
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Life After Prison: A Phenomenological Study on the Lived Experiences of Released Inmates

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ABSTRACT

This is a phenomenological study of the lived experiences of released inmates from the time they are convicted and incarcerated up to the time they are liberated. Phenomenological interviewing was used in data gathering to describe the meaning of the phenomenon. In-depth interviews were conducted to arrive at the three phases of data collection needed in the study. The study seeks answers to the following questions: What are the positive experiences of the informants on the rehabilitation programs, what are the negative experiences of the informants on the rehabilitation programs, and what is the impact of the rehabilitation programs on the informants after release from jail facility? Results revealed that three themes came up in the positive experiences of the informants on the rehabilitation program which are: Pious Acts: A Route to Direction, Concept, and Behavioural Change; Proficiency and Capability: A Subsistence to Live; and lastly, Education Knows No Boundaries. The released inmates were exposed more to religious programs, including educational programs. The negative experiences of the informants in the rehabilitation program are Humanity: A Setting of Great Sprain and Struggle: Longing for the Family. On the impact of the rehabilitation programs on the informants after release from a jail facility, two (2) themes emerged: Programs: A Treatment, Transition, and Avoidance of Recidivism and Falling: A Striking Relationship Impact of Re-Entry.

KEYWORDS

Criminal Justice, released inmates, life after prison, phenomenological study Philippines.

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1. Introduction

The intensified applications of the law were dramatic changes that occurred across the criminal justice landscape. Strict political agendas across jurisdictions widen the scope of our criminal justice with iron-clad fists that put a more significant number of violators and offenders imprisoned (Coyle, 2005). Offenders who have lived through life in prison wonder what life must be once people get used to the horrors behind bars, thinking life back in society is far greater than being institutionalized. In recent news, both on television and in print media, we learned that Philippine jails and prisons are overcrowded and leave miserable conditions for the wellbeing of the inmates.

Metro Cebu correctional institutions are not different from other institutions around the country. Overpopulation is the center of concern, and it becomes alarming to the agency concerned that it will affect the purpose of institutionalizing the inmates. The reason for incarceration is that they need to be rehabilitated and reformed before they will be reintegrated into the mainstream of society. An inmate must follow discipline aside from the rules and regulations as they are provided with a rudimentary rehabilitation program such as work programs and events or activities that can help boost their morale.

Everything the prisoners learn within the bars will help them become good, law-abiding citizens. They will be released from prison; there is the slightest possibility that the subject will not commit a crime again, and the community will not be fighting for them, and they have in their perception that the person is already in his excellent morale and good reputation (Robinson & Crow, 2009).

In the administration of penal institutions, the United Nations stipulates that the justification of a sentence of imprisonment being the protection of society from crime can only be achieved if the period of incarceration serves to assist offenders to live legitimate lives upon their return to society (United Nation on Peace Keeping, 2011).

Due to this, I became interested in conducting a study on the lived experiences of released inmates in the prison rehabilitation programs in jail facilities. To know the impact of this program on the lives of the inmates and the problems encountered in implementing the rehabilitation program.

Furthermore, this study will serve as a realization on the part of jail management and penology and correctional institutions as a whole and whether the rehabilitation program has a positive or negative impact on the lives of inmates.

The literature revealed that there are studies conducted about ex-convicts' reintegration into the labor market and social life (Afouxenidis et al., 2003) and ex-convicts' reintegration into the labor market and social life (Efthimos, 2003). Furthermore, there is also a study on Addressing the social needs of fNeedsmilieFamiliessonePrisonersl foToolmate rehabilitation (Jorgenson, 1986) and Inmate-family ties: DTiesable but difficult, & Harding.). However, the researchers cannot find a study about the lived experiences of released inmates in prison rehabilitation programs in jail facilities. Specifically, the positive and negative experiences, especially the impact of the rehabilitation programs among released inmates.

So, as a criminal justice educator, the researcher decided to write this topic because it is timely for the government to develop programs that will rehabilitate and facilitate the successful reintegration of offenders into the community. Moreover, it explored the lived experiences of released inmates on the prison rehabilitation programs in jail facilities in highly urbanized cities. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions about the positive and negative experiences of the informants in the rehabilitation programs and how the rehabilitation programs impact the informants after release.

2. Literature Review

This study is anchored on the following theories: the social learning theory of Albert Bandura, supported by the two theories, the theory of planned behavior by Ajzen and Fishbein, and the cognitive dissonance theory by Festinger.

The leading theory is the social learning theory of Bandura (1997). The theory boosts the idea that information happens within a social context. People learn from observing others' behaviors and the outcomes of those actions. Albert Bandura explains that social learning is a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Astray-Caneda et al., 2013). Observational learning states that humans can control their behaviors through a process known as self-regulation. This self-regulation consists of three methods: self-observation, self-judgment, and self-response. Self-observation is when individuals track their behavior—self-judgment deals with comparing their observations with standards set by society and themselves. Self-response is when individuals reward themselves either positively or negatively, depending on the view of their performance. Social learning theory, when incorporated as a component of work release programs, can positively influence the reduction of recidivism. Social learning theory focuses on the learning that occurs within a social context. It considers that people learn from one another, including observational learning, which has four components: attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation.

Bandura's social learning theory (1997) agrees with the behaviorist learning theories of classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Social learning theory also pointed out two crucial ideas: first, the behavior process occurs between stimuli and responses, and second, behavior is learned from the environment through observational learning.

This theory emphasizes an individual's observation to learn from what is being observed in a correctional facility wherein different attitudes from different people could be a factor of learning to the other individual. Negative qualities from other inmates are more likely to impact their peers. Albert Bandura's social learning refers to the fact that we acquire much of our behavior (e.g., hitting a golf ball, giving a speech, using a computer program) by observing and imitating others in a social context (Gibson, 2006).

Albert Bandura's social learning theory seeks to explain learning in the naturalistic setting. Unlike the laboratory setting, the social milieu provides numerous opportunities for individuals to acquire complex skills and abilities by observing modeled behaviors and their behavioral consequences (Bell-Gredler, 1986).

