



CHALLENGES AND COPING MECHANISMS OF PERSONS DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY OF SABLAYAN PRISON AND PENAL FARM IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT: *The primary purpose of the study was to determine the challenges and coping mechanisms of the selected Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) of Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm (SPPF), Occidental Mindoro, Philippines. The study made use of qualitative descriptive design. An interview guide was used to collect the data. Owing to the Prison Superintendent's permission and prerogative only three (3) PDLs were allowed to participate in the study. The participants were selected based on criteria such as being not from Mindoro, being head of the family, on minimum security, and first time offender. The participants during the data gathering disclosed that they had trouble inside the prison. It includes difficulties in adjusting to prison life, the feeling of powerlessness, adherence to unwritten laws, bearing the pain for the sake of the family, staying out of trouble, exploitation of the weak, and they feel that they are the forgotten the victims. The effects of these difficulties vary among individuals because they have their ways of adapting to the prison environment. One of the participants thought of self- destruction, while others develop adaptive behavior towards incarceration. Other repercussions of challenges are self-reflection and self- renewal, faith in God, prison as a haven and positive outlooks in life. The challenges were either helpful or harmful in the participants' life. Moreover, the study revealed that to cope with the prison environment the participant chose to become submissive, bear the consequences of their act, keeps themselves busy, and, remained active in religious activities.*

KEYWORDS: *Prison challenges, imprisonment, adaptive behavior, experiences of inmates, coping strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Imprisonment is painful. The pains of imprisonment, however, cannot be viewed by being limited to the loss of physical liberty. The significant hurts lie in the frustrations or



deprivations which led to the withdrawal of freedom, such as the lack of heterosexual relationships, isolation from the free community, the withholding of goods and services, and so on. So how painful these frustrations or deprivations may be in the immediate terms thwarted goals, discomfort, boredom, and loneliness, they carry more pain like a set of threats that are against the foundations of the prisoner's being. The individual's picture of himself as a person of value begins to waver and grow dim. Prisoners also lost society's trust, status citizenship and material possessions, which constituted a large part of their self-perception (Shammas, 2017).

Prisons aimed to cure criminals of crime; however, their record has not been encouraging. Prisons produce more harm than good. The pains of prison confinement affect all PDLs differently. In some PDLs, the significant cause of depression would include the loss of communications with family and friends outside the prison. There is also the fear of deterioration — the lack of personal choice within the prison environment which may affect PDLs. After many years of being told on what to do, they may well lose the ability to think for themselves and make their own decisions and choices freely (Tomar, 2013).

Moreover, PDLs also suffer emotionally. Emotions are feelings that so change men as to affect their judgment, and that are also attended by pain or pleasure. Such are hatred, pity, fear and the like, with their opposites. Emotion is indeed a heterogeneous category that covers a broad variety of important psychological phenomena. Some emotions are very complex, insofar as they concern a specific person, object, or situation. Others, such as distress, joy, or depression, are very general. Emotion is the current experience and reflection, as when one “wallows” in it, or it may pass virtually unnoticed and unacknowledged by the subject. An emotion may be profound, in the sense that it is essential to one's physical survival or mental health, or it may be trivial or dysfunctional. An emotion may be socially appropriate or inappropriate. It may even be socially obligatory—e.g., feeling of remorse after committing a crime (Solomon, n.d.).

In a study on young offenders, Biggam and Power (1997) found that anxious and depressed PDLs reported inadequate practical and emotional support from those around them. They



also found that those prisoners with high levels of hopelessness felt they received less emotional and practical support from prison officers.

Many early researchers concluded that incarceration had negative psychological and physical effects on its PDLs, leading to psychological deterioration. These effects included emotional withdrawal, depression, suicidal thoughts or actions and increasing levels of hostility (Tomar, 2013). A recent study shows that the inmates experienced high levels of psychological difficulties and significant feelings of helplessness. It was carried out by the Psychologist in Clinical Training on placement with the Department Justice Psychology Service (O’Riordan, 1990). Likewise, fear, anxiety, loneliness, trauma, depression, injustice, powerlessness, violence and uncertainty are all part of the experience of prison life (Liebling, 2005). The result was one in two prisoners had thought about killing himself at some point in his life, and one in three had tried to do so (O’Riordan, 1999). These ‘hidden,’ but everywhere apparent, features of prison life have not been measured or taken seriously enough by those interested in the question of prison effects (Liebling & Maruna, 2005).

Similar to these, the study of Narag and Jones (2016) asserted that the propensity to use PDL leaders is a critical issue that concerns the Department of Justice (DOJ), which supervises the BuCor. The PDLs had been used to managing other inmates, which translated into PDLs usurping their power, challenging prison authorities, and creating power dynamics that contradicted the goals of reformation. In some prisons, abuse was systemic, prompting victimized inmates to seek redress from the courts by challenging the conditions of their confinement.

Relative to this, the prison environment has described as a barely controlled jungle where the aggressive and the strong will exploit the weak, and the weak are dreadfully aware of it (Bowker, 1980).

This exploitation is evident like correctional treatment that is infinitely more intrusive than punishment because it does not respect the ability and right to make choices of an individual. It considers their behavior as “controlled” by factors that can be influenced by



the intervention. Pennsylvania's system of correctional discipline was based on total PDLs isolation for the length of confinement coupled with complete silence between inmates with the exception being made for religious services and contact with staff. This philosophy of confinement was thought to encourage inmate reflection of their life and criminal act, which in turn would allow them to seek the proper path to redemption. Inmate cells contained a Bible to encourage redemption (Rothman & Morris, 1996).

Besides, the ability to deal with and to understand a wide variety of persons is a central skill in avoiding troubles. Besides complying with prison rules and the inmate code of conduct, social skills like getting along well and communicating assertively with others appear to facilitate interpersonal relationships, therefore preventing recurrent conflicts (DeRosia, 1998).

However, not everyone can deal with and understand a variety of person. There are many PDLs who come from socially and economically marginalized groups and have had adverse experiences in childhood and adolescence that may have made them more rather than less vulnerable to psychological stressors and less able to cope effectively with the chronic strains of prison life than those with less problematic backgrounds (Petersilia & Reitz, 2012).

Most people agree that the harsher dangerous, or otherwise psychologically- taxing the nature of confinement, the higher the number of people who will suffer and the deeper the damage that they will incur (Haney, 2001).

Prison has a significant impact on the members of PDL's families wherein they experienced a form of 'selective visibility' which varies depending on the context. For example, from a prison management perspective, family contacts necessitate provision for visits; raise security questions, and are linked to prisoner well-being. In the actual prison context, the day-to-day realities of visits involve officers and prisoners alike in rules, regulations, procedures, and routines which make these visits possible. In this context, families are always either present or imminently present. From a policy point of view, however, they are an additional optional consideration. For example, it may be a matter of custom and



practice to take family considerations into account in sentencing, and indeed some recent cases have considered the impact of a prison sentence on the offender's children, but this approach is not universal (Piper, 2007).

Nevertheless, individuals who maintain connections with their social networks outside of prison have lower rates of reoffending and that the timing and consistency with which visitation occurs also affect criminal behavior. Specifically, prisoners who are visited early and who experience a sustained pattern of visitation are less likely to recidivate (Cochran, 2013).

Considering all the issues mentioned above research is needed to identify the psychosocial mechanisms through which incarceration at the ecological and contextual level affects individual-level mental health outcomes. One potential mechanism is social capital and beneficial social relationships. These processes are severely disrupted in neighborhoods where large numbers of its residents are involved in the criminal justice system and are strongly related to mental health, including depression. Stigma may be another social process linking neighborhood incarceration and individual mental health outcomes, just as family members experienced stigma when their loved ones were incarcerated ([Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hamilton, Uddin, & Gaea, 2015](#)).

To sum it up, imprisonment produces negative behavioral and physical changes in some PDLs, especially, the prison conditions that aggravate the changes. Although imprisonment is not monotonously devastating or certainly damaging to individual PDLs, particular inabilities to cope and adapt and the vulnerabilities of the PDLs can come to the forefront of the prison setting. The attitudes and behavior patterns that occur can be in many forms, from deepening social and emotional withdrawal to utmost aggression and violence.

In the context of coping behavior, prisoners differ from each other in terms of vulnerabilities and backgrounds and in how they cope with the same kinds of events and environments. As a result, the same experiences inside the prison have different consequences for different PDLs. However, the goal of placing people inside the prison is not only for punishment but



also with the intent of rehabilitating them and eventually they will leave the prison as a law-abiding citizen (Travis & Western, 2014).

