

Therapeutic Community Modality Program: The Lived Experiences of the Former Persons Deprived of Liberty

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ABSTRACT

Jails are facilities where persons in conflict with the law who are still awaiting trial or those serving sentences of three years or less are detained, and these are managed by the BJMP. This qualitative phenomenological study examined the experiences of ten Person. Liberty (PDL) in a Therapeutic Community Modality Program within the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in Misamis Occidental. Using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology, this study employed an in-depth interview design to collect firsthand data from participants. The instrument consisted of an interview guide, which was reviewed and approved by the adviser and panel members before administration. Data analysis involved bracketing, horizontalization, clustering, textural description, structural description, and textural-structural synthesis using NVivo software. The results revealed four themes: Initial Doubts and Adjustment to the Program, Self-Reflection and Confronting Past Behaviors, Building Positive Relationships and Social Support, and Personal Growth and Rehabilitation. The study's findings highlight the importance of patience, perseverance, and self-reflection during the initial adjustment period, as well as the transformative potential of the program in facilitating personal growth and rehabilitation. The findings suggest that such programs can have a positive impact on individuals' mental health, self-awareness, and rehabilitation outcomes. The study's results also emphasize the importance of creating a supportive environment that fosters positive engagement with the program.

Keywords: therapeutic community modality program, correctional rehabilitation, personal growth, phenomenological research, mental health

INTRODUCTION

In the Philippines, jails and prisons are distinct from each other. Jails are facilities where persons in conflict with the law who are still awaiting trial or those serving sentences of three years or less are detained (RA 10592, 2013) and these are managed by the BJMP (Nario-Lopez, 2021). Prisons are for those already sentenced (on remand) and are managed by the Bureau of Corrections (Aotearoa, 2021). The Philippine prison system adopted two approaches for the treatment of offenders. These are the institutional-based treatment programs and the community-based treatment programs. These programs aimed towards the improvement of the offender's attitude and philosophy of life. Reformation and rehabilitation of inmates as well as preparation for the reintegration in community are the ultimate goals of the programs. Prison inmates are some of the most disturbed and unstable people in society (Yangco, 2019). Most of the inmates have had too little discipline or too much come from broken homes and have no self-esteem. They are very insecure and are at war with themselves as well as with society. Most inmates did not learn moral values or learn to follow everyday norms. To rehabilitate criminals, we must do more than just send them to prison (Evans et al., 2018). This program could give them a chance to acquire job skills which will improve the chances that inmates will become productive citizens upon release. The programs must aim to change those who want to change (Vandala, 2019). Those who are taught to produce useful goods and to be productive are likely to develop the self-esteem essential to a normal integrated personality (Gonzales et al., 2023). This kind of program would provide many useful skills and habits and replace the sense of hopelessness that many inmates have. Important for a prisoner is to have a will to change himself and then giving he support to improve (Evans et al., 2018). Many of them do not know how to start a new life such therapeutic Community Programs are the way, and they can enlighten their future life.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically using the phenomenological research method. This methodology is particularly suited for exploring the impacts of the Therapeutic Community Modality Program (TCMP) among former Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) in the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in Misamis Occidental. The phenomenological approach focuses on understanding the lived experiences of former individuals, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the subjective impacts of the Therapeutic Community Modality Program on Persons Deprived of Liberty.

The study involved 7 former Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) who had participated in the Therapeutic Community Modality Program. These participants were purposively selected based on their suitability for interviews. The inclusion criteria for selecting participants were as follows: 1) former PDL of the Therapeutic Community Modality Program (TCMP), and 2) being willing to participate in the study.

The study utilized an interview guide to collect firsthand data from the participants. The interview guide was reviewed by the adviser and subsequently checked and approved by the panel members before being administered to the participants. The tool contained questions designed to uncover the challenges faced by Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) and to explore the impacts of Therapeutic Community Programs within the jail. The instrument included opening questions to gather the necessary profile information of the respondents, core questions, and closing questions. During the interviews, the researcher recorded the conversations for future reference during data interpretation. In addition to recording the interviews, the researcher also used a recording sheet to note important points provided by the participants. Data collection was crucial in this research endeavor. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher sought permission from the Dean of the College of Criminology at Misamis University through formal letters to proceed with the study. After obtaining approval from the Dean, the researcher also requested permission from the participants through a formal letter. The researcher then scheduled appointments with the selected participants and proposed a timetable for the interviews. Participants were informed that the conversations would be recorded, and they were assured that all responses would be kept strictly confidential.