Social learning theory emphasizes that people learn by observing others they believe are credible and knowledgeable. Social learning theory also recognizes that reinforcement or reward behavior tends to be repeated. The observer adopts the model's behavior or skill that is rewarded. Social learning theory posits that acquiring new behaviors or skills can result from personally undergoing the outcomes of those behaviors or skills or witnessing others engage in them and observing the results they experience (Noe, 2008).

The theory of reasoned action, developed by Martin Fishbein and Lawrence Icek Ajzen, is a support theory. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) serves to understand an individual's voluntary behavior. An individual's decision to engage in a particular behavior is based on the outcomes the individual expects will result from performing the behavior. According to Ajzen and Fishbein, who formulated 1980 the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the ideas found within the theory of reasoned action have to do with an individual's primary motivation to act (Ajzen, 1991).

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) helps us understand how to change people's behavior. The TPB is a theory that predicts deliberate behavior because behavior can be deliberative and planned. According to Ajzen, human action is guided by three kinds of considerations: behavioral beliefs, beliefs about the likely consequences of the behavior; normative beliefs, and beliefs about the normative expectations of others; and control beliefs, beliefs about the presence of factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of the behaviors. Ajzen's three considerations are crucial when changing people's behavior in circumstances /projects/programs. In their respective aggregates, behavioral beliefs produce a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behavior, normative beliefs result in perceived social pressure or subjective norm, and control beliefs give rise to perceived behavioral control. In combination, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perception of behavioral control lead to the formation of a behavioral intention. As a general rule, the more favorable the attitude and subjective norm and the greater the perceived control, the stronger the person's intention to perform the behavior in question should be.

Another theory that supports this study comes from a social psychologist, Leon Festinger, who developed the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). The theory has stood the test of time in that it is mentioned in most general and social psychology textbooks today. The theory is counterintuitive and fits into a category of counterintuitive social psychology theories, sometimes called action-opinion theories. The fundamental characteristic of action opinion theories is that they propose that actions can influence subsequent beliefs and attitudes. This is counterintuitive in that it would seem logical that our actions are the result of our beliefs/attitudes, not the cause of them. However, on further examination, these theories have great intuitive appeal in that the theories, particularly cognitive dissonance, address the pervasive human tendency to rationalize.

Cognitive dissonance theory is based on three fundamental assumptions: humans are sensitive to inconsistencies between actions and beliefs. According to the theory, we all recognize, at some level, when we act in a way inconsistent with our beliefs/attitudes/opinions. In effect, a built-in alarm goes off when we notice such an inconsistency, whether we like it or not. For example, if you believe it is wrong to cheat, yet you find yourself cheating on a test, you will notice and be affected by this inconsistency. Recognition of this inconsistency will cause dissonance and motivate an individual to resolve the dissonance. According to this theory, once you recognize that you have violated one of your principles, you will not just say, "Oh well." You will feel some mental anguish about this. The degree of dissonance will vary with the importance of your belief/attitude/principle and the inconsistency between your behavior and this belief. According to the theory, the greater the dissonance, the more you will be motivated to resolve it.

Dissonance will be resolved in one of three primary ways: Change beliefs. Changing your beliefs is the simplest way to resolve dissonance between actions and beliefs. You could, of course, decide that cheating is o.k. This would take care of any dissonance. However, if the belief is fundamental to you, such a course of action is unlikely. Additionally, our core beliefs and perspectives are consistent, and individuals do not frequently alter their foundational beliefs, attitudes, or opinions, as we depend heavily on our worldview to predict occurrences and structure our ideas. Therefore, though this is the simplest option for resolving dissonance, it is probably not the most common.

Change actions, a second option, would be to ensure you never do this action again. You may say to yourself that you will never cheat on a test again, and this may aid in resolving the dissonance. However, aversive conditioning (i.e., guilt/anxiety) can often be a pretty poor way of learning, especially if you can train yourself not to feel these things. Plus, you may benefit from an action inconsistent with your beliefs. The trick would be eliminating this feeling without changing your beliefs or actions, leading us to the third and probably most common resolution method.

Change perception of action; a third, more complex method of resolution is to change the way you view/remember/perceive your action. In more colloquial terms, you would rationalize your actions. For example, you might decide that the test you cheated on was for a dumb class you did not need anyway. In other words, you think about your action in a different manner or context so

that it no longer appears to be inconsistent with your actions. If you reflect on this series of mental gymnastics for a moment, you will probably recognize why cognitive dissonance has become so popular.

The inmates have always been released, and officials have long struggled with helping them succeed. However, the current situation is different. The numbers of returning offenders dwarf anything known before, and the needs of released inmates are more significant than the correction has retained few rehabilitation programs (Petersilia, 2003). Some unfortunate collateral consequences are likely, including increases in child abuse, family violence, the spread of infectious diseases, homelessness, and community disorganization. Victim advocates are well aware of the implications for public safety and risk management, which are significant factors in reentry (Brannon et al., 2007). For scores of people in some communities, incarceration is becoming almost an ordinary experience. The situation may affect the socialization of young people, the power of prison sentences to deter, and the future trajectory of crime rates and crime victimization (Petersilia, 2003). Former prisoners who return to neighborhoods with lower levels of informal social control may face fewer sanctions for deviant behavior and more opportunities to go back to crime (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Returning prisoners also tend to have precarious living situations, making building local social networks and participating in local organizations more difficult (Morenoff & Harding, 2014).

A third perspective on how neighborhoods can influence returning prisoners' ability to reintegrate focuses on normative environments (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). Shaw and McKay (1969) argued that socially disorganized slum neighborhoods contain a full array of "competing and conflicting moral values," both conventional and unconventional. This creates a breakdown of social control and a cultural environment in which "delinquency has developed as a powerful competing way of life" (Morenoff & Harding, 2014). More recently, Rose and Clear (1998) argued that high levels of prison cycling "open opportunities for the entrance of newcomers (with potentially different norms and values) into the neighborhood" and "increase opportunities to be socialized into prison subcultures." Normative environments may also be necessary for understanding how community members treat returning prisoners. Also, the degree of mistrust and antagonism toward agents of the law (aka "legal cynicism") in a community can influence residents' willingness to cooperate with the police (Morenoff & Harding, 2014).