Over the last decade, Philippine correctional facilities such as the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) conducted a survey that showed that their prisons and penal farms garnered 5038 admissions. However, 20% of those admitted were recidivists or ex-offenders who were previously released but were convicted again for the same or a different crime. This is startling because the Philippines' recidivism rate during 2004 was only 5%. With the capacities of our prisons decreasing faster each year and the conditions getting severe, the eventual result was often forgotten – offenders leave prisons with few marketable skills, secondary education, severe emotional problems, broken spirits and anxiety for what comes next (BuCor, n.d.). In 2017, BuCor maintained in its custody an average daily inmate population of 42,172 prisoners wherein 38,990 are males, and 3,182 are females, distributed in its seven (7) operating prisons and penal farms (OPPFs) throughout the country. Out of this number, a total of 5,674 were admitted at the Assessment, Rehabilitation, Program Development and Monitoring Division of NBP, of which 3.8% were re-offenders and the rest were first-time inmates in the BuCor (Department of Justice [DOJ], 2017).

Further, the study of Payne (2007) provides some evidence that current custodial sentencing practices are doing little to deter people from returning to prison. While the recidivism research in Australia presents two out of three prisoners, they have previously been incarcerated, and between 35% and 41% of prisoners return to prison within two years of being released back into the community. The economic and social consequences of Australia is rapidly expanding the prison population, and high recidivism rates have increased pressure on governments and correctional facilities to develop informed policies and programs to rehabilitate prisoners.

On the other hand, Religion plays an essential role in rehabilitation. As a 2006 Federal Bureau of Prisons report put it, "faith groups have become involved in offering formal programs within the prison to bring about not only the spiritual salvation of the inmates but



their rehabilitation in the profane world as well." The idea is that spiritual rebirth may help tame the criminal impulse and set wild hearts on the straight and narrow. In some prisons, ministers conducted regular congregation meetings. At one facility, for example, 32 attended a public lecture given in two of the prison yards. The results have been encouraging. A man incarcerated in the state of Indiana, who had received a life sentence for first-degree murder, made positive changes in his personality and was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The rehabilitation program is crucial to conquering the challenges inside the prison. It helps them fight boredom and most especially develops and improves their skills. In the faith-based rehabilitation program, various methods are used to reform the inmates. The inmates should get some primary education; otherwise, a large number of prisoners will remain illiterates. With education, inmates can do some decent works for a living after releasing the prisons. Research and studies show that encouraging a prisoner with education provides better results. After undergoing literacy and training, many former offenders have returned to normal life (Ward, 2012).

Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm is located in Occidental Mindoro. Established on September 26, 1954, under Presidential Proclamation No. 72, the penal colony has a total land area of approximately 16,190 hectares. Sablayan is a facility where inmates from National Bilibid Prison are brought for decongestion purposes. Most of them are from other provinces. It follows the same colony standards as other penal farms (Bucor, n.d.). As of April 11, 2019, the total number of inmates in Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm is 1,950.

With what the name dictates, 'Penal Farm,' most of the colonists complained of rigorous working conditions in the penal colony. They underwent work program—the massive farming and cultivation of lands, breaking of stones, clearing of the area and cutting of forested lands. However, proper discipline towards the colonists is enforced, that is why they experienced these kinds of work. According to BUCor (n.d.) the purpose of the inmate work programs is to keep the inmates busy, and to provide the money for their expenses and their families as well as help them acquire livelihood skills; in order that they become



productive and responsible citizens once they are assimilated back into the mainstream of society.

Aside from hard work, they also complained about the problems of not having enough facilities for conjugal visits, prolonged processing of their documents for executive clemency, and the distance from their family or loved ones is a significant source of anxiety and concern because they cannot be visited easily. Lack of writing materials and the cost of mails in which the postage is almost a luxury for them are other aired problems. There was also a lack of necessary laboratory facilities. However, at the SPPF, overcrowding is not a problem. There is a very good overall sanitation and prospects for a more self-supporting colony as far as food and nutritional supplies are concerned. Moreover, there is also an on-site case hearing provided by a visiting judge with his full-court staff and the Public Attorney's Office provides them with lawyers. However, still, the Assistance and Visitorial Office continue to review the synopsis submitted by the inmates and get their records directly from the officer's in-charge. The Commission on Human Rights and the Bureau of Pardons and Parole work together to follow-up the records of those inmates ready for signatures and approval of the President. Lastly, the commission shall continue with its Philippine Human Rights Plan for Prisoners/Inmates Sector to prevent abuse or maltreatment (Preda Foundation, 2016).

This situation implies that there are already problems present inside the prison and a further study is needed to address the other problems specifically on the challenges experienced by inmates during incarceration. This study presumes that the creation of an effective program for the inmates of SPPF has many benefits and can impact positively the lives of many inmates as well as their families. The program will promote positive coping strategies inside the prison and develop personal motivation toward affirmative action after incarceration that will make them a useful and law-abiding citizen upon re-entry to the community.



STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to determine the challenges experienced by the inmates of Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm in Sablayan, Occidental Mindoro.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following:

1. What are the challenges experienced by the Persons Deprived of Liberty inside the Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm?
2. How do the challenges affect the lives of Persons Deprived of Liberty inside the Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm?
3. What are the coping mechanisms used by the Persons Deprived of Liberty to conquer the challenges inside the Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm?
4. What action plan can be proposed to address the concerns based on the findings of the study?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The researchers used a qualitative- narrative approach. Interviewing is central to narrative research. This study created opportunities to reflect with respondents about their experiences inside Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm. Furthermore, interviewing allowed respondents to make explicit, coherent stories of how they account for what has happened to them which might otherwise have been left unsaid and passed unnoticed.

The narrative approach allowed the respondents to feel uninhibited to express themselves in their own words and focused on what is most important to them; the researchers opted for semi-structured interviews based on open-ended questions. Because the interviews were grounded in shared experiences, they unfolded like comfortable conversations. There was a considerable degree of variation among the interviews, with comments generating unanticipated questions. There was also a reflective dimension to the interviews, as respondents took advantage of a rare moment's stillness to gather their thoughts and share stories about their experiences in prison. The interview process caused no surprises. Before the interview, the researchers showed the list of the questions to be asked to the



respondents. The intention was to set their minds at ease so that their stories would flow freely during the interview.

POPULATION AND LOCALE OF THE STUDY

The qualitative narrative approach works well with small samples because the researchers can focus further on the details of stories told by the participants. The proposed number of participants to this study was six (6); however, the Superintendent of the Bureau allowed only three (3) PDLs to be interviewed, and the psychologist agreed to that. They were selected based on the psychologist's assessment and the criterion set by the researchers.

Purposive sampling was used in this qualitative study for the selection and identification of information-rich respondents related to the phenomenon of interest. The researchers used the criterion-based selection as a sampling method. In this method, the researchers chose the respondents based on the following criteria:

1. **He must not be from Mindoro.** Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm is located at the island of Mindoro. As of April 11, 2019, there are 1,950 inmates at the SPPF, and most of them are not from Mindoro. To reach the Prison one has to ride in a ferry, transfer in a bus and hire a tricycle to reach the Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm. It takes time, money and effort to visit the inmates of SPPF. This situation hampers the relatives from visiting the inmates of SPPF. This leads to a lack of communication that intensifies depression and loneliness.

2. **Head of the family.** In the Philippines, males are considered as the head of the family because they are the ones who provide the needs of his family. These circumstances add agony to the inmate because he knows that his situation will impair the normal life of his family.

3. **Classified as a minimum security inmate.** Minimum security inmates are those who can be reasonably trusted to serve their sentences under less controlled conditions. They have served one-half (1/2) of their minimum sentence or one-third (1/3) of their maximum



sentence, excluding Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA). Considering the length of their stay inside the prison, they can be information-rich respondents.

4. First time offender. Life behind bars is far different from the life outside prison. The first time offender is the best respondent for this study because everything is new to him. He has to deal with the difficulties that transpire inside the prison. These difficulties have positive and negative effects on the inmates depending on how he coped with the present situation.

The researchers chose SPPF as the locale of the study because PDLs of the penal farm was already convicted. They already knew that they have to stay inside the facility for a more extended period. Unlike the detainees, there is still hope that anytime they will be released from jail. Thus, the PDLs from SPPF were the most qualified participants of the study because of the length of time they spent inside the prison. Hence, the Superintendent allowed three PDLs to participate in this study.

