

Executive Summary

Discovering the reasons drug abusers started taking drugs are important to lower the rate of drug use. Nevertheless, exploring significant desisters is also crucial to assist abusers in desistance, prevent ex-drug abusers' relapse, and maintain low drug use rates in society. Yet, the data of local youths' desistance from drugs is rare. Thus, the aim of our project is to extend the current knowledge pertaining to desistance theory by examining pathways to desistance among young ex-drug users in Hong Kong.

For the sake of a comprehensive qualitative research, our project team recruited 76 interviewees in total by using purposeful sampling to conduct in-depth interviews. In which, the 76 interviewees were divided into 3 groups evenly, including ex-drug abusers, significant others and case workers. After conducting all interviews, our project team focused on data analysing by adopting an inductive coding approach. Throughout the two-year period of research, it is found that there are 11 notable desisters, including 2 static factors- gender and criminal history, and 9 dynamic factors- family, peers, intimate partner, social worker, work engagement, growth, positive changes, self-concepts, and social roles. Among the 11 desisters, family, intimate partner, and the 4 personal dynamic factors including growth, positive changes, self-concepts, and social roles are more significant than other desisters being found from the local and overseas literatures. For an easier understanding, our project team has developed a conceptual model and a set of basic principle for the pathways to desistance in local settings. Ultimately, several recommendations on current drug desistance services for local young people and the future direction of the development of drug desistance services for local young people are discussed and suggested.