A fourth perspective concerns the problems former prisoners encounter when they return home to areas where they lived before prison. People who return home after prison may renew ties with friends and acquaintances that helped facilitate their criminal lifestyles by influencing their motivation to offend and engaging them in activities that lead to criminal opportunities. Also, the environmental stimuli that former prisoners encounter when returning to places that they associate with prior drug use could trigger a "cue-reactivity" process that can lead to drug cravings and increase the risk of relapse (Morenoff & Harding, 2014).

The theoretical perspectives covered so far have all focused on the effects of neighborhood environments on the attitudes and behavior of returning prisoners. Another approach to understanding the role that community context might play in prisoner reintegration is rooted in how institutional reactions to deviance may vary across communities. Prior research suggests that police practices vary considerably across neighborhoods in such a way that disadvantaged areas are both over-policed and under-policed (Weaver, 2014). On the one hand, poor and non-white jurisdictions tend to have less police protection per recorded crime.

Incarceration carries a stigma for men and women, but the degree of stigma is much greater for women because of gender-based stereotypes that hold women to different standards. The stigma of drug use and incarceration may be additive, yet little research to date has explored the impacts of increased burdens of stigma on formerly incarcerated women. Stigma refers to hostile attitudes, beliefs, and policies toward people perceived as belonging to an undesirable group.

Erving Goffman, widely credited for conceptualizing and creating a framework for studying stigma, described stigma as an attribute deeply discrediting within a particular social interaction. Link and Phelan developed a conceptualization of stigma that represents stigmatized individuals as labeled and assigned negative attributes, set apart as not fully human, and treated negatively (Van Olphen et al., 2009).

Stigma results in prejudice and discrimination against the stigmatized group, reinforcing existing social inequalities, particularly those rooted in gender, sexuality, and race. According to Link and Phelan, those who are stigmatized can experience direct, structural, or internalized discrimination. For example, a formerly incarcerated woman may be treated poorly by others, denied access to housing or employment because of her criminal history, or internalize feelings of worthlessness because of the lowered expectations of those around her. This stigmatization is likely to significantly influence the success of a woman's transition from jail to home, potentially limiting her help-seeking intentions and compromising her access to health care, drug treatment, employment, and housing. For many of these women, their stigma stems from the intersecting categories of incarceration history, drug use, mental health status, gender, race/ethnicity, or sexual orientation, making it challenging to attribute any particular stigmatization to a single category (Van Olphen et al., 2009).

Stigma contributes to policies related to the treatment of drug users, leading to strict standards of abstinence, or clients are discharged from treatment as "failures." At the same time, victim blaming is expected, as well as moral judgments about the "weak wills" of people who are thought to "choose" drug use (Van Olphen et al., 2009).

Imprisonment of criminal offenders, in the modern context, is a psychosocial intervention designed to protect society from the phenomenon of criminality: it exacts from the prisoner reformation or transformation needed for his reentry into society's mainstream after serving time within the confines of prison (Dolovich, 2011).

The present condition of jails and prisons already serves as punishment to inmates. The community that awaits them after life in prison continues to view them with suspicion and, most of the time, refuses to give them a second chance in life (Irwin, 2013).

Reforms in the correctional system are an integral part of a comprehensive reform program for the criminal justice system, which the Department of Justice is currently undertaking under my watch (Bloom et al., 2003).

The jails and prisons today can be seen through the burgeoning jails and prisons and the old facilities that are starting to fall apart and are in disrepair. It can be seen through the empty eyes of inmates paying their dues in jails and prisons for the wrong done against society.

The project structure is a Build-Transfer-Maintain (BTM) scheme where the private partner will finance, detail-design, construct, procure security equipment, and maintain the structural and technical facility. The government, through the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Corrections, on the other hand, will continue the operational custodial and reformation services of the correctional institution.

Our hopes are high that we have finally taken a giant leap into realizing what the Philippine government has envisioned for 15 years (Shirk, 2008). Correctional institutions have the dual purpose of punishing and rehabilitating offenders. However, it has been learned that punishing surpassed rehabilitation. The study confirmed that prisoners leaving prisons are overwhelmed with various problems, and their future lives are uncertain. They mainly face a central lack of accommodations, jobs, money, broken family relationships, and discrimination by ordinary people and governmental authorities who deal with their affairs. The source of their problems has been revealed, which is the lack of a deliberate pre-release plan that could foresee their problems' release and plans to tackle those barriers by allocating substantial resources that can facilitate their integration into society.

Equally, the lack of social support from informal social networks has been described as one of the factors that caused adverse consequences for prisoners and ex-prisoners. For instance, those who burned their bridges with families, relatives, neighbors, and peers because of their criminality and addictions had relapsed into substance abuse and crimes. On the other hand, ex-prisoners who were firmly attached to their informal social networks have access to social support and have demonstrated tremendous progress. The study has discovered that social support should be in place when prisoners leave the institutions (Nsanze, 2007).

In prison, they struggle with isolation from family, the difficulties of prison life, and their problems with their sense of self. After prison, they struggle, with great difficulty, to gain a place in society that will not lead them back again to prison. While the exact truth of some of these narratives might be open to question by skeptics, their accounts in their general form are entirely consistent with what we know from other sources, including statistical survey data, about the kinds of women who go to prison, the things that bring them to prison, the kinds of experiences they have, and the difficulties of their return to society (Rowe, 2004).

According to Chiu (2017), most inmates lack formal education. According to him, education is the backbone of correctional rehabilitation; it is what correctional facilities are all about. He also implied that formal and informal education would be included because this program would gradually improve the outlook of the prisoners.

With all the theories and related literature, I was able to support the studies related to the lived experiences of the released inmates in the rehabilitation program. In this study, the researcher wanted to explore and understand beyond revelation the positive and negative experiences and how rehabilitation programs impact the informants after they are released from jail.