This study is hoped to enlighten the readers on the concept of the double sentence which means that a PDL does not only suffer deprivation of liberty but more than that, there are challenges they have to deal with inside the facility. This will also give insight to the reader that life behind bars is not easy and will deter them from committing a crime.

DATA GATHERING TOOLS

The researchers wanted to capture the challenges experienced by the PDLs. Thus, a qualitative- narrative approach was appropriate. Using this lens, the research concentrated on the subjective experiences and emotional response of the respondents to better understand the essence and meaning of what they perceived to be their experiences.

The researchers formulated the questions and ensured that all questions were under the ethical standards of research involving inmates. It was approved by the Prison Superintendent of SPPF to guarantee that questions are acceptable in the context of a setting in which safety and security are primary. Additionally, it was checked by a licensed psychologist to avoid emotional harm and psychological trauma on the participants. It



served as protection against exploitation and guaranteed that research was beneficial to inmates.

TREATMENT OF DATA

The researchers adopted thematic analysis. The process gave more emphasis on the told, the events or the content of the narratives and paid a little attention to how a story unfolded during the conversational exchange between the researchers and the respondent.

Each transcript was analyzed individually. Several readings of each transcript preceded “initial noting” of descriptive comments which were then coded to form “emergent themes.” This was repeated for each transcript before searching for similarities, idiosyncrasies, and patterns across the entire data corpus.

In analyzing qualitative data, the researchers separated themselves from the data. To maintain objectivity and avoid bias, the researchers reviewed the findings with peers and dissertation adviser. The researchers asked them to review the conclusions. During the review of the findings, they saw things that the researchers missed and identified gaps that were then considered by the researchers.

The validity of the measurement device in this study was in the procedures to control how the data was collected and analyzed. Consistency tended to be a foremost element to the collection and analysis of the data. Consistency in how interviews were conducted, questions that were asked, setting of the interviews, and length of the interviews tended to provide more similar, reproducible data. Consistently looking at the data for clearly defined themes also added to the validity of the study.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The PDLs are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse by research because their freedom for consent can easily be undermined. The PDLs were treated based on the ethical framework for research involving inmates. The researchers made themselves sure that the respondents voluntarily submitted themselves to the interview and, in return, the researchers promised



confidentiality and anonymity by using K1, K2, and K3 as their pseudonym. The researchers also informed the participants of their right to refuse to participate. To safeguard the respondent against traumatic experiences, the researchers was assisted by a registered psychologist throughout the conduct of the study.

To ensure that the needed information was extracted from the participants, the researchers chose a qualified psychologist who assisted her during the conduct of the interview. The psychologist is a Registered Psychologist, Registered Guidance Counselor, and Registered Psychometrician. He is a Certified Specialist in Counseling Psychology and Certified Specialist in Clinical Psychology by the Psychological Association of the Philippines. He also served as psychologist/counselor in Dasmaringas City Jail, Dasmaringas City, Cavite, BJMP and *Bahay Pag-Asa* (Institution for Children and Youth in Conflict with the Law, De Lasalle University in Dasmaringas, Cavite, Philippines. He performed briefing and debriefing procedures to the participants, as well as, to the researchers to make sure that participants were not psychologically and emotionally harmed in any way during their participation in the study. This approach prevented post-traumatic disorder and other adverse sequelae.

The researchers upheld the general principle for all research: Ethically permissible research must offer benefits to PDLs that outweigh the risks. Analyzing all the potential risks is crucial. The researchers sensibly selected the words to be used on the questions and during the interview because some words might trigger harmful emotional or psychological responses. Gaining the trust of the respondents was very crucial in this study because it made the participants more cooperative and honest in answering the questions. Thus, they were informed that pseudonyms were employed to maintain the anonymity of their identity. Likewise, to ensure the protection from exploitation and to be truly ethical, the researchers actively considered what is best for the participants, and the organization.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Challenges Experienced by the PDLs

The stories about the challenges inside the prison were elicited from the actual experiences of the PDLs of Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm. The stories started from the time they entered the prison until they arrived at Sablayan and Prison Penal Farm.

Prison environment contributes a significant number of challenges that directly and indirectly influence PDL's emotions and behaviors. The impact of these challenges inside the prison depends on an individual because many prisoners come from socially and economically marginalized groups. Also, have had adverse experience in childhood and adolescence that may have made them more rather than less vulnerable to psychological stressors and less able to cope effectively with the chronic strains of prison life than those with less problematic backgrounds (Petersilia & Reitz, 2012). Below are the themes that emerged from the challenges experienced by the inmates inside the prison.

Difficulties of Adjusting to Prison Life

The difficulties of imprisonment lie on how PDLs adjusted from being free to be controlled and restricted. Adjustment to the prison community is a complicated process for the first time offender because of his assimilation into the new and different kinds of environments and individuals. An inmate explains:

K3: "Mahirap kasi yung kinasayanan nating galaw sa malayang lipunan natin, hindi ko na magawa dito sa loob. Hirap po bukod sa hirap sa katawan, malayo ka sa mahal mo sa buhay, malayo ka sa magulang mo at sa kapatid mo." (It is very hard because of the habit that I used to do in a free community I cannot do it here. Aside from the physical pain, you are far from your loved ones; you are away from your parents and siblings).

Adjustment means psychological processes in which people cope and manage the challenges or demands of everyday life. Indeed, prison life is considerably distinct from the



life outside because of the deprivation of the things they used to do and the things they used to have outside the prison. Adjustment to prison life depends on how one dealt with it. As one offender noted in Laub and Sampson's (2003) study, —A prison will either break you or make you.'

Generally, difficulties in adjusting to prison life have a psychological impact that changes the foundations of the prisoner's being. The inmate's adjustment depends on the influenced of the prison environment itself and his characteristics before he enters prison.

Corollary to this, Shammass (2017) mentioned the significant hurts that lie in the frustrations or deprivations which attend the withdrawal of freedom, such as the lack of heterosexual relationships, isolation from free community, the withholding of goods and services, and so on.

Further, deprivation theory argues that prisonization is an adaptive process employed by inmates to cope with the social and physical deprivations of imprisonment. Faced with similar deprivations, inmates begin to try to solve their problems collectively. Once such a collective response occurs, an inmate society begins to form, "a society that includes a network of positions, which reflect various types and levels of commitment to subcultural norms as well as adaptive reactions to the problems of confinement" (Paterline & Orr, 2016).

Feeling of powerlessness

Prison culture denotes weakness and vulnerabilities among the PDLs and such vulnerability invites exploitation. In an environment characterized by powerlessness, prisoners are confronted with a situation where submission and dominance become entangled with. Upon arrival to the Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm, inmates recounted their stories:

K2: "Madaling araw alas cuatro gising na po kami nyan magtatarima na po kami nyan andun na po kami hanggang sa magbukas ang pinto ng ala sais. Kapag nakita kang sumalampak at nakita po nya na baliko po yun, yun po nakaranas po kami ng tadyak



ma'am. Mula sa unahan ma'am sisipain yan ngdi-ranggo tutumba talaga kayo ma'am"(The counting starts at dawn at 4 AM we are already awake until the door would open at 6 AM. If you flopped and they saw that there is a slight bending ma'am, from the first person in line, the "di-ranggo" will kick that person, and all of you like dominos will flop, ma'am).

K1: "Nagtanim kami ng palay. Nagbukid, eh, wala kaming kaalam- alam. Mahirap mag- adjust kasi hindi ako lumaki sa bukid" (We planted rice. We did farming even if we do not know it. It is very hard to adjust because I did not grow up in a field).

K2: "Pahinga lang namin yung kain, kain lang tapos papatarimahin kami lima-lima, (nakaganun lang) hindi kami pwedeng sumalampak." (Our only rest was when it was time to eat. We were forced to do "tarima" five over five like this (making actions), and we must not flop).

In prison, there are formal rules that must be obeyed by the PDLs. However, some informal rules and norms are part of unwritten but crucial in inmate and institution's code and culture that on the same level must be abided. Often, they have no choice over when they must get up or go to bed and on what to eat. Besides, the existence of abusive inmate leaders and doing rigorous work contribute to physical abuse.

The result of powerlessness inside the prison is the victimization of the weak and the dominance of the powerful. Powerlessness is a psychological issue that upsurges anxiety, depression and physical abuse on the inmate.

As Rothman and Morris (1996) contended, the correctional treatment is infinitely more intrusive than punishment because it does not respect the individual's ability and right to make choices inside the prison. It regards their behavior as "controlled" by factors that can be influenced by the intervention.