This study used Moustakas' (1994) data analysis technique of phenomenological reduction. The transcripts of all participants gathered from the interviews were analyzed using Moustakas' methods.

Throughout the entire study process, the welfare of the participants was the researcher's top priority. Privacy and confidentiality were always maintained, especially regarding participants' names and any other irrelevant information. The researcher adhered to the guidelines outlined in Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the "Data Privacy Act of 2012." By following these guidelines, the researcher ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the qualitative research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Participants

A total of 7 Former Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) participated in the study through a face-to-face interview. The participants' ages range from 25-46 years old. All of them are former Person Deprived of Liberty at least 4 years. All of the participants have Therapeutic Community Modality Program: The Lived Experiences of the Former Persons Deprived of Liberty

Table 1. Profile of the Participants

Social Group	Variables	No. of Informants (7)
Gender	Male	7
Age group	18-25	1
	26-35	4

	36-45	1
	46 and above	1
Education	Primary Level	1
	Secondary Level	4
Incarceration	1month to 1year	4
	2 years to 3years	2
	4years to 5years	1

Therapeutic Community Modality Program: The Lived Experiences of the Former Persons Deprived of Liberty

From the responses of the participants, there were four emergent themes, namely: (1) Initial Doubts and Adjustments to the Program; (2) Self-Reflection and Confronting Past Behaviors; (3) Building and Maintaining Respectful Relationships; and (4) Developing Practical Skills and Personal Growth.

Initial Doubts and Adjustments to the Program

The initial adjustment period in correctional rehabilitation programs often presents significant challenges for participants. Research has shown that individuals entering such programs frequently experience a sense of doubt and resistance, primarily due to the abrupt transition from freedom to a highly structured and restrictive environment (King, 2021). This phase is characterized by feelings of anxiety, skepticism, and discomfort as participants struggle to adapt to new routines, rules, and the loss of personal autonomy. The psychological impact of confinement can exacerbate these feelings, making the initial phase particularly strenuous. Despite these challenges, this period is crucial as it sets the stage for subsequent rehabilitation efforts.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"At first, the walls seemed suffocating, but within them, I discovered a profound truth – the importance of being present." (P1)

"My time behind bars was initially colored by a sense of skepticism; I anticipated encountering individuals who might not necessarily embody virtues of goodness or decency. However, my perceptions shifted as I engaged with my fellow PDLs." (P4)

"Being relatively new to the program and the facility, I'm still acquainting myself with the rules and regulations." (P6)

The results indicate that participants might initially harbor doubts and uncertainty regarding the program's worth, resulting in feelings of anxiety and resistance. Nevertheless, as they actively participate in the program and interact with other inmates, their viewpoints evolve, and they gradually recognize the program's advantages. The program's organization and support network significantly contribute to this transformation. By addressing initial uncertainties and anxieties, participants can cultivate trust and self-assurance, which are pivotal for their progress within the program.

Self-Reflection and Confronting Past Behaviors

These reflections illustrate the profound impact that the Therapeutic Community Modality Program has on fostering self-awareness and personal development among its participants (Schaefer et. al., 2021). The process of introspection and confronting past behaviors not only aids in personal reconciliation but also instills a stronger sense of responsibility and commitment to positive change. By addressing underlying issues such as substance abuse and negative behavioral patterns, the program helps participants build healthier relationships and make

better life choices (Lipsey, 2019). The emphasis on perseverance through challenges further reinforces the transformative potential of the program, as it equips participants with the resilience and determination needed to overcome obstacles and achieve lasting personal growth. This thematic consistency across multiple participants underscores the program's effectiveness in promoting meaningful rehabilitation and preparing individuals for successful reintegration into society.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"As a Person Deprived of Liberty (PDL), I aspire to reconcile with myself and seek forgiveness from those I've hurt. Through introspection, I've come to understand why I ended up in prison and why I behaved poorly." (P3)

"Before joining the Therapeutic Community Program two years ago, I struggled with substance abuse and negative behavior, leading to difficulties in maintaining healthy relationships and making positive choices." (P7)

"I now have a better understanding of myself and my choices, which has boosted my self-esteem and strengthened my resolve to stay on the right path." (P5)

"Yes, I'd like to emphasize the importance of perseverance and self-reflection in the journey towards positive change. While participating in the program, I've encountered setbacks and challenges, but each obstacle has served as an opportunity for growth and learning." (6)

The results indicate that the participants struggling with substance abuse, negative behavior, and past mistakes, but through their engagement with the program, they gained a deeper understanding of themselves and their choices. The program's focus on self-reflection, individual counseling, and vocational training helped participants develop essential life skills and build pro-social relationships. By confronting their past behaviors and mistakes, participants can develop a greater sense of accountability and responsibility.