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative study utilizing a method of phenomenological research design for selected released inmates as key informants, and a descriptive phenomenology study deals with the personal experiences of released inmates on the rehabilitation program and interpretation of the meaning of the phenomena are investigated, follow up questions has been made and with the aid of an interview guide. This research involves qualitative analysis and assessment of themes derived from semi-structured interviews, observation, and exploring the lived experiences of released inmates in the prison's rehabilitation programs. The participants can describe their lived phenomenal experiences that can be used to gather data in a phenomenological study.

4. Results and Discussion

The data gathered was thoroughly read to acquire a feeling for describing the informants' experiences. Significant statements about the research phenomena were extracted from the informant's transcripts. Formulated meanings were constructed from the substantial statements and arranged into clusters. There were one hundred six cluster themes from emergent themes.

All of the seven emergent themes respond to the study's sub-problems, specifically the informants' positive experiences of the rehabilitation programs and the negative ones. The other emergent themes would elucidate the rehabilitation programs' impact on the informants.

I have developed emergent themes from the typical responses of the informants. Below are the presentations of themes related to the positive and negative experiences of the rehabilitation programs and the impact of the rehabilitation programs after the informants were released from the jail facility.

4.1. Positive Experiences Of The Released Inmates On The Rehabilitation Program

One of the primordial mandates of the Bureau Jail Management is the effective rehabilitation of prisoners. Thus, various programs are in place to address the rehabilitation aspect of corrections. Rehabilitation in corrective work is done through a combination of programs that involves spiritual activities, educational courses (formal and informal), medical and hygienic practices, cultural and recreational activities, productive work, counseling, therapeutic and disciplinary measures work program, health care, education and skills training, recreation and sports, religious guidance. The emergent themes that evolved out of the positive experiences of released inmates are the following.

4.1.1 Pious Acts: A Route to Direction, Self-Concept and Behavioral Change.

This theme deals with the influence and practice of religious programs in the correctional setting common in jails and prisons—pious means referring to spirituality or devotion to a particular religion. Inmates participate in some religious programs during their incarceration, where they gain direction, improve their concept of self, and promote personal behavioral change. In the different jails and prisons, it does not matter what faith you follow; in short, the religious program is helpful to them because it gives their lives meaning.

The objectives of my inquiry were to ask the informants about their circumstances, particularly the experiences they encountered. The majority of the participants experienced the different programs. The informants stated they participated more in religious activities to excavate their responses to the rehabilitation programs.

In religion, we often pray. You can choose which religion to join if you want to, Catholicism or others. But definitely, it was catholic who had frequent visitations. We often attended religious activities on Fridays. (Participant 1).

In the bible study, we pray together, but it is up to us if we ever attend the said activity. At the same time, I was a choir member. (Participant 3).

Sundays are for bible sharing. Mass is at the chapel, and a priest delivers the sermon. Non-catholics do their religious activities on Saturdays. You are forced to attend these sessions; the "mayor" reminds the brigade of Angelus's time, and anyone from any brigade who fails to attend will be sent to an isolation cubicle. (Participant 11).

Piety is a quality that can encompass devotion to God, spiritual practices, or a combination of the two. I came up with this theme since all of my informants commonly confessed that the most excellent program offered in jail is the religious program. This program is a big help in transforming and reforming their lives. With this, they have the direction, self-concept, and behavioral change toward their outlook in life.

Social learning can help offenders build positive social skills and learn how their interaction with the environment can elicit excellent and destructive behaviors. As a result, this could reduce the number of individuals who return to prison (Schneider et al., 2012). These types of prisons aim to change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that lead to healthy and adaptive lifestyles. Inmate participants cannot be a high risk, and they must be willing to participate in a highly structured environment and work on relationships with others.

The antisocial behavior and the inability to understand the result of their actions, as to whether they have done something wrong to others, is a matter of an offense to the divine being. The very reason why religious organizations came onto the scene, an example of which is the Catholic laypeople, which preached teachings in the bible to help the inmates understand their role as

Christians and remind them that they have no right to violate the innocent victims. The teachings will help them to make them better people.

According to Sykes (2011), the religious program has a mission to serve the inmate population and institutions by promoting and delivering quality spiritual life services in worship, religious education, and crisis counseling. This program seeks to achieve the highest professional response from chaplains and volunteers involved in the delivery of various religious activities across the country and to integrate religious programs and services into an institutional response toward meeting the inmate's needs. This is also the best opportunity to confront newly adjudicated offenders' negative attitudes and behaviors.

Rehabilitation programs in correctional institutions are beneficial in the sense that many incarcerated individuals do not have skills in terms of livelihood programs. If an individual commits a crime, especially a violent one, they need help. I viewed the jail system as one that promotes rather than deters crime. By throwing individuals together into a facility, you provide an environment ripe with social learning that enhances criminal behavior rather than eradicating this behavior. According to Schneider et al. (2012), some jails have been created as therapeutic communities that draw on social-ecological, social learning, and humanistic theories to promote the personal growth and development of the inmates.

4.1.2. Proficiency and capability: a subsistence to live.

Livelihood programs can be implemented in an institution like a jail. The objective is to train the inmates' livelihood skills, provide services, and improve their moral and spiritual aspects. This can be attained by delivering seminars and training regarding livelihood skills. Initiatives like this can effectively facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the workforce. Fostering success among prisoners might require a transformative approach. The prevailing culture within prisons often shapes every aspect of life within the facility. This notion extends to recreational programs, which encompass a variety of activities, including sports, musical instrument playing, gardening, and crafting. These activities aim to introduce enjoyment, pleasure, or thrill into the inmates' lives. It has been observed that engaging in sports and recreational activities has a beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of inmates.

Informants opined that rehabilitation programs can help inmates compensate and earn a living to sustain their primary needs. Recreational activities are essential in maintaining physical and mental health, providing opportunities for the constructive use of leisure time, and fostering the development of positive social habits of the informants.

I joined in basket making because you can make money by learning and doing much of it. I did not attend the welding because the time was cramped, and the schedule was synchronized. There was also furniture work, like making a dining table; we did it in the workshop area. The worker received an amount of ₱250 a week or a monthly of ₱700. This happens because of the warden's initiative. (Participant 5).

They have sports like Basketball because they have a court and games like volleyball and chess, and we are separated from women. If there are visitors, we cannot play games, and visits are permitted only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, and no visits on Mondays. (Participant 2).