It corroborates with the statement of Haney (2001) which asserts that the more extreme, harsh dangerous, or otherwise psychologically- taxing the nature of confinement, the higher the number of people who will suffer and the deeper the damage that they will incur.

This strengthens the findings in the study of Tomar (2013) on the “The Psychological Effects of Incarceration on inmates” that there is a deprivation of personal choice within the prison environment which may affect prisoners. After many years of being told what to do, they may well lose the ability to think for themselves and make their own decisions and choices freely.

However, the reformatory theory states that the object of punishment should be reformatory. The offender should be reformed. The prisons should be converted into reform homes. This is supported by Reformists who look sanction as an instrument of rehabilitation and tries to mold the behavior of criminal on the premises that criminals are not born but made by the environment of society (Mishra, 2016).

Adherence to the unwritten laws

The subculture describes the customs, beliefs, attitudes, values, and lifestyles of the PDLs within a particular prison. These subcultures were embraced by the PDLs to survive inside the prison. One of these is the shared leadership of prison personnel and PDLs. Such shared leadership is deduced from the narrative of one of the respondents.

K3: “Vice- Mayor po ako. Para sa akin challenge, mahirap kasi sa bawat tao mo na nagkakaroon ng problema tawag ka, tatawagin ka ng mga empleyado, ikaw ang unang tatawagin, mayor, vice, pataas.” (It is very challenging in a way that whenever there is a trouble you will be summoned, you will be summoned by the employees, you will be the first one to summon, the mayor, the vice-mayor and other rankings).

However, few chose not to abide and faced the consequences of contradicting the practices, as illustrated in the narrative that follows.



K1: *“Niyakap ko ang rehas para hindi ako matattoo- an. Pinahirapan ako, pinaglinis ako ng mga inidoro.”*(I chose to embrace the bars so that they will not put a tattoo on me. I was tortured, they let me cleaned the toilets).

Based on the stories of the participants, the prevailing subcultures inside the prison are shared leadership between the prison personnel and inmates and the presence of tattooing. Even though shared leadership is prohibited inside the prison, this type of penal management arose from the lack of resources given to the prison as an institution. This trend augments the difficulties experienced by the participants since inmate leaders can be abusive and non-rankings are oppressed. About the presence of tattooing inside the prison, inmates are obliged to accept and follow it because if they contradict it, they will face the consequences of defying it. Tattooing is one of the lifestyles in prison, and everyone is encouraged by other inmates to put tattoos on their bodies.

An unwritten law has a direct and indirect psychological and social impact on the inmates. In the stories of participants, it is apparent that this trend could dreadfully affect their lives inside the prison that intensifies the pain of imprisonment.

According to Paterline and Orr (2016), the creation of such a subcultural system is seen as an effective means of resolving many of the problems of prison life. However, the proponents of the deprivation model argued that the subculture into which inmates are assimilated is a reflection of the pains of imprisonment that are caused by the structure of the prison organization. This means that an understanding of inmates' attitudes, values, and behavior can be gained through an examination of the influences that are indigenous to the prison setting.

In the study of Narag and Jones (2016), the propensity to use inmate leaders is a critical issue that concerns the Department of Justice (DOJ), which supervises the BuCor. Inmates were used to managing other inmates, which translated into inmates usurping their power, challenging prison authorities, and creating power dynamics that contradicted the goals of



reformation. In some prisons, abuse was systemic, prompting victimized inmates to seek redress from the courts by challenging the conditions of their confinement.

Relative to the cultures of tattooing inside the prison, the tattoo literature indicates that society influences tattooing behavior and people's perceptions of tattoos (Jankowski, 2004). Solidifying one's identity is particularly crucial in prisons where individual identity is limited for inmates (DeMello, 1993). However, the identity that is often solidified is one of being a convict (DeMello, 1993). Should the individual decide to move away from the criminal lifestyle at a later time, the individual may wish to have tattoos removed (DeMello, 1993).

Bearing pain for the sake of the family

In the Philippines, families are valued highly. One of the Filipino values is, family comes first among many other priorities in life. These values are still inculcated in the minds of inmates. It can be observed through the sufferings of the inmates for the sake of their families. An inmate shares his experienced, as a son:

K1: *"Nangako ako kay mama na hindi ako magpapa- tattoo. Pinanindigan ko po ang sinabi ko sa kanya kaya po ang ginawa nila sa akin pinahirapan ako."* (I promised my mother that I will not put any tattoo. So, they tortured me as I keep my promise).

As a father, he also reveals:

K1: *"Hindi ko rin masusustentuhan yung anak namin. Basta sabi ko magsabi lang sya kung mag-aasawa na siya."* (I cannot support my child. I just told her to inform me if she married again).

The participant's pain for his family is a piece of evidence on how Filipinos value their family. It should be noted that the participant endured all the physical pain inside the prison in exchange for keeping his promise to his mother. Besides, he renounced his right as a husband and a father by allowing his wife to find someone new to provide the needs of his family.



These pains encompass psychological and physical abuse that is being endured by the participant while in prison. This concludes that imprisonment cannot hinder someone from proving his love for the family.

Similar to this, Piper (2007) affirms that it may be a matter of custom and practice to take family considerations into account in sentencing, and indeed some recent cases have considered the impact of a prison sentence on the offender's children, but this approach is not universal.

Apart from this, in the prison community, inmates are bound with an unwritten contract that gives authority to punish those who violated unwritten rules. The concept of social contract proposes that all people freely and willingly agree to form a society by giving up a portion of their freedom for the return benefit of protection (Mickunas, 1990).

The findings were supported by the identity theory which is particularly useful for its ability to conceptualize the degree to which, and why parents enact or fail to enact roles associated with their parental identity. The lower rates of recidivism are linked to the protective role of a father, and the assumption is a particularly critical point (Hairston, 1991). Because of its ability to describe how identities and their associated roles are taken, discarded, and modified, identity theory holds promise for researchers and practitioners attempting to develop a better understanding of why fathers who are incarcerated succeed or fail in maintaining and re-establishing connections with their children.

Staying out of trouble

Prison community is comprised of different types of a wrongdoer. Thus, living in this kind of environment needs much effort to stay out of trouble. Participants tried their best to avoid trouble and stand on the belief that they must earn friends not enemy:

K1: *"Karamihan po ay naging kaibigan ko. Kasi nga po may kasabihan dito na mag-
ipon ka ng kaibigan wag ng mga kaaway."* (Most of the inmates are my friends.
Because there is a saying here that goes that you have to collect friends and not
enemies).



K3: *Pipilitin ko na hanggat kaya kong umiwas sa gulo pipilitin ko na kaya kong hindi ulit gawin.*" (I will make sure that if I can avoid trouble, I will avoid it).

Staying out of trouble is one of the hardest things to do inside the prison because trouble is just around the corner. Even if the prisoners are trying to learn from their mistakes and doing their best to attain the ultimate prize of being released from prison, there is someone who is still trapped in their criminal thinking. This means that they have to be mindful of what is going on around them. The participants said that for them to survive inside the prison; they must gain friends and stay focused on the path towards freedom.

Therefore, staying out of trouble is a social issue that has to be dealt with inside the prison. To deal with it, the prisoner must be aware of what is going on around him and commit himself to make the best out of his bad situation.

This corroborates with the statement of DeRosia (1998) who espoused that the ability to deal with and to understand a wide variety of persons is a central skill in avoiding troubles. Besides complying with prison rules and the inmate code of conduct, social skills like getting along well and communicating assertively with others appear to facilitate interpersonal relationships, therefore preventing recurrent conflicts.

Similarly, coping theory focuses on the interaction of the personal and environmental factors involved as inmates adapt to a life of incarceration.

Exploitation of the weak

In a place like a prison, the aggressive prevails and the weak are exploited. It is up for the inmates on what they want to become: the aggressive or the weak. An inmate confides his experience:

K3: *"Simula nang matuto akong magbisyo sa drugs. Noong napunta po akong NBP nadala ng mga kakosa mga kasama ayon natuto po ako."*(I learned to use drugs. I was influenced by my fellow inmates when I was placed at NBP).



It can be observed that some participant has a weak personality because the other inmates were able to persuade them. The inmate's behavior can, however, be attributed too, to the fear of being wronged. For fear of whatever may result from any defiance on his part, his better option is to blend with the others. Mostly the first time offender is the victim of this situation because of their vulnerability while in the new environment.

