

Issues and Concerns of the Jail Officers in Dealing with Persons Deprived of Liberty: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

Correction, play a critical role in criminal justice system. Nevertheless, despite the existing laws that provide reformation and protects the rights of every Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL), jail officers are chronically understudied relative to their issues and concerns experiences in dealing with PDL. This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature related to jail studies by interviewing the City jail in Ozamiz in order to determine their issues and concerns towards the PDL. There are seven Jail Officers served as the participants of the study. Data obtained through interviews were analyzed through Houlton Thematic analysis it analyzed the qualitative data. The gathered data from the participants were analyzed and found four (4) themes which includes: (1) Struggles in eradicating contraband; (2) Difficulty in maintaining the security and other services due to lack of personnel; (3) Different personalities of the Persons Deprived of Liberty; (4) Lack of fund. We discuss the implications of these findings, includes in addressing the Philippine government to support the needs of National, Regional, and local jails especially in allocation of budget, providing additional enhancement programs for the personality development of PDL, and increased of jail personnel for effective performance of services.

Keywords: correction, criminal justice system, contraband, person deprived of liberty

INTRODUCTION

The backbone of corrections is its workforce, the corrections sector relies on qualified, trained and dedicated staff for effective, professional operations (Saddam & Mansor, 2019). But today, correctional administrators, particularly those running prisons and jails, are grappling with severe workforce challenges that directly impact mission performance (Russo, 2019). In global scope in terms of correctional facilities, Officers experienced as one of their issue with regard to the massive number of PDL they have to deal with every day (Schuster, 2022). In the study of (Schuster, 2022) it shows that in US prison population of inmates has receded slightly from a historic high, but it remains quite large. Correlated to the overcrowding it resulted to increased incidence of assault and riots putting officer in greater danger (Johnson & Matthews, 2020).

In the peak of COVID-19 global pandemic it added greater need to address issues and concerns in the correction facility especially the spreading of highly transmissible disease which detrimental to both officer and PDL (Schuster, 2022). Though for many it has proven to be a rewarding career, a variety of factors can deter individuals from entering or remaining in the field of corrections (Chouhy & Lee, 2020). The work is inherently dangerous, given the characteristics of the population of incarcerated individuals (Friedman, 2021). Beyond the risk of physical injury, there are extraordinary stressors associated with corrections work that can seriously affect the well-being of staff (Russo, 2019). According to the study of (De Guzman et al., 2020) a report on the situation of the Philippine Penitentiaries revealed that prison wardens often face

problems such as pollution or overcrowding, food supplies are inadequate for ordinary human demands daily (De Guzman et al., 2020).

While many studies have been conducted already to look into the experiences of Person Deprived of Liberty and enhancing their well-being inside the penitentiary (Flores-Barolo & Vicente, 2019). However, there was a limited study into how Jail Officers deal with the Issues and Concerns in handling the PDL (Asis, 2022). Moreover, despite the programs and services implemented under the mandate of Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), studies conducted continue to show that Jail Officers have still existing issues and concerns that needs to be unravelled (Aguilar & Lineses, 2020). It is for the above reasons that this study was conducted to determine what are the Issues and Concerns of the Jail Officers in Tinago, Ozamiz City in dealing with Persons Deprived of Liberty (Viotti, 2019).

Jail Officers are vastly underrepresented in research this study sought an answer on how Jail Officers cope up with the existing issue they experience, and to determine the needs of the Jail Officer for a quality correctional facility (Kilmer & Silver, 2023). In addition, the findings may provide insights to the official of the government here in the Philippines to support and provide the needs of the Jail Officers National, Regional, and local jails which will result to the enhancement of every correctional facility (Nario-Lopez, 2021). Officers in the correction sector having its own issue and concerns relative to their working conditions specifically in dealing with the PDL has brought to renewed attention and urgency to address this issue (City, 2022).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