There is a pingpong, boxing and Basketball. (Participant 14).

One of the rehabilitation programs offered to the inmates is the recreational and livelihood programs. Inmates are allowed to enjoy themselves and have time for leisure, and at the same time, it includes work or livelihood programs. It shall be taught in jail to promote good work habits. Moreover, the result is the learning skills about recreational and livelihood workshops.

The theory of planned behavior is pertinent to this discussion as it shows that a person who has committed a crime demonstrates a positive attitude and drive towards rehabilitation, obtaining a job, and steering clear of additional legal troubles. Their belief in their ability to achieve these goals significantly increases their chances of success. This theory emphasizes the role of self-belief and attitudes.

This theory's main application is to look for ways to improve attitudes, intentions, and beliefs relating to the outside world. One way to help people get used to the outside world and feel more positive towards rehabilitation is getting a job inside prison, as it allows them to gain work experience and be more employable.

These work programs may give inmates the skills to obtain similar jobs in a free society. As part of the rehabilitation of inmates, work programs and recreational programs provide a wide range of activities to permit inmates to express their talents and pursue their interests in a wholesome way. This can be essential in reintegration into society and meeting the inmate's physical fitness,

mental fitness, and general wellness while incarcerated. This program promotes self-awareness, self-fulfillment, and personal motivation toward positive actions and avoidance of idleness (Kate, 2003).

On the other hand, the prisoners are encouraged to engage in livelihood programs to have additional income sources. The inmates are also given value formation and moral-building activities through educational and religious programs. Such activities help them realize what they have gone through and prepare them to become better individuals and re-born members of society. Occupational and vocational programs are based on the needs of the inmates, general labor market conditions, and institution labor force needs. Recreation and wellness activities encourage healthy lifestyles and habits.

The duration of my interviews and the numbers of the informants from the time they were arrested, convicted, and incarcerated draw specific ideas and gather information as well on the directions of the positive experiences of some of the programs the inmates are given freedom in choosing what programs they are likely interested in. They are allowed to jail educational programs and livelihood, but some did not avail because of the factors that man cannot control. For the spiritual aspect, I understood that it must be mandatory. According to their Magna Carta law, inmates' participation in every cell brigade is one of their disciplines. The majority of the inmates consider these elements to be positive experiences.

Many studies have consistently found that initiatives like rehabilitation programs, education, therapy, and vocational training play a crucial role in improving inmates' lives and benefiting society, as these individuals are equipped to contribute positively rather than be burdensome. For every dollar invested in such programs, society sees an approximate return of 13 dollars, effectively boosting our economic resources rather than draining them (Schneider et al., 2012). By providing inmates with essential job skills and coping mechanisms, we are preparing them for successful reintegration, preventing them from returning to the streets potentially more dangerous than before their incarceration.

4.1.3. Education Knows Boundaries.

Jail education programs expand opportunities to improve employability for inmates. Local providers deliver education programs at the facility. Inmates can continue their course as they return to society. They can be educated and rehabilitate their lives.

The ALS sometimes lasted for three (3) months, starting at 9- 11 o'clock, and I only attended for two weeks, but after that, I never returned to school until such time I was released from prison. (Participant 3).

Education helped me a lot, but because of family problems, I did not pursue it. However, I am interested. (Participant 3).

There were teachers from ALS. We had classes on subjects like science and maths, and all subjects for high school. We had examinations, and classes lasted for six months. I did not continue. (Participant 5).

Some may offer educational programs. My task was to invite those interested in joining the class. I also ring the bell for attendance if there are activities downstairs. (Participant 9).

Educating an inmate is a right, and it cannot be deprived, whatever your status, whether you are rich, poor, or a criminal. No one can prohibit or deprive you of education. In my emergent theme, education knows no boundaries, meaning it has no limitations; it does not matter what kind of place and people it may be. It has no limits. According to my informants, especially those less educated, an appropriate and formal system for education programs is being offered. However, all of them never had a chance to continue to be able to obtain a diploma.

Moreover, this theme is positive because the program is apparent. The only problem is on the part of the released inmates. Hindrances beyond their control are why they cannot finish their schooling.

These initiatives often incorporate mentorship and role model guidance to boost confidence in one's abilities. Prisoners' participation in these initiatives aims to equip them for a smoother transition back into the community. Additionally, this draws on the principles of Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, suggesting that environmental observation and learning influence prisoners' engagement in these activities.

Career and vocational training programs have a longstanding tradition and are often viewed by correctional specialists as holding the most significant promise for beneficial outcomes, according to Snarr and Wolford (1985). Numerous correctional facilities collaborate with community businesses to provide vocational training via work release initiatives, enabling inmates to acquire diverse job skills through hands-on training and educational programs. These training programs offer different levels of counseling and support for the inmates, along with careful supervision of the prisoners.

Collins (2002) states that prisoners are given opportunities to expand their knowledge in criminal rehabilitation. This is crucial because research indicates that many inmates lack elementary school education. This significantly hindered their ability to secure employment, leading many to resort to criminal activities. Basic criminal rehabilitation programs ensure a standard literacy level amongst the inmates who sign up for the course. Rehabilitation also makes sure inmates are well-adjusted socially.

The statement above defines the personal background of my participants. Most are only in primary grade school and have never attended school. Moreover, the reason why they only have that poor education, they said, is because of poverty.

4.2 Negative Experiences of the Released Inmates.

4.2.1. Humanity: A Setting of Great Sprain.

Inmates experience obstacles and hardships while serving their jail terms. However, inmates are still privileged and have the same fundamental rights inherent to every individual, without which they cannot survive as human beings. According to human criteria, any services offered for inmates' welfare, especially concerning their sleeping arrangements, must fulfill all necessary standards, such as health, considering factors like air volume, minimum space per person, and the adequacy of lighting and airflow. A comprehensive multi-disciplinary rehabilitation program should aim at the inmates' total human development, covering other welfare services, including health and medical provisions.

In there, food is free but deficient. No visit is painful for the prisoners. They were coming from Surigao and Lapu-Lapu. That is why they do labor, like doing laundry for their co-prisoners, to earn money to buy viand and soap. Someone was selling this stuff there. We can also keep money amounting to not more than five hundred pesos (P500.00).