As a result, the participant suffered from psychological and social trauma. Psychological trauma because of the effects of the drugs that he dealt with and social because of the unwise decision of choosing acquaintances.

It is, therefore, true that the prison environment is a barely controlled jungle where the aggressive and the strong will exploit the weak, and the weak are dreadfully aware of it (Bowker, 1980). Inmates differ from each other in terms of how they behaved inside the prison. Some may suffer emotional withdrawal and choose to be alone, and some may result in resentment that may lead to aggression and violence. Moreover, non-criminal justice research indicates that drug and alcohol use is related to stressful life situations and may be used as a negative coping mechanism ([Saxon, Davis, Sloan, McKnight, McFall, & Kivlahan, 2001](#)).

Moreover, the prison environment has the power to shape behavior, often to the impairment of both prison workers and prisoners. Thus, prisoners differ from each other in terms of vulnerabilities and backgrounds and in how they cope with the same kinds of events and environments. As a result, the same experiences inside the prison have different consequences for different prisoners (Travis & Western, 2014).

Accordingly, social learning theory combines cognitive learning theory, which posits that learning is influenced by psychological factors, and behavioral learning theory, which assumes that learning is based on responses to environmental stimuli.



They are forgotten victims

Imprisonment is a punishment for crimes committed against society. However, we often forgot that imprisonment is just incapacitation. The difficulties behind bars and the consequences brought by imprisonment is real punishment. The participants confide:

K1: *“Yung pag-aasawa ng iba ng asawa ko, simula po kasi ako nakulong ma’am sinabi ko rin iyon na kung mag- aasawa siya walang problema kasi naging kasalanan ko rin.”*

(When my wife found another man, but from the start of my imprisonment ma’am I told her that there would be no problem if she finds someone new because I know that it is my fault).

K2: *“Dinala po kami rito, mula po noon hanggang ngayon hindi na po ako naalala ng misis ko.”*(Until they brought us here. Then, until now my wife never remembered me anymore).

K3: *“Naging problema ko po yung textmate ko, Noong bumiyahé na ako nadala na ako dito, Naging problema ko yun kasi iniisip ko, iniisip ko nasaan na kaya yung mga yun. Nasaan na kaya yung anak ko, saan na kaya sila pumunta?”* (My textmate was my problem. When they brought me here, I think if where they are. Where is my child? Where did they go?).

The imprisonment of an offender means restoring and repairing the harm suffered by the victim. However, prisoners are confronted with different types of difficulties not only inside the prison but also on their family. Their family was broken because of their current situation. From the time they entered the prison until they were interviewed nobody visited them.

For this reason, they are also a victim of the circumstances. The depression and anxiety they faced is a piece of evidence that imprisonment is enough to repair the damaged that has been done by the offenders. All they need is a chance to prove that they have been changed.



In a study on young offenders, Biggam and Power (1997) found that anxious and depressed prisoners reported inadequate practical and emotional support from those around them.

The pain is on the frustrations or deprivation they went through inside the prison such as lack of heterosexual relationships, no personal contact with the family that leads to broken homes, and isolation from the free community. They are also victims of circumstances around them and they suffered from their wrongdoings. The individual's picture of himself as a person of value begins to waver and grow dim. Prisoners also lost society's trust, status citizenship and material possessions, which constituted a large part of their self- perception (Shammas, 2017).

For some prisoners, the primary source of stress would include the loss of contact with family and friends outside the prison (Tomar, 2013). Travis and Western (2014) declares, "The imprisonment of millions of individuals and the disruption of their family relationships have significantly undermined the role that families could play in promoting our social well-being."

Hence, social exchange theory focused on marital quality and stability have posited that individuals weigh the costs and benefits of mate selection and of remaining in the marriage. The theory assumes that behavior is consistent with what individuals value in their lives.

The findings show that the challenges experienced by inmates are difficulties in adjusting to prison life, feeling of powerlessness, adherence to unwritten laws, bearing the pain for the sake of the family, staying out of trouble, exploitation of the weak and they are forgotten, victim. It can be inferred that the participants experienced difficulties upon entering the prison and these difficulties continue throughout their stay in prison.

These challenges affect their psychological and social well- being negatively and positively. Likewise, challenges have a direct and indirect influence on the participants' behavior.



Effects of the Challenges in the Lives of PDLs

The effects of challenges to the lives of inmates can be helpful or harmful. It varies from one individual to another and is often reversible. Their situation has a significant impact on how they will adapt to the prison environment. They do not have a place to call their own, no choice over, or what to eat, or where to go. There are risks and suspicions everywhere. Love or even a gentle human touch can be difficult to find. The inmates are separated from family and friends. Below are the themes that emerged on the effects of challenges to the lives of inmates inside the prison.

Thought of self- destruction

Participants feel hopeless. Depression is a common mental problem inside the prison and this depression makes him feel hopeless. The inmate expresses hopelessness and fear about the future:

K1: *“Sa umpisa po parang gusto ko ng sumuko. Iniisip ko na lang pamilya ko”* (At first, it seems like I wanted to give up. I think of my family).

K2: *“Meron time po na ganun ma’am noong nasa presinto pa lang po ako di pa po ako nalilipat sa Jail siguro wala pang dalawang linggo ma’am gusto kong magbigti noon ma’am. Oo dun pa sa detensyon namin ma’am ang sikip pero dun sa taas merong mga ano cord ng computer may nakalawit nacord dun, lambitin na lang kaya ako dito ginaganun ko ma’am”*(There was a time like that when I was still in the precinct and was still not transferred to Jail. Maybe just about two weeks in Jail, I thought of ending my life. Because in our detention, it is narrow but above there are computer wires or cords hanging. Upon seeing the wires, I thought, 'Should I hang myself here?').

With all the challenges they have gone through, the participants in this study felt hopeless because of the degrading situations under which they live and their sense of self-worth and personal value were diminished. In extreme cases, one participant thought of killing himself.



The participants suffered from a psychological problem such as the thought of self-destruction as the consequences of the challenges they experienced inside the prison. They thought of giving up, but because of their family, they chose to fight and overcome all the challenges brought by imprisonment.

These experiences support the findings of a recent study that prisoners experience high levels of psychological difficulties and significant feeling of helplessness. The study found out that one in two prisoners had thought about taking at some point his life and one in three had tried to do so. This study was carried out by a Psychologist in Clinical Training on replacement with on the Department of Justice Psychology service (O’Riordan, 1999).

Moreover, Tomar (2013) stated that many early researchers concluded that incarceration had adverse psychological and physical effects on its inmates, leading to psychological deterioration. These effects included emotional withdrawal, depression, suicidal thoughts or actions and increasing levels of hostility.

The experiences substantiate the functional adaptation theory which posits that the behavior and disposition of the inmate is the response to the prison environment (Bradford, 2006).

Develop adaptive behavior towards incarceration

Adaptation to imprisonment is at all times difficult and involves the incorporation of the norms of prison life into one’s habits of thinking, feeling, and acting. There are natural and normal adaptations made by prisoners in response to the unnatural and abnormal conditions of the prisoner’s life. As the respondents shared:

K1: “Sa pagtatrabaho at pakikisama ko sa mga nakakahalubilo ko na mga tao. Sa pag-uugali, marunong ka dapat makisama na hindi katulad dati sa laya na konting problema away agad. Eh dito dapat marunong ka makisama sa kapwa mo kasi ikaw rin magpapahamak sa sarili mo.”(Adaptation takes place in working and socializing with other people. In attitude, one must know how to deal with them unlike when I was still free; the little problem might cause immediate trouble. One must know how



to associate with the people here because your inability to associate may bring you harm).

K3: *“Nahirapan din po ako dito kasi nag withdrawal ako pagdating ko dito, hinahanap ng katawan ko yung drugs pero kung pursigido ka naman sa sarili mo na talikuran yung mga bisyo na ganun.”* (It is difficult because I underwent withdrawal here. My body longed for the drugs but if one is determined to quit the vice, nothing is impossible).

The challenges they have experienced taught them to adapt to the environment they live in. They have by now been aware of the trend within the prison and they learned how to deal with it. The participant learned that the best way to fight challenges is to develop a friendship with other inmates because their fellow PDLs cause most of the challenges. In addition to that, the participant who learned to use drugs inside prison suffered during withdrawal because of a lack of professional help. He said that his determination helped him to overcome it. His statement proved that if someone is determined to improve himself, he can endure everything even the adversity of withdrawing drug dependency.