An article by Ellison & Caudill (2020) “Working on local time: Testing the job-demand-control-support model of stress with jail officers”. There are countless strategies to cope with a difficult circumstance in order for the Jail Officers to cope up with existing issues such as delegating appropriate works, maintaining control, providing social support, and reduction of safety risks. The capacity of a system to adapt successfully to challenges that threaten the function, survival, or future development of the system or simply as how human beings deal with adversities. An article by Miller et al., (2021) “Well-Being in Frontline Correctional Officers” Correctional officers (COs) work in high-stress environments, frequently experience critical incidents and have shown high levels of burnout, the study had determined the key themes includes the job satisfaction, personal growth, and coping to maintain their well-being and safety. Both our conscious and unconscious attempts to resolve issues and reduce stress. The mind’s internal problem-solving algorithm attempts to return it to where it should be. In psychology, we proactively employ coping strategies such as coping skills or tactics to avoid burnout. Our thoughts, feelings, and actions are some of these tools, which are influenced by our personality patterns. An article by Moore (2019) “Resilience theory” The Norman Garnezy hypothesis of resilience states that a person with high resilience is not always very brave in the face of adversity rather, they are able to maintain functional adequacy despite experiencing emotional turbulence. Jail officers face a very challenging working environment where their resilience always needs to be boosted and maintained. An article by City (2022) “Social Support, Emotional Intelligence and Political Skills: A Structural Equation Model on Resilience of Jail Officers in Region XI” It had been discovered in this study that social support and emotional intelligence influence the resilience of jail officers. Research into how people respond to adversity has been going on for decades, and resilience theory has come out of that. It also does not have a predetermined set of principles or hypotheses, in contrast to other major theories. Instead, we might say that it is a framework that is constantly changing as researchers learn new things about human resilience. As a result, we can assert that resilience has no set definition.

An article by Jaegers et al., (2021) “Work–family conflict, depression, and burnout among jail correctional officers: A 1-year prospective study. Safety and health at work” The Social Support theory

is focused on the proposition that instrumental, informational, and emotional supports reduce the likelihood of delinquency and crime. Social support protects people from the bad health effects of stressful events by influencing how people think about and cope with the events.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design utilized is a qualitative-descriptive phenomenological research design to gather data and information that helped the researchers determined how Jail Officers in Ozamiz City Jail address the issues and concerns in dealing with the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL). This design is the most appropriate for the investigation since it explored the direct experiences of the Jail Officers and this design means to describe, portray, characterize or represent information that are being narrated to account for something usually by giving details of an event, it includes the processes of analysis to obtain the common responses and perceptions of the participants. Participants profile includes classification, age, gender, rank, experiences and length of service and evaluation to generate the findings and conclusion that lead to the recommendations of the study. The data were gathered through the use of in-depth interview, and the totality of information were being consolidated for analysis and interpretation.

The study will include seven (7) Jail Officers four (4) from the Male Dormitory and three (3) from the Female Dormitory particularly in Ozamiz City Jail as the participants. The participants of the study are identified through purposive sampling. They were chosen based on the following criteria: 1) who served as a jail officer for at least five (5) years in service, 2) assigned as custodial officers, (3) willing to participate in the study.

In gathering the data and information of the study, the researchers made use of the following research instruments: The study will utilize the in-depth interview guide developed by the researchers as the main tool in gathering the needed data from the participants. The interview guide contains a series of questions that solicit their experiences and strategies in order to address the issues and concern in dealing with Person Deprived of Liberty (PDL). The interview will be recorded through the use of an audio recording device for future reference. Further, the interview guide will be subjected to the correction of the research adviser before it shall be reproduced for distribution to the participants.

The data collection is essential in every research endeavour. Thus, to get the essential information from the participant data collection should be done thoroughly. Before actual interview with the recognized participants, the researchers asked permission to the Dean of the College of Criminology allowing the researchers to pursue their study and conduct the interview through an official/ formal letter. The researchers make the interview guide and submitted for final approval and were made ready to be reproduced, once the approval from the dean is acquired, the researchers now asked permission from the Jail Warden of the Ozamis City Jail allowing them to conduct the study with in the jail premises. Upon obtaining the required authorization, the study participants are identify by the researchers. The researchers make an appointment with the identify participants and proposing the schedule of the interview. The researchers inform the participants that all of their conversations and responses will be recorded and gave them assurance that all of their conversations and responses will be kept with utmost confidentiality. Further, considering the COVID-19 virus, the researchers followed the proper health and safety protocol during the conduct of the data gathering.

