigma but not self-stigma. Johnrex claimed he was fine with being a *Kanding*, while LL stated that he could not say he felt dirty because he was a man.

"Since I am a man, I do not consider myself to be filthy as a Kanding. However, I believe it to be the same." - LL.

Unsettled transactions are one of the costs the informants shared when they engaged in sex exchange. Janet, Jay, and LL had once experienced being uncompensated by their service. They were disappointed since it was mostly their frequent sexual partners who would not pay them.

"Yes, sometimes they will not pay me. They say, 'I do not have my wallet with me. I will withdraw some money. Just stay here.' Then sometimes they leave me at the hotel without knowing they already paid for it. As a Kanding, I waited for them until the next day. I have waited for so many hours. That happened to me. I trusted them because they were my usual partners. They will contact me every week or month." - Janet.

Finally, several informants, including Jay, LL, and Jane, developed sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) because of the constant exchange of sex with various individuals. In addition, none of them visited a clinic or took appropriate antibiotics for their infections. They were even unsure of the exact name of their infections.

"I got it [infection]. It is my first time having an infection because of gays. I tried to heal myself using coconut! It is true, and my skin was chafed." - LL.

Also, others did not acquire any sexually transmitted infections since they used contraception such as condoms. Janet and Chay-Chay shared their experience of using condoms before having sex with anyone.

"I have never had sex [without a condom], even if I have sex with many men in one day, sometimes five, but I cannot go without a condom. They will be angry, but how can they if I have the money and I already have the shabu? Ah, I will leave them." - Janet.

3.6 Aspirations of the Kandings

The informants expressed concerns regarding their hopes and aspirations in life. Almost all of them wanted to change for several reasons. Some informants were tired of their addiction, others could not stand the disrespect from other people, and others wanted to finish their education. Another informant rekindled his talent for songwriting, but the most common responses were to rely on their family for inspiration and to remain faithful to God.

Most desired the best for their families, particularly their children. They tried to change the trajectory of their lives by looking to their children for inspiration and hoped to see them succeed in life.

"Yes, I will change myself for the sake of my children. It is unfortunate that nobody will care for them." - Johnrex.

"I want my kids to focus on their education, and I want my partner to come back so our family can be whole again." - Gracia. Despite how troubled and unfortunate they felt, others held onto their faith in God. They saw God as an instrument for their recovery. Mari and Joy emphasized the importance of faith in their lives.

"Personally, even though I have failed in life twice, there was never a time that God was not with me. He is always here in my heart. If you do not believe in God, you have nothing. Do you know that you will be given problems so that you can have faith in God? I usually do not go to church because I am discouraged by my partner, but I have high hopes for my future because I have children." - Mari.

Despite acknowledging God's presence, Lalay is still unable to comprehend her father's death. Her father had been her only source of inspiration in life, and when he died, she lost hope.

"I do not care about myself. God will take care of me. I do not have any inspiration in life other than my father. When he died, it was on my birthday, which is today." - Lalay.

To reiterate the research problem, the researchers in this study concentrated on the emergence of the phenomenon of *Kanding* and the social interactions between the *Kandings* and their partners that involved sexual encounters.

The findings implied that the term *Kanding* emerged as a slang term commonly used in the drug subculture and discourse. The availability of illegal drugs in Iligan City is considerably more accessible due to the establishment of illegal drug trading, which was made up of *drug lords, sources, runners or pushers, and parokyano, or parok*.

Moreover, the study utilized the social exchange theory of George Homans, with the core tenet that interactions that result in another person's approval are more likely to be repeated than those that result in their disapproval (Crossman, 2020). The results imply that the *Kandings* obtained their rewards with either money or drugs through sex transactions and that their motivations were firmly rooted in their economic vulnerabilities and dependency on drugs. This is evident in the majority of results from research on the sex trade, where one of the main drivers of sex work is financial instability (Duria, 2021; Lasco, 2017; Legarde, 2023; Orchard et al., 2020). In addition, past studies counted drug usage as one of the risk factors for sex exchange (Homma et al., 2012; Kaestle, 2012; McNeal & Walker, 2015). Their implicit sexual agreements determine the rewards and advantages they receive, as well as their relative values. Although the *Kandings* claimed that drugs are always included in their transactions, they are allowed to choose between having money or illegal drugs available. The *Kandings* derived social rewards from their transactions, which included self-gratification from obtaining illegal drugs and meeting their basic needs. In their sexual encounters, reciprocity was also important. They anticipate doing the same for each other since they happen to exchange illegal drugs and sex.