To sum it up, the participants underwent psychological and social problem. They dealt with it by learning the trend and through a determination to achieve their goals. This statement proves that if someone is determined to improve himself, he can endure everything including the adversity of withdrawing drug dependency.

In prison, the PDLs focus on survival. They employed various mechanisms to adjust to stressful, unpleasant, and difficult situations inside the prison. The work of Johnson and Dobrzanska (2005) points toward the notion that humans can be highly adaptable regardless of the environment. In addition to that, the prison provides an environment in which inmates learn how to get along with other inmates and it also teaches inmates how to adapt to unfamiliar environments. As one inmate in a study noted of prison adjustment: “I think those in here have a real good adjustment ability... ability to adjust to different situations” (Crank, 2010).



The results confirmed the finding in the study of DeRosia (1998) who pointed out that the ability to deal with and to understand a wide variety of persons is a central skill in avoiding troubles. Besides complying with prison rules and the inmate code of conduct, social skills like getting along well and communicating assertively with others appear to facilitate interpersonal relationships, therefore, preventing recurrent conflicts.

The story of Tyler Tabor is contrary to the story of K3 when he was booked in a jail outside Denver on a spring afternoon in 2015. Three days later, Tabor died of dehydration at the Adams County jail, according to a coroner's report. The alleged cause: drug withdrawal (Lurie, 2017).

The theory of positive psychology indicates that actively cultivating "positive emotions" has direct and indirect mental and physical health benefits, including relief from depression (Seligman et al., 2005) and increased resilience against physical illness (Fredrickson, 2001).

Self- reflection and self- renewal

Self- reflection is the capacity to assess oneself and willingness to learn more about its fundamental nature and purpose while self- renewal is the act of renewing oneself. An inmate reflects on his experiences:

K3: "Binabago ako ng pagkakakulong, noong nakulong po ako naisip ko na ang hirap pala na maging mapusok. Ang hirap pala ng magdesisyon ka nang biglaan kasi yung pagdedesisyon napakadali lang pero yung kalalabasan ng desisyon mo napakahirap."

(Incarceration changed me. When I entered here, I realized that aggressiveness would not do good. An immediate decision is tough because making a decision is very easy, but the consequences of that decision will not be that easy).

The effects of challenges are the self- reflection and self- renewal of the participant. The participant recognized his wrong deeds and understood the reason for his imprisonment. Likewise, he realized that the immediate decision would not do good. It was evident that there is a positive result of rehabilitation.



In his case, the effect of challenges is helpful. The respondent began to heal from the psychological trauma brought by imprisonment.

The goal of placing people inside the prison is not only for punishment but also with the intent of rehabilitating them and eventually they will leave the prison as law-abiding citizens (Travis & Western, 2014).

Indeed, to suffer punishment is a debt due to the law that has been violated. Guilt plus punishment is equal to “innocence.” The concept behind expiatory theory is that the offender will serve the victims and their dependents to compensate for the deprivation which will create a sense of repentance and cleansing of hearts (Mishra, 2016).

This finding relates with the theory of ethical hedonism which claims that all and only pleasure has positive importance and all and only pain or displeasure has negative importance. This importance is to be understood non-instrumentally, that is, independently of the importance of anything that pleasure or displeasure might cause or prevent (Moore, 2018).

Faith in God

The participant’s painful experiences tested their faith in God. The findings below attest that inmates find God behind bars. One of the participants confirms it:

K2: “Ang kulungan ma’am ang nagpabuo ng pagkatao ko. Noon di ako marunong magbasa ng bible hindi ako marunong tumingin diyan ma’am. Simula nung nakaulong ako natuto ako. Lumakas yung pananampalataya ko. Wala na rin po talaga akong kinakapitan kundi Siya” (This prison completed my personality. Before I do not know how to read the Bible, I do not know how to find verses of it. However, since I stayed here, I learned about the Bible. It strengthened my faith. I hold on to nothing except Him).



These statements reveal that in times of challenges, PDLs tend to seek God to lighten their burden. That faith in God brings back their self-worth. Even though prison harmed their lives, in the end, they will realize that God is the only one who will never leave them behind. Based on the responses, the challenges produced a positive effect on the spiritual life of the participant. Thus, the spiritual recovery program of prison changed him into a better person.

Religion plays a vital role in rehabilitation. As a 2006 Federal Bureau of Prisons report put it, "faith groups have become involved in offering formal programs within the prison to bring about not only the spiritual salvation of the inmates but their rehabilitation in the profane world as well."

Relative to this revelation by the participant is the philosophy of confinement of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania's correctional systems' philosophy of confinement was thought to encourage inmate reflection of their life and criminal act, which in turn would allow them to seek the proper path to redemption. Inmate cells contained a Bible to encourage redemption (Rothman, 1998). Though there is no complete isolation in the Philippine prison settings, inmates are still encouraged to read bibles and participate actively in religious activities.

It corroborates with the functionalist perspective, which originates from Emile Durkheim's work on religion. The functionalists contend that religion serves several functions in society. Religion depends on society for its existence, value, and significance, and vice versa. From this perspective, religion serves several purposes, like providing answers to spiritual mysteries, offering emotional comfort, and creating a place for social interaction and social control. One of the most important functions of religion, from a functionalist perspective, is the opportunities it creates for social interaction and the formation of groups. It provides social support and social networking and offers a place to meet others who hold similar values and a place to seek help (spiritual and material) in times of need. It reinforces social norms such as appropriate styles of dress, following the law, and regulating sexual behavior.



Prison as a haven

In the previous discussions, the prison environment harms the psychological well-being of the PDLs; however, these findings suggest the positive impact of imprisonment on the participants. The participants explain:

K1: *“Hindi rin naman po ako nagsisisi na nandito na ako. Kasi kung nasa labas siguro ako patay na ako. Kasi yung mga naging barkada ko napatay na po sila lahat. Kaya nagpapasalamat ako sa panginoon na dinala ako dito para baguhin ang sarili ko. Anytime na lumabas ako hindi na ako gagawa ng mali.”* (I do not regret that I am here. If I am out there, maybe I am dead. My old friends were all already killed. So, I thank the Lord for bringing me here to change myself. Anytime, I go out I will not do anything wrong).

K2: *“Malaking pasasalamat ko na rin na nakulong ako ma’am kasi baka di ako nakulong ma’am baka matagal na din po akong patay dahil sa naging ugali ko sa laya.”* (I am very grateful because I think if I was not imprisoned, I might be dead already because of my attitudes outside Jail).

K2: *“Ang sabi ko sa kanila na uuwi lang po ako doon ma’am. Makita ko lang po yung nanay at tatay ko babalik po talaga ako dito. Dito na po ako magtatrabaho at maghahanap buhay kasi doon ma’am hindi ko masisigurado kaligtasan ko dun ma’am.”* (I told them that I would see them and go back here. I will find a job here and a source of living because if I come back there, I cannot assure my safety).

The results suggest that, even though the correctional institutions often incorporate abusive dynamics, for the participants, the prison is a relatively safe environment. Participants find prison as an oasis, they say, "it saved my life." One of the participants chose to live in a nearby barangay of a colony wherein they established a small community of ex-convicts. The good thing of establishing that community is that they are not recidivists.



These experiences affect the psychological and social well-being of participants. Through the challenges they went through, they still find prison as a haven relative to the level of safety as compared to before imprisonment.

Their statements show that they possessed positive emotions, as supported by Frederickson (2001), that a person's emotion includes joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, and inspiration, and impact attitudes and actions. Further, the model indicates that actively cultivating "positive emotions" has direct and indirect mental and physical health benefits, including relief from depression (Seligman et.al., 2005) and increased resilience against physical illness (Fredrickson, 2001). However, those who find a niche in prison can become a recidivist and sometimes chose to stay in Sablayan.

Maps (2017) studies corroborate this finding that it is common for former prisoners to have become 'dependent' on strict routines and rules. Depending on the length of their sentence, prisoners can experience a loss of life skills and knowledge of contemporary life. This, in turn, leads to even greater dependency and feelings of isolation on release. Heightened anxiety is common among prisoners, including 'gate fever'.

Relative to this, the coping theory examines individual differences in how inmates adapt to their environment. An example of how coping behaviors would represent an interaction between the inmate and the penitentiary environment could be the comparison of two individuals, both of whom are facing a long sentence in the same institution. The way the two individuals deal with their long sentences could also determine how they are each affected by the environment. While one might cope with the stress of long confinement by avoiding all thoughts of the future, the other may cope by finding a safe and comfortable behavioral niche within the institution.