The researcher carefully observed confidentiality to the said participants. These will serves as their geared upon conducting the interview. In terms of participant's identity, the researcher must observe the value of every participant's privacy and personal information of the participants will never be disclosed. The researcher must in line to guidelines of R.A. 10173 also known as "Data Privacy Act of 2012" stipulated it is the State's policy to protect the fundamental human right of privacy, of communication while ensuring

free flow of information to promote innovation and growth. The researchers will also follow the minimum health protocols provided by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) and the Department of Health (DOH).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study involved seven (7) Bureau of Jail Management and Penology Personnel who had experienced issues and concerns during their service. The participants had a length of service of at least five (5) years and is assigned as custodial officer. There were two (2) officers who have a rank of Jail officer 1, three (3) for Jail Officer 2, and two (2) for Jail Officer 3.

Based on the responses of the participants during the interview, the following themes were obtained: Struggles in eradicating contraband, Difficulty in maintaining the security and other services due to lack of personnel, Different personalities of the Persons Deprived of Liberty, and Lack of fund

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Code Name	Age	Rank	Length of Service
P1	27	JO1	5 years
P2	30	JO1	9 years
P3	38	JO2	12 years
P4	30	JO3	5 years
P5	45	JO3	14 years
P6	35	JO2	9 years
P7	35	JO2	12 years

Struggles in eradicating contraband

Contraband is being prohibited inside the jail since it risks both PDL and jail officers, these contraband is being check upon commitment of the PDL, visiting the PDL, during court presentation or trial, and inside their dormitory. It was then evident that contraband is still present despite the strict measures applied. These were revealed in the answers of the participant.

Code Name	Responses
P1	“What I have encountered the most in dealing with the PDL during my duty is that the contraband I intercepted during pat frisk or searching their body after their on-person hearing. In handling the issues I reiterate again the consequences they will receive or earn to their action that is against the policy of the Bureau”
P3	“I have also encountered a problem about contrabands. To always be vigilant in checking the visitors as well as conducting Greyhound operation.”
P6	“The contrabands that the PDL trying to push through even if it was prohibited. To always look into CCTV and be vigilant”
P2	“The issues I encountered was the PDLs desires from using or obtaining contrabands, but I was able to handle it by performing my duties as a gate keeper, searching their persons and belongings whenever the PDL came back from escorting”.

This implies that Jail Officers risks their self and job just to prevent the entry of contraband. They maintain peace and order inside the jail and provide reformation program for the PDL, they play a huge role in making the PDL a better person when going back to the mainstream of the society. Interdiction techniques

must be customized to each agency, and facility agencies should take a forceful stance against contraband, which is a common and serious problem for correctional agencies. Administrators of prisons and jails should gather timely data from trustworthy sources to guide their approaches of contraband interdiction (Shukla et al., 2021).

Difficulty in maintaining the security and other services due to lack of personnel

In every agency to be effective and efficient, personnel is the most important thing to consider. In our correctional system it is quite evident in the quota of BJMP aspiring officer that it has lower number of applicant and these affects the work of a jail officer of how they manage to administer the growing population in every jail nationwide. Under the laws, the custodial ratio or ratio of jail personnel to PDL should be one to seven. But now it hovers around one to 80. In certain circumstances, it is one to 500, because of this, jails and prisons often resort to “organizational coping.” (Guda, 2022). These were revealed in the answers of the participant.

Code Name Responses

- P2 “In solving these concerns the Bureau already have this intervention, what we really need the most is the well trained personnel to handle or educate the PDL”
- P3 “The concern that I would like to express is to have additional personnel to speed up jail services. The concern can only be solved if we have enough personnel in the jail.”
- P6 “Additional Personnel for more security.”
- P7 “Seeking assistance from other agencies to become jail service providers”.

This implies that the BJMP Ozamiz addressed their concern about the lack of personnel which affects their services. Because of the lack of personnel to handle large jail populations, the PDLs themselves resort to self-governance. It is evident on the result that Jail needed more personnel for the delegation of specific workload and to be able to manage a larger population of PDL without having shortage of personnel.

Different Personalities of the Persons Deprived of Liberty

We have different personalities as a person it’s either be an acquired or innate personality and these personality will help to determine someone’s behavior. While personality determines what you think and how you behave, personality disorders are marked by thoughts and behavior that are disruptive and distressing in everyday life. Someone with a personality disorder may have trouble recognizing their condition because their symptoms are ingrained in their personality (Cherry, 2022). These were revealed in the answers of the participant.