However, there are instances where every interaction presents distinct costs or challenges. The majority of *Kandings* were stigmatized by the community and within themselves. Perceived stigma refers to the former, while self-stigma refers to the latter. Most of the female *Kandings* experienced both perceived stigma and self-stigma. It was when they were disrespected and labeled dirty by the community. They also felt filthy for themselves. While male *Kandings* only experienced perceived stigma but did not experience self-stigma because they are men. The findings about stigmatization are evident from the findings of past research regarding the differences between men's and women's experiences with sex work. Female participants shared numerous pessimistic accounts concerning the nature of their profession. One of the pressures of their line of work was the fear of being discovered and feeling ashamed. They were also reluctant to disclose their work for fear of being judged or labeled as promiscuous. In contrast, male participants are less ashamed or even pleased to report selling sex because it may make them feel more desired. Moreover, the fear of being "discovered" was absent in male participants (Kaestle, 2012; Van de Walle et al., 2012).

The potential for unresolved transactions within the exchanges is another challenge they encountered. A number of the informants, particularly the male *Kandings*, have reported not receiving payment for their sex work. Since the majority of their gay partners were regulars, they felt secure in knowing that they would be compensated. Furthermore, several *Kandings*—particularly the males—have reported contracting STIs from their continuous intercourse with random gays. A single female *Kanding* also became infected with STIs. The informants are skeptical that their illnesses are a threat. They did not even seek medical advice from a physician to address their infections. One person revealed that she followed her friends' advice on how to heal herself. Past studies involving sex work and drug use argued for a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) (Baseman et al., 1999; Urada et al., 2014).

Finally, in light of the concepts of distributive justice and equity in social exchange, the *Kandings* anticipate greater returns or benefits than the costs they bear. Many *Kandings* maintained their engagements for some time for the reasons mentioned above. However, as their transactions with their sexual partners developed, the costs began to exceed the benefits or rewards they could receive from the exchanges. As mentioned, the male *Kandings* received low payments or unpaid services from their gay partners. For the female *Kandings*, the stigma worsened when some of them felt intense shame and feelings of filth.

Although most of the *Kandings* interviewed in this study were former *Kandings*, the researchers found out that for some *Kandings*, specifically women, sexual exchanges with their sexual partners within the drug economy ceased to exist, but they continued their relationship with each other. Some of the female *Kandings* have their former sexual partners as their boyfriends or live-in partners. They formed a bond by developing deep emotional connections. Also, others felt the need to formalize their relationship for economic reasons such as providing food and housing rent. Moreover, the former *Kandings* pursued jobs both within and outside the illegal drug trading of

the city. Some of them became pushers or runners, *bugaws* or *pimps*, *selling babying pipes*, *dispatchers*, *food servers*, *tricked drivers*, and garbage collectors.

4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the term "Kanding" emerged in Iligan City due to the problem of drug usage and sex work, which led to interactions between numerous actors in illegal drug trading. The *Kandings* under investigation represent a disadvantaged community with few resources. Their upbringing in dysfunctional homes and communities had a profound impact on their personal development, which led them to succumb to drug use and limit their ability to take advantage of opportunities. This explains the reasons they manifest experiences of using drugs, prostitution, and having intimate relationships with their sexual partners to gain access and earn money despite challenges such as stigma, unresolved transactions, and the acquisition of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They were also kept outside of mainstream institutions by the stigma and criminality associated with drug use and sex work, which limited their ability to institutionalize their connections.

However, being a *Kanding* does not limit their aspirations in life. The informants maintained their optimism, wanting the best for their families, their children's success, and their deep belief in God to help them overcome such challenges. What is alarming is the fact that they are still involved in Iligan City's illegal drug trading and that they still use drugs. Moreover, the study captures the complex nature of sex work and drug usage in the field of deviant sociology, which highlights the need to understand and seek solutions. Thus, the researchers recommend that future researchers utilize different theoretical perspectives on the sociology of deviance to allow them to explore the discourse of drug use and sex exchange. Different approaches to research design are recommended, such as using quantitative and mixed methods. This would enable other researchers to look into the prevalence of the phenomenon. Regarding policy recommendations, it is recommended that government offices serve the needs of underprivileged and marginalized community members and strengthen their cooperation with one another. Government agencies that deal with drug use, addiction, and prostitution, such as the Iligan Anti-Drug Abuse Council (ICADAC) and Iligan City Health Office (CHO), ought to recognize the complexity of the problems that their clients face. Lastly, this research could be an initial step toward understanding the intricate nature of the sex-for-drug exchange that exists in Iligan.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The corresponding author, Jovell Nicole S. Along, gathered the data, encoded, analyzed the data, and wrote the results and discussions of this research. The other author, Renebel O. Labadiso, served as the research adviser who guided the formatting, interpreting, editing, and finalizing of the study's findings.

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