

**THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT  
OF  
RELAPSED DRUG USERS  
IN  
NEPAL**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of  
Tribhuvan University in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**in**

**ANTHROPOLOGY**

**By**

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## LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We certify that this dissertation entitled “*The Social Environment of Relapsed Drug Users in Nepal*” was prepared by Mr. Ashish Sinha under our guidance. We hereby recommend this dissertation for final examinations by the Research Committee of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of *DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY* in *ANTHROPOLOGY*.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the social environment of drug users who have relapsed following their stay at a drug rehabilitation center. The social environment paradigm of William C. Cockerham was taken as the basic premise for the study, which describes social environment as consisting of three clauses: actual living conditions; norms and values; and particular social and cultural context (presupposed as ‘alienation’ by the study) of relapsed drug users. The understanding of the clauses of social environment is further reinforced by the theoretical perspectives of Phenomenology, Symbolic Interaction and Alienation. This study focuses on comprehending the sociological and anthropological intricacies that constitutes the three clauses of social environment of the relapsed drug users (RDUs). Further, the study also explores the stance of the drug rehabilitation centers and various service providers working with drug users, to understand their role and perspective on the phenomena of drug abuse in Kathmandu. This study is a balance of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and exploits tools such as a questionnaire, containing closed and open-ended queries and ethnographic approaches, including participant observation, interviews, and case studies to derive the data for the study. The study, with the use of purposive sampling technique, located a sample of 153 RDUs, and 4 additional participants for case studies through 6 drug rehabilitation centers located in Kathmandu. The study found the social environment of RDUs as characterized by high degree of incarceration, risky behavior, discontinuity of education and employment, long and intensive drug career, easy access to drugs, high degree of association with user friends, early resumption of drug use following discharge from rehabilitation centers, long duration of drug use following relapse, and high level of regrets and self pity (among RDUs living with HIV/AIDS). Findings also showed no clear indications on the differences of social environment between married and single RDUs. Further, alienation, even as being clearly evident, wasn’t present in its severest form amongst the RDUs. The study also found intact relationships for a majority of RDUs with their families, and high regards from RDUs on their recovery and on their family and social obligations.

Further, relapse, as the study found out was a critical social-cultural phenomena to be understood and tackled. Findings showed that various socio-cultural situations and antecedents, weaker defensive mechanisms of drug users, their intensive drug use career, specific events and gaps within intervention efforts seemed to have initialized, catalyzed or compounded the craving urge and thus creating a compulsion to use drugs.

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**Annex Table G.115. RDUs' Needle Sharing frequency, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.116. RDUs' Drug Use Characteristics, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.117. RDUs' Beliefs and Values, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.118. RDUs' Relationships with Parents/Spouse, by Marital Status**ERROR!  
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**Annex Table G.119 RDUs' Number of Cessation attempts, by Marital Status .....**ERROR!  
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**Annex Table G.120. RDUs' Means and Number of Cessation Attempts, by Marital Status**.....ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.121. Reasons for Cessation of Drugs, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.122. Clean Dates of RDUs following DRC discharge, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.123. Duration of Drug Use after Relapse, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.124. Decision Makers for RDUs’ DRC enrolment, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.125. Question: Did you stay full time at the DRC prior to your relapse(s)? (By Marital Status) .....**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.126. Table ‘Very True’ Reasons Behind Relapse(s), by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

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**Annex Table G.128. Common Issues behind Multiple Relapses, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.129. ‘Other’ Issues and Multiple Relapse, by Marital Status**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.130. Question: What factors did you utilize to subside the craving of drugs after you left the center? (By Marital Status) .....**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.131. Factor(s), besides craving, that invited Relapse (By Marital Status)**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

**Annex Table G.132. Factors that could have Prevented RDUs from Relapse, by Marital Status .....**ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AFTC	Asian Federation Therapeutic Community
ASC	Area Service Committee.
CDO	Chief District Officer
DADRP	Drug Abuse Demand Reduction Project
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Drug Rehabilitation Center
DUs	Drug Users
FC	Freedom Center
FDUs	Female Drug Users
GSR	Group Service Representative
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDU	Injecting Drug User
IDUWHA	Injecting Drug User Living with HIV/AIDS
IGP	Inspector General of Police
INGOs	International Non Governmental Organizations
LALS	Life Giving and Life Saving
MOHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NA	Narcotics Anonymous
NCSAP	National Center for STD and AIDS Prevention
NDCD	Narcotic Drug Control Division
NIDA	National Institute on Drug Abuse
NK	Nava Kiran Center
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
PLWHA	People Living With HIV/AIDS
RDU	Relapsed Drug User
RDUWHA	Relapsed Drug User Living with HIV/AIDS
RFN	Richmond Fellowship Nepal
RFN-M	Richmond Fellowship Nepal – Male

## ABBREVIATIONS (Continued)

RFN-W	Richmond Fellowship Nepal – Women
RN	Recovering Nepal
RSC	Region Service Committee
SI	Symbolic Interaction
SLC	School Leaving Certificates
SPs	Service Providers
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SXSSC	St. Xavier’s Social Service Center
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Project
TC	Therapeutic Community
TD/TT	Tidigesic
UNODC	United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime
UNODCCP	United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
YV	Youth Vision Center
WFTC	World Federation Therapeutic Community
WHO	World Health Organization
WSO	World Service Office