Positive outlooks in life

It is a positive Filipino cultural value that Filipinos can always see a thread of positivity in a world full of negativity. In spite of all the challenges, the participant still believe in a positive future ahead of them. The inmates talked about what their plans are:



K1: *“Ang iniisip ko po ngayon ay tungkol sa mga anak ko. Ang makahanap ng maayos na trabaho para anytime na makabawi ako sa kanila suportahan ko sila.”* (What I am thinking right now is about my children. To find a good job so that I can catch up with them for my shortcomings and will be able to support them).

K3: *“Plano kong mag aral ulit ako ng TESDA. Gusto ko na ipagpatuloy yung pag aaral ko sa computer technician po. Hahanapin ko rin ang pamilya ko.”* (I want to study again in TESDA. I want to continue my studies as a computer technician. I will also find my family).

The positive outlook of participants decreases depression and encourages positive emotions. Their plans for their family after imprisonment confirms that they value their family above all. Their willingness to fulfill their shortcoming and to catch up for the lost time are signs that they changed to become a better and responsible person.

Therefore, the positive psychological effect of imprisonment is evident in how the inmates are directing their lives. Usually, prisons do little to prepare prisoners to address the immediate and practical needs they will face upon release. However, because they want to repair and rebuild the broken relationships with their family, they planned so that these plans will become a reality.

The participants' plan showed that they have high hopes in the future. However, according to Chambliss (2011), ex-convicts face barriers to obtaining jobs because of the stigma of having been in prison, and potential employers review applications for criminal backgrounds.

Further, the theory of positive psychology proposes that “positive emotions” have benefits beyond the experience of happiness. “Positive emotions,” according to Frederickson (2001), include joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, and inspiration, and impact attitudes and actions. Further, this model indicates that actively cultivating “positive



emotions” has direct and indirect mental and physical health benefits, including relief from depression and increased resilience against physical illness (Fredrickson, 2001).

The findings show that the effects of challenges are the following: the thought of self-destruction, adaptive behavior towards incarceration, self- reflection and self- renewal, faith in God, prison as a haven and positive outlooks in life. Thus, the challenges can be helpful or harmful in the participants' life.

Moreover, the inmates’ degrading condition diminished self- worth, and personal value led to the thought of killing themselves. However, most of the effects of challenges are positive. These mean that it is inherent among Filipinos to always see a thread of positivity in a world full of negativity.

Coping Mechanisms used by PDLs to Conquer the Challenges

Prison environment has been described as a barely controlled jungle where the aggressive and the strong will exploit the weak and the weak are dreadfully aware of this (Bowker, 1980). Thus, to cope with the prison, PDLs are obliged to alter their behaviors, attitudes, and language to conform to written and unwritten rules and regulations of the prison. The PDLs must make behavioral changes to adapt to the prison environment and understand the prison slang. Moreover, coping mechanisms can be described as the total of ways in which people deal with minor to major stress and trauma. Some of these processes are unconscious ones, others are learned behavior, and still, others are skills that are consciously mastered to reduce stress or other intense emotions like depression. Not all coping mechanisms equally beneficial, and some can be very detrimental (Evangelista, 2004).

Below are the themes that emerged relative to the coping mechanisms used by PDLs to conquer the challenges inside the prison



Submissiveness

Prisoners tend to become submissive to avoid conflict. They just recognized the threat and submitted, letting the dominant people do whatever they want. The participant confide:

K2: *“Tanggap lang kayo ng tanggap, sumunod lang kayo ng sumunod dito, kung doon sa pinanggalingan sumunod muna bagosumuway ganun ma’am eh pero dito hindi pwede yung sumunod muna bago sumuway dito kailangan sumunod ng sumunod hanggang sa sumunod ng sumunod.”* (We do not have other choices here but to receive and obey. In my former prison, you have to obey first before you complain. But here, you have no choice but to obey).

K3: *“Ang buhay ng isang bilanggo is yung paano mai- survive ang sarili mo. Yung sumusunod ka lang sa patakaran. Matuto kang sumunod sa patakaran ng bureau. Yung wag kang gagawa ng labag na pwede mong ikapahamak.”* (The prisoner’s life is about how to survive. Just obey the policy. You must learn to abide by the policy of the Bureau. Just do not do anything wrong that may harm you.)

To cope with the prison, the participants alter their behavior from aggressiveness to being submissive. Aside from being submissive, the participants opted to abide by the rules to withstand the difficulties inside the prison.

Its proponents recognized the facts about coping theory, and they examined individual differences in how the inmates adapt to their environment. This is unlike most studies into the effects of incarceration, which are focused primarily on finding a comprehensive, uniform set of psychological effects upon which to base predictions about long term inmate behavior. Operating on the premise that how individuals cope with problems is more important than the frequency and severity of the problems experienced, the coping theory focuses on the interaction of the personal and environmental factors involved as inmates adapt to a life of incarceration (Zamble & Porporino, 1988).

This is evident like correctional treatment that is infinitely more intrusive than punishment because it does not respect the individual's ability and right to make choices. It regards their



behavior as "controlled" by factors that can be influenced by the intervention (Morris, 1995).

As the psychological or motivational hedonism claims that only pleasure or pain motivates people. Ethical or evaluative hedonism claims that only pleasure has worth or value and only pain or displeasure has disvalue or the opposite of worth. Bentham's claim that pain and pleasure determine what people do makes him a psychological hedonist, and more specifically a hedonist about the determination of the action. This motivational hedonism is mirrored in how the inmates regarded their imprisonment.

Accept the punishment

The findings reveal that to survive inside the prison, the first step on prisoners' cognitive adaptation is to accept the punishment. They chose to bear the consequences of their acts and accept their current situation. They say:

K1: *"Bandang huli natanggap ko rin. Sa isip- isip ko ito na siguro yung parusa sa mga ginawa ko sa labas, palaging palaaway."* (In the end, I accepted it. I thought that it was probably my punishment for all I did outside, always in trouble).

K3: *"Sa akin tinanggap ko na din kasi okay naman na nagawa ko naman talaga. Hindi ko inaalís sa sarili ko na may numero pa rin ako may prison number parin ako ng isang bilanggo. At habang nabubuhay ako at habang nandito ako habang dala ko yung numero ko mamumuhay ako ng buhay ng bilanggo."* (I accepted it already because I know that I did something wrong. I will never forget that I have a number; I have a prison number. Also, as long as, I live and while I am here while I have the number I will live a prisoner's life).

K2: *"Tiis lang talaga andito na eh sabi naming nandito na tayo tiis nalang tayo malalampasan din natin to."* (I am enduring it. We said we are already here so let us endure till we can overcome this).



In the end, the participants accept their wrong deeds by enduring all the challenges and by acting in a manner the prisoner is expected to do. They started to believe that they committed something wrong and deserved to be punished.

Generally, prisoners conform to their sentence, assume responsibility for their crimes, and face their new living conditions. Their cognitive adaptive behavior guides them on how they ought to live inside the prison (Moore, 2018).

This result supports the retributive rationale, wherein retribution is a term that means balancing a wrong through punishment (Pollock, 2014). In addition to the retributive rationale, Immanuel Kant was long considered to be an exemplar of the retributivist theory of punishment. While he does claim that the only proper justification of punishment is guilt for a crime, he does not limit the usefulness of punishment to retributivist matters. Punishment can have as its justification only the guilt of the criminal. All other uses of punishment, such as rehabilitation (the alleged good of the criminal) or deterrence (allegedly good to society) use the criminal merely as a means. Once this guilt is determined, however, Kant does not deny that something useful can be drawn from the punishment. Consequently, inmates believe that they deserve being punished, and such reassignment is evident among the subjects in this study.

Passing Time

When an individual enters prison, he is worried about a different number of reasons, as prison is both restrictive and dangerous. Along with the loss of liberty and potential violence; however, he may also be worried about boredom and how to pass the time in prison. One of the participant's recount:

K1: "Ako dati yung sa monitoring ng livelihood. Ako po nache-check ng record nila kung nasa bukid sila. Sa livelihood natuto ako magtanim ng palay at mais. Sobra po siyang nakatulong kasi nagtatrabaho ka umagang- umaga at iniisip mo na maging magaan ang katawan mo kasi kapag nagtatrabaho ka at masama ang loob mo hindi makakabuti sa kalusugan mo. Ang ginagawa ko pinaghahandaan ko sa pamamagitan ng pagtulog ng maaga. Kaya hindi na ako nag-iisip ng sa pamilya ko dahil doon. Puro trabaho na lang. Pagkatapos maligo sa hapon tulog na ulit. Hindi na akonakakapag-



isip sa pamilya ko” (I used to monitor the livelihood. The researchers have checked their records if they are on the farm. In the livelihood, I learned to plant rice and corn. It has helped much because you have to work early in the morning and must think positive because working with anguish is not good for your health. What I did is to prepare myself by going to sleep early. So I no longer think of my family because of that. It is all work. After taking a bath in the afternoon, I just slept. I was not able to think of my family.)