There were deaths due to swelling and tuberculosis, swelling because of sleeping on a cemented floor, and tuberculosis because of sweating due to the tightness and warmness of the cell. There was also dermatitis and water deficiency. A doctor is present, but it took him time to go out. (Participant 4).

We have pork stew on Sundays, always wrapped in small plastic bags. They do the wrapping, so some get a bigger slice of pork than others; some fried fish are not even whole slices. Rice is also packed in very little serving, so there is little food to eat inside. Just snacks. This is probably the reason why, because of hunger, they have bad temperaments. (Participant 7).

The study discovered that cognitive dissonance arises when individuals willingly participate in activities that are either physically or morally uncomfortable in order to reach a specific objective. The psychological discomfort stemming from this dissonance can be alleviated by the individual overstating the attractiveness of the intended outcome.

The cognitive dissonance theory applies to the theme of humanity: a setting of significant sprain. This theory suggests that humans seek a state of internal psychological harmony to mentally navigate the real world effectively. When faced with internal conflict, individuals often experience psychological discomfort, prompting them to seek resolution to diminish the cognitive dissonance. This resolution may involve adapting their beliefs or behaviors to align with their current psychological state, introducing new elements to mitigate the dissonance, or avoiding situations and information that could exacerbate the internal conflict.

This theory suggests that individuals aim for internal psychological harmony to navigate the real world effectively. When faced with internal conflict, a person may feel psychological discomfort and is thus driven to lessen this cognitive dissonance. To achieve this, they might alter their mindset by incorporating new elements that justify their troubling behavior or deliberately avoiding any social scenarios and conflicting information that could amplify their cognitive dissonance.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the right to food covers every human being – even those conflicting with the law. To put it more precisely, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (SMRTP) mandate that authorities must supply incarcerated individuals with adequate nutrition. If prisoners or detainees, or anyone in any form of detention, are deprived of adequate food, it can be considered “torture or inhuman and degrading treatment.”

In the Philippines, the right to food for prisoners is embodied in the guidelines of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). According to the Inmate's Orientation Sheet of the BJMP, the right to adequate food is by the Prisoner Subsistence Allowance (PSA). According to the 2015 budget of BJMP, each prisoner's daily allowance for food is P50. In summary, the total of 3 meals each detainee/prisoner consumes should not exceed P50: P10 for breakfast, P20 for lunch, and P20 for dinner. The UN Council on Human Rights also mandates that in addition to what is supposed to be given in the usual hours, food provided should be adequate to maintain health and strength, decent quality, and adequately prepared and served.

According to Karapatan or the Alliance for the Advancement of People's Rights, there are cases where detainees/inmates are served "below standard nutrition" meals consisting of a cup of rice, porridge for breakfast, a cup full of water boiled with squash or sayote, half a can of sardines for lunch, and an egg or a small fish, and a cup of rice for dinner. The group added that prisoners are threatened against complaining about the food rations.

Meanwhile, in 2005, Hurights Osaka (Asia-Pacific et al. Center was inaugurated on 17 December 1994. It was given the short name "HURIGHTS OSAKA). Released a report on the situation behind bars in Manila City Jail. According to the report, inmates likened their meals "which would look like a feed, mush or worse, slop" to the way "cows are fed in ranches" and often call their mealtime as ranch time. The food, it said, is of "little nutritional value and prepared in an unsanitary way."

In the health services, the overcrowding of jails and prisons has severe consequences for detainees, according to Jean-Daniel Tauxe, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) head of delegation in Manila, told reporters recently after numerous prison visits across the Philippines. Access to safe water, sanitation, healthcare, and acceptable living conditions is a significant problem in overcrowded detention facilities, with the spread of tuberculosis, he said and is considered a serious concern (ICRC, 2010).

Tuberculosis is one of the highest cases of the disease in inmates. However, according to a study by physician Richard Pearson Strong, he performed nutritional experiments with prisoners to see whether he could advance the field of beriberi research. It is a complex illness organized a nutritional trial involving prisoners in the Bilibid Prison in Manila. The results, as we now know, from lack of thiamine, the person suffers from heart problems and swelling of the legs. So, therefore during the inspection of the CHR regional offices, they did not see that swelling is the major problem in the inmates' health conditions, simply because it is not a contagious disease unlike tuberculosis (IRIN, 2010).

4.2.2. Struggle: Longing of Family.

Visiting inmates is significant because social support helps offenders transition from prison to the community. It can undoubtedly provide hope to an inmate while he or she is incarcerated. A significant facet of visitation is giving the inmate a lifeline upon release.

I wish there were jobs there for the jail inmates while others commit suicide due to loneliness. Every Christmas time, I could only wish that our family could be together. (Participant 2).

I have negative experiences. If I do not have visitation, I get jealous of other inmates if they have visitation from their families. (Participant 3).

Some inmates commit suicide, especially when they think that they do not have a family that will visit them. (Participant 13)

Family is essential, for they give hope and inspiration to them. As Broderick and Smith (1979) described, family systems theory consists of the different subsystems in the family, such as the role of mother, father, sister, brother, etc. Each of these subsystems within the family affects the other subsystems because the family is a unit of interrelated parts. Homeostasis is the primary goal of the family in order to achieve and maintain harmony according to the family systems theory (as cited in DeGenova and Rice, 2002). This study predicts that the actions of the other family members toward the incarcerated individual will affect the inmate's perception of their sentence and chance of re-offending.

Bowen's family systems theory ties into the concept of struggle through the yearning within a family. Bowen posits that family members are anticipated to interact with each other based on predefined roles, which are shaped by the relationships within the family. Within these family boundaries, behavioral patterns emerge as the actions of one family member both influence and are influenced by the actions of others in a predictable manner. Adhering to a consistent set of behaviors within a system can result in equilibrium within the family unit but can also contribute to dysfunction. For instance, should a husband be incarcerated and unable to cope, it might fall upon the wife to shoulder additional duties to compensate. While this role shift helps preserve the relationship's balance, it steers the family towards a new dynamic. This altered state could become problematic if the wife cannot sustain this heightened responsibility indefinitely.