Code Name	Responses
P1	“In dealing with the Persons Deprived of Liberty they have different personalities inside the facility. So far, what I have encountered the most in dealing with the PDL”
P1	“I had a concern specifically with the PDL during their stay in our custody must have intervention in reshaping their attitude for their reintegration in the mainstream of the society”
P2	“I have negative experiences because I have to deal with different personalities of the PDL at the same time, there were also positive experiences because I am happy at times when I play along or having sports game with the PDL”
P4	“My main issue and concern in dealing with PDL who are in the denial stage and PDL who are keep on claiming that they are only victims on the crime they committed”.

P5	“The concern that I would like to express is that the PDL should tell their lawyer the truth about their case and in order for these issues to be solved the PDL should accept their sin and the consequences”.
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This implies that criminal behavior is one type of behavior that is significantly influenced by personality. We must comprehend a criminal’s personality in order to discern what makes them “criminals.” The way a person thinks has a big impact on their behavior. A person is made up of their personality. Despite having the appearance of a criminal, a person is only a criminal because of the way they think. The criminal’s decisions to commit crimes are the result of abnormal thought patterns, which are similar to thought patterns found in crimes and include constant lying, a failure to develop empathy, expecting their wants to be catered to them, loving someone for doing what they want and blaming others. It is evident on the result shown that they were more likely to be less accountable, intolerable, and lacking in self-control.

Lack of Fund

A fund is an accumulation of money reserved for an intended purpose. The Jail facility needs fund in order to provide adequate needs of the PDL such as food, clothing, medicine, and others. It is also an issue faced by the jail today. These were revealed in the answers of the participant.

Code Name	Responses
P4	“The concerns I would like to express is to implement the welfare development programs specifically livelihood services, health services, paralegal service, sports and recreational services, and religious services. The issues I have encountered was the PDL visitors, health condition, and mental health issues.”
P7	“It is a big challenge for me to budget the given subsistence allowance for the PDL in order to provide healthy and sufficient foods”
P7	“In handling the issue I needed to familiarize and establish good rapport on market vendors and good dealers in order to have discounts and reasonable prices for products or foods I purchase. The concern I wanted to address is the continuous support on the basic needs of PDL”.
P7	“We are encouraging their families and friends to continue their support on their incarcerated relative”.
P5	“The issues I have encountered was the PDL visitors, health conditions and mental health issues”.

This implies that lack of fund is a current deficiency necessary to maintain current operations. It is evident on the result that some PDLs depend on cooked food handed from relatives who regularly visit them which the government have a food allotted allowance for PDL and in health medication where jail nurses are few, as well as programs that should be funded by the national government for the welfare of the PDL.

CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, Ozamiz City jail encountered difficulty in the eradication of contraband for the reasons of lack of personnel, and the PDLs recklessness despite the fact that it will result to dreadful outcome. And due to the lack of personnel it resulted to their issues in handling large number of PDL, speeding up the jail services, and increased backlogs. In the side of PDL, their impertinent affect the intervention process which is crucial in reshaping their personalities for their reintegration in the mainstream of the society, these were PDL who were in their denial stage that they have not committed the crime which is one of the officers’ issue regarding personality. And the lack of fund is their major issue for them to develop more programs specifically in relation to health, livelihood, and sports, recreational services, food for the PDL, improve

facilities and providing additional personnel. The study shows that the issues and concerns they have experienced had affect their course of duty as well as the PDL well-being. Further, addressing the issues and concern of the Jail Officers is imperative in anticipating solution in order to maintain the aim of the bureau for the reformation of PDL and quality services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result of the study, the BJMP personnel should increase their level of security for the interception of those who tried to smuggle contrabands to prevent from risks both PDL and officers. Should provide more security personnel to speed up jail services and well organize delegation of workload by addressing the issue into the government here in the Philippines to support and provide the needs of the Jail Officers National, Regional, and local jails which will result to the enhancement of every correctional facility especially in allocating budget, providing additional enhancement programs for the personality development of PDL, and increased of jail personnel for effective performance of services. And in order for these issues to be overcome proper funding is pivotal for the fulfilment of the BJMPs duties and aim in providing transformation in the lives of the PDL.

DECLARATIONS

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing financial, professional and personal interests.

Consent for publication

Authors declare that they consented for the publication of this research work.

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