The findings reveal that active involvement in livelihood programs is the best way to pass the time. As obtained from the participant, he spends his time doing hard work so that he will be diverted from thinking about his family and it also relieved depression. Thus, he learned to farm and in the same manner, he avoided boredom. In short, his coping strategies have a positive result for him.

Truly, coping with prison was frequently associated with the ability to “do time.” This involves doing activities that are formal or informal, and individual or collective, depending on the institutional offer and preference of each prisoner, as well as the period of the day. Besides passing the time, activities serve many secondary purposes. Depending on the strategy, they may be allowed more freedom and autonomy, a distraction from personal concerns, and ways for channeling stress (Goncalves, Martins, Goncalves, & Braga, 2015).

This conviction of Goncalves et al. (2015) coincides with what BuCor (n.d.) said that the purpose of the inmate work programs is to keep the inmates busy, and to provide the money for their expenses and their families, as well as, help them acquire livelihood skills; in order that they become productive citizens once they are released and reintegrated back into the mainstream of society.

This fact is approved by proponents of the coping theory which examined individual differences in how inmates adapt to their environment. Strategies of individuals on how they cope with problems are more important than the frequency and severity of the problems experienced.



Spiritual recovery

Spiritual recovery is crucial to a PDL's positive transformation. It changed the individual's perspective in life. According to one of the participants:

K2: "Lagi lagi po akong nagsisimba. Nakakatulong po sya dahil lahat po ng dasal ko kay GOD talaga pong nadidinig na din po ma'am natutugunan nya po." (I attended mass regularly. It helped me because all of my prayers to God, he listens to it and answers it).

Through spiritual recovery, the participant regained his faith in God by actively participating in religious activities and also by believing that God answers all his prayers. This attitude makes a prisoner free from negative emotions such as low self-esteem. Likewise, in the context of the participant's story, he was helped to move away from aggressiveness and unlawful acts. Therefore, the spiritual recovery program of the prison is a success.

Besides, there are programs created by the institution to help the PDLs conquer the challenges inside the prison. The programs include a religious program. The idea is that spiritual rebirth may help tame the criminal impulse, and set wild hearts on the straight and narrow (Peters, 2007).

This corroborates the study of Eytan (2011) examined empirical data on religion, spirituality and mental health or illness in places of detention. Results showed that RS or Religion and Spirituality, improve the coping mechanism for facing stressful life. It also reduces depressive symptoms or self-harm. Also, it has an impact on the inmate's behavior by reducing arguments, violence and disciplinary actions inside the penal institution. According to the review, the most reliable indication of RS is the reduction of incidents and disciplinary actions inside the prison.

Furthermore, rational choice theory (RCT) proposes that people are self-interested, though not necessarily selfish, and that people make rational choices—choices that can reasonably be expected to maximize positive outcomes while minimizing adverse outcomes.



The findings show that the participants alter their behavior to cope inside the prison. Likewise, they chose to become submissive, bear the consequences of their act, keep themselves busy, and participate actively in religious activities.

Moreover, coping mechanisms can be described as the total of ways in which people deal with minor to significant stress and trauma. Indeed, participants cope inside the prison through submissiveness, accepting the punishment, passing time and spiritual recovery.

Proposed Action Plan to Address the Challenges inside the Prison

The concept of incarceration is to rehabilitate and deter someone from committing a crime. However, the experiences of inmates show that incarceration has a more serious impact on the inmates that commences from the deprivation of liberty to the extent of losing their family. The challenges they experienced inside the prison has a great effect on how they live their lives in the future. To address these challenges, the researcher proposed an action plan that is hoped to help the participants cope with the challenges inside the prison. Table 1 shows the Action Plan to address the challenges inside the prison.

Table 1

Action Plan to Address the Challenges Inside the Prison

KEY RESULTS AREA	ISSUES AND CHALLENGE	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	AGENCIES INVOLVED	BUDGET	FEEDBACK MECHANIS M
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Improve psychological well-being	1. Difficulty of adjusting to prison life	To improve the psychological well-being of inmates to conquer the challenges inside the prison.	The DRD(formerly RDC) should have a specific program that will focus on the psychological preparation of inmates before they are brought to their respective prisons. It may include seminars that will feature the	Bureau of Correction P3,000,000.00	The response of inmates on the seminar must be included in the Case Management Report of inmates. It will serve as a basis for their rehabilitation.	Evaluation on the effects of wellness on
	2. Feeling of powerlessness					
	3. Bearing pain for the sake of the family					
	4. They are forgotten victims					

KEY RESULTS AREA	ISSUES AND CHALLENGES	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	AGENCIES INVOLVED	BUDGET	FEEDBACK MECHANISM
	5. Thought of self-destruction		the true situation inside prison and			the inmates.



provide methods on how to conquer it psychologically and socially.

The BuCor must adopt the E-dalaw of BJMP to decrease the anxiety and to lessen the problem of broken family.

Inclusion of wellness program in the rehabilitation

KEY RESULTS AREA	ISSUES AND CHALLENGES	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	AGENCIES INVOLVED	BUDGE T	FEEDBACK MECHAN
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Improve social well-being	1.Adherence to unwritten laws	To improve the well-being of inmates	To avoid the abusive behavior of inmate leaders	Bureau of Correction s	P2,000, 000.00	Performa nce evaluatio n of inmate leaders.
	2. Staying out of trouble	conquer the challenges inside the prison.	the Bucor should adopt the formally the inmate leaders. There will be a meritorious selection and training. The scope and limits of their authority should be given emphasis.			
	3.Exploitation of the weak					

CONCLUSIONS

The participants experienced different challenges inside the prison. The challenges started from their entry to the prison because the participants need to adjust to prison life. Besides, the degrading conditions of prison made them feel powerless and the participants needed to adhere to the unwritten laws. In terms of family, they have to bear the pain that the imprisonment caused them for the sake of the family. Moreover, exploitation of the weak exists within the prison; therefore, the participants have to stay out of trouble. With all the challenges that the participants went through, they thought that they are forgotten the victims.



The identified challenges were found to have harmed the participants like the thought of self- destruction. However, most of the effects are positive such as adaptive behavior towards incarceration, self- reflection and self- renewal, and faith in God. The participants also considered prison as a haven. Moreover, Positive outlooks in life are also present. Overall, the challenges were seen to have worked more positively than negatively about the reformation of the PDLs, socially, emotionally and psychologically.

To cope with, or to conquer the challenges, the participants were made to alter their behavior to cope inside the prison. As a result, they chose to become submissive, bear the consequences of their act, keep themselves busy and stay active in religious activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. The Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm should have its psychologist or a guidance counselor who will assess the psychological condition of the inmates and address their emotional problems.
2. If the presence of inmate leaders cannot be eliminated, the bureau must formally adopt it. If this practice is formally acknowledged, then there is a possibility that abuse could be controlled and the practice redirected toward good use. It could be done through meritorious selection and training of PDL leaders. The limitation and scope of the PDLs' authority should be given emphasis.
3. The Bureau should stop the presence of vices inside the prison by enhancing their security procedures through close monitoring of visitors and cells to avoid entry of contraband so that the real purpose of rehabilitation will be served.
4. To address the problem in broken homes, the Bucor should prioritize the request of the PDLs to serve his sentence in a colony near his place. The BuCor should also adopt the *e-dalaw* of BJMP to strengthen family communication and improve the prescribing privileges in visitation.



5. The degrading conditions of prison encourage the creation of negative coping strategies that are subject to abuse. The BuCor should enhance the rehabilitation program that promotes self- respect.

6. A related study may be conducted to identify the other challenges present inside the prison.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers express their sincere thanks for the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the Philippines for the scholarship-study granted to one of the researchers. The same gratitude is extended to the members of the research examination committee of the University of Baguio for their suggestions and recommendations for the study, and all the officials, faculty members of the Occidental Mindoro State College for their guidance to the researchers, and to the officials and research participants from Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm (SPPF) in Occidental Mindoro, Philippines for their great assistance to the researchers.