Incarceration causes traumatic separation, leading to family estrangement, and theorists assert that the loss of a family member to prison is even more demoralizing to wives and children than a loss resulting from death (Carlson et al., 1991). Arditti (2003) noted that the United States had the highest incarceration rate in the world. Moreover, at least ten million children in 2003 had a parent involved in the criminal justice system (as cited in Reed & Reed, 19980).

This study defines family support as “the relationship between individuals where contact is frequent through in-person interactions, phone calls, letters, and emotional support is an important and significant factor.” The relationship must benefit both parties (DeGenova & Rice, 2002).

Arditti (2003) found that visitation has negative and positive effects on families. It provides an outlet for connection and a barrier to feelings of separation. The authors also suggested that contact visiting was essential for maintaining bonds with incarcerated individuals and their families. Contact visiting includes face-to-face and physical contact. Carlson and Cervera (1991) found that the best predictor of a successful release from prison (not re-offending) was having a stable and supportive family environment to which the inmate will return. The study found that the incarceration period is a highly stressful experience, and the stress is best alleviated through support from significant others. Although couples in this study coped well, there were signs they could have used some further assistance.

On the other hand, in one of my research environments, there was a case where an inmate escaped from confinement because of an intense longing for his wife and children. According to the report, Saveniano Dayondon bolted out of the Lapu-Lapu City Jail last Thursday afternoon. However, before he could even see his family, the 33-year-old inmate was brought back to the jail 19 hours after he escaped prison. He apologized to the jail officers and tearfully explained his reason for trying to escape. “*Na-miss nako akong asawa ug mga anak. Mahal na mahal nako sila* (I miss my wife and children. I love them very much),” said Dayondon, a native of Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur. Dayondon said his wife is pregnant with their third child. They have two children, ages three and four. He was arrested last March for allegedly peddling illegal drugs and carrying an unlicensed firearm (Sunstar Philippines, 2015).

In addition to the modifications of their personalities and emotional adjustment to their post-prison environments, inmates must adjust to the changes in family members during their imprisonment (Grounds, 2004). The informants in the present study expressed that the personalities they had consciously or unconsciously adopted during their incarceration contributed to their broken relationships with family members.

According to some participants, the inability to transition from a prison environment to a family household resulted in frequent disputes with family members. The broken relationships with family members corroborate the findings of Grounds (2004), who reported that exonerated individuals were often estranged from family members after their prison release.

4.3 How do the rehabilitation programs impact the informants after released from jail facility?

The inmates elucidated the influences they experienced that gave them the impression of the rehabilitation programs.

4.3.1 Programs: A Treatment, Transition and Avoidance of Recidivism.

The realities of how inmates learn rehabilitation and how they would change help them avoid committing the same mistakes.

In bible study, it helps me a lot. If you join, it wipes away all the problems much more; you share it with the other inmates. Sometimes, it makes you cry. (Participant 3).

In everything I do, God is always my providence. I read the bible, and at the same time, I will teach the children how to read bible verses Marcus 10:17. With man, this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible. (Participant 3).

The good thing that happened to me during my imprisonment was that I pay my wrongdoings. I repented and learned discipline. It is different here than inside the jail. (Participant 9).

Eventually, this theme applies to the concepts of Bandura’s (1977) social learning and self-efficacy theory in the sense that while inmates participated in these programs such as livelihood or work, and most especially the spiritual aspect wherein it touches their lives to reintegrate not only into the society but at the same time, it may lead them to become a law-abiding and productive citizen.

The social learning theory also relates to the program's theme: treatment, transition, and avoidance of recidivism. Albert Bandura’s Social learning refers to the fact that we acquire much of our behavior (e.g., hitting a golf ball, giving a speech, using a computer program) by observing and imitating others in a social context (Gibson, 2006). In short, as what the inmates learned in jail, there is also a possibility that it will be adopted during their transition back to the community or the time they will be released from incarceration, or it may be a key to finding a job that can sustain or support the needs of their family.

For instance, this program could allow them to acquire job skills, improving the chances that inmates will become productive citizens upon release. The programs aimed to change the lives of the inmates after their release. Those taught to produce valuable goods and be productive will likely develop the self-esteem essential to lead an everyday life. This kind of program would provide many valuable skills and habits and replace the sense of hopelessness that many inmates have (Manwong & Foronda, 2009).

Criminal rehabilitation is gaining popularity among many who are forward-thinking; such forms of rehabilitation can help reduce the number of repeat offenders who return to jail after being unable to adopt a life outside of jail. This can also help to solve some of the more severe cases of offenders who may continue in their ways after being released. Criminal rehabilitation can help solve overcrowding in most prisons (Farkas & Stojkovic, 2007).

The visiting and recreational program further helps them to get an atmosphere of the world beyond the confines of bars. It prevents the inmates from developing a feeling of isolation, which might even lead to depression. The bureau ensures that while the prisoners are serving their punishment for their respective offenses, they would be worthwhile and that there is always room for change and development. In such cases, they retain their identities and make their families feel that they still exist and could even afford to support the latter, though they are in prison.

As Larson et al. (1998) mentioned, religion can inhibit delinquent and criminal activity. Aside from complex and challenging theological discussions about the possible spiritual roles of religion and the evidence demonstrating the mental and physical health benefits of religion, there are scientific reasons to predict that religion might affect behavioral and social change. Religion targets antisocial values, emphasizes accountability and responsibility, changes cognitive approaches to conflict, and provides social support and social skills through interaction with religious people and communities; such emphases seem consistent with what many rehabilitation workers would call principles of effective treatment.

The livelihood program for inmates is set to become an earning opportunity and a means to contribute to having a healthy mind occupied with creativity and productivity. Besides developing the skills, they were also taught skills to exercise their power of preferences and to become productive and responsible members of society. The inmates are learning that committing a crime and ending up in jail is not the end of it all, realizing that they have the right and responsibility to make and have a great life for themselves (Lifeline, 2006).

4.3.2. Falling: A Striking Relationship Impact of Re- entry.

The impact of society on issues relating to responding to conflict, misbehavior, and wrongdoing makes things as right as possible for all who were impacted. Being labeled as a stigmatized person substantially affected how people thought and felt about themselves and how they expected to be treated by others in their environment.

When I was out of the prison, I went home and did not go out of the house because I felt introverted. I was not comfortable. People would say that I stole a motorcycle. I ignored them because if I minded, I might fall into trouble. (Participant 1).

I heard gossip and stories. I just let them go and ignored them, but sometimes it hurt. I just controlled myself in order not to commit any sins. (Participant 3).

Market aid, but they were afraid and had no trust in me. They knew already where I came from. That is okay. I will not insist, and why should I do? (Participant 4).

People will be scared of you, similar to how they react when you see a psychiatrist for help. Your experience inside will teach you to develop high tolerance and patience and never to be back inside. Use only verbal arguments when fighting. (Participant 10).

Social reaction theory or labeling theory by Becker relates to the theme of falling: a striking relationship impact of reentry. This theory focuses on the linguistic tendency of the majority group to negatively label minority groups or those seen as deviant from norms. This concept explores how individuals perceive themselves and how their actions can be shaped or impacted by the labels or categories they are assigned to. It relates to a self-fulfilling prophecy and the impact of stereotyping.

The background information in this theme provides details related to ex-inmates experiences as they attempt to reintegrate into society. This theme aims to understand and describe the post-prison experiences of released inmates less than three years after their prison release. Social identity theory (SIT) is also related to this theory as it deals with the identities assumed by some individuals in prison and the stigma associated with incarceration. I also used the social reaction theory Becker's (SRT) as it relates to labeling released inmates. The experiences of inmates reentering society can be impacted by the identities they adopt while incarcerated, according to Boduszek and colleagues (2013). Some prisoners take on the identities associated with being former convicts and struggle to rid themselves of these identities even after they are released from prison.

Although unrelated to the rehabilitation program, I included this as the impact of released inmates. However, I consider this a highlight because I believe that one of the factors of the inmate's reintegration is the process of preparing the latter and the community to become law-abiding citizens. It significantly impacts inmates; along the way, they have been able to finish their education in prison and earn a diploma or acquire skills such as livelihood or work programs. However, being inmates or ex-convicts, ex-prisoners may face challenges that their reclaimed freedom cannot help them overcome the abovementioned challenges. It can be seen, though, that the general attitude of ex-convicts neighbors toward them is hostile.

For Averill et al. (2015), society denigrates and ostracizes ex-convicts. When an inmate is released, he is dubbed to have completed his sentence and is considered a bonafide member of society again. However, the truth is that ex-convicts suffer for their crimes even after their required sentences end. After leaving physical incarceration, UK Essays (2015) publication disclosed that ex-offenders entered other prison cells due to the social stigma they experienced, making them find it challenging to live for the second time.

Additionally, Davis (2014) highlighted that the stigma surrounding former prisoners is a contributing factor to their joblessness, as it affects their outside perception. Afouxenidis et al. (2003) conducted a field study of ex-convicts' reintegration into the labor market and social life in three countries, namely Greece, Germany, and France. It was found that the problems ex-convicts face during reintegration are professional qualifications for employment purposes, lifestyle and routine socialization problems, and adjustments to society.

The consequences of incarceration and the reentry experiences of ex-inmates also provide insight into the reintegration experiences of exonerates. For example, outlined in their study, certain infections and diseases associated with long-term incarceration and how these illnesses affect the attempts of ex-inmates to restructure their lives. The discriminatory practices of some individuals against ex-prisoners also provide awareness (Westervelt & Cook, 2010).

Garland et al. (2013) highlight that housing challenges are prevalent because numerous landlords decline to lease to ex-inmates, driven by concerns over community safety. This leads to a significant number of these individuals facing homelessness, as noted by Harding et al. (2014). Discriminatory factors associated with employment also plague ex-prisoners. Garland et al. (2013) found that a significant number of employers are hesitant to hire individuals with past incarcerations, primarily due to concerns over trust and the potential for future criminal behavior. This reluctance stems from the stigma attached to having a criminal record, according to the findings of Garland and colleagues (2013).

The amount of time an inmate is incarcerated has risen exponentially in the last few decades. According to a study done in 2010, inmates released in 2009 spent, on average, more than nine additional months behind bars than those incarcerated for the same crime in 1990 (Bloom, 2012). This not only costs millions of additional tax dollars, but it also does not seem to make our communities any safer. Over 60% of the prison population is being held for nonviolent, non-serious crimes. Researchers found that if the justice system released just half of these nonviolent offenders, the prison system could save over 17 billion a year and cause no additional effect on the crime rate (Bloom, 2010). Criminologists also argue that mass incarceration promotes crime, not detours it, as represented by the social learning theory. The longer someone is detained, the likelier they are to become institutionalized. Once prisoners become institutionalized, they struggle to adapt to societal norms upon release. They lack the necessary social skills and mechanisms to deal with the stress and challenges they face once they are out. Frequently, their inability to secure employment or receive help in finding housing leads them to revert to criminal activities, as it is the only lifestyle they are familiar with, thereby perpetuating the cycle. Research indicates that merely lengthening prison sentences does not necessarily deter criminal activity. Instead, it has been found that rehabilitation initiatives, coupled with shorter durations of imprisonment, are more successful in curbing crime than simple punitive measures.

5. Conclusion

Six (6) emergent themes were derived from the informants' responses. Among the responses were extracted the significant statements that resulted in creating a core meaning for the emergent themes; the following are the emergent themes arranged according to each sub-problem.

Three themes were created for the positive experiences of the released inmates on the rehabilitation program: *Pious acts, A route to direction, self-concept, and behavioral change; Proficiency and capability, A subsistence to live;* and lastly, *Education knows no boundaries.*

Two themes were created for the negative experiences of the released inmates in the rehabilitation program: *Humanity, a setting of significant sprain,* and *Struggle longing for family.*

Two themes were created regarding the impact of the informants' rehabilitation programs after release: *Programs: a treatment, transition, and avoidance of recidivism;* and *Falling: A striking relationship impact of re-entry.*

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