Building and Maintaining Respectful Relationships

Programs that foster mutual respect among inmates and between inmates and staff can contribute to improved behavior, reduced conflict, and enhanced emotional well-being (Friedman, 2018). The implications of participants' experiences in TCMP suggest several important considerations for correctional systems and rehabilitation programs. Firstly, the emphasis on respect and community-building within TCMP highlights the significance of creating supportive environments within prisons.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"One of the things I learned and experienced in the Therapeutic Community Modality Program is respect for fellow PDLs, especially for prison personnel." (P2)

"Engaging in activities and leisure pursuits organized by the program not only provided moments of respite but also instilled discipline and a sense of purpose. Following the rules diligently became a pathway towards earning the coveted Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA)." (P5)

"TCMP wasn't just a program; it was a life-changer. It taught me how to steer clear of trouble and focus on positive interactions with my fellow inmates. Respect was a big lesson. I learned to respect others, whether they were inmates like me or the prison staff." (P1)

The responses from participants in the Therapeutic Community Modality Program (TCMP) highlight several key themes and outcomes. Firstly, the emphasis on respect stands out as a central theme across their experiences. Participants noted the importance of respecting both fellow inmates and prison staff, which contributed to a more positive and supportive environment within the prison walls. This focus on respect not only helped in fostering better relationships but also played a crucial role in their personal development and rehabilitation journey. By learning to respect others, participants were able to cultivate a sense of community and mutual support, which are essential for successful reintegration into society upon release.

Developing Practical Skills and Personal Growth

These programs often incorporated various components, including educational opportunities, vocational training, and psychological support, aiming to address both the practical and emotional needs of participants. (Peters et al, 2018) In correctional settings, programs like the Therapeutic Community Modality Program (TCMP) provided structured environments designed to facilitate rehabilitation and reduce recidivism among incarcerated individuals.

These were revealed in the answers of the participants:

"In the crucible of incarceration, I also discovered the power of education and skill development. Through educational programs and vocational training, I equipped myself with the tools necessary to rebuild my life upon release." (P1)

"Furthermore, the TCMP taught me valuable life skills that extend beyond the confines of prison walls. From communication techniques to conflict resolution strategies, I gained practical knowledge that I can apply to various aspects of my life." (P2)

"From conflict resolution techniques to anger management strategies, I gained valuable tools to navigate life's challenges more effectively." (P3)

"Moreover, the Therapeutic Modality Program not only focused on spiritual and emotional wellbeing but also provided opportunities for practical skills development." (P5)

"Through my two years in the therapeutic program, I've learned the transformative power of self-reflection and communal support. Engaging in therapy sessions and group activities has helped me recognize and address the underlying issues contributing to my past behavior, while the camaraderie within the community has shown me the importance of accountability and mutual encouragement in the journey towards personal growth and rehabilitation." (P2)

The collective insights from these participants suggest several key points. Firstly, educational and vocational training programs play a crucial role in equipping PDLs with essential skills for life post incarceration, aiding in their rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. These programs not only enhance practical knowledge but also contribute to improved self-esteem and a sense of purpose. Secondly, the emphasis on life skills, such as communication and conflict resolution, extends beyond the prison walls, helping individuals navigate challenges in various aspects of their lives. This broader applicability underscores the effectiveness of TCMP in fostering holistic personal development. Lastly, the integration of spiritual and emotional well-being into the program highlights the importance of addressing the mental health and emotional needs of PDLs, which are often critical to successful rehabilitation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were crafted by the researchers. Participants underwent a significant shift in mindset, moving from initial doubt to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the program's value. Engaging with the supportive community and participating in program activities facilitated this transformation, highlighting the importance of patience and perseverance in rehabilitation efforts. Therapeutic communities are effective in reducing recidivism by addressing root causes of criminal behavior and promoting pro-social behaviors. The structured environment supports participants in confronting past behaviors, developing essential life skills, and fostering community relationships. TCMP's structured activities and focus on respect and discipline are effective in promoting rehabilitation and reducing conflict within correctional settings. The program empowers participants to make positive choices and build a foundation for successful reintegration into society. Educational and vocational training within TCMP contribute significantly to reducing recidivism rates and improving inmates' prospects post-release. The program's holistic approach, integrating emotional well-being and practical skills, enhances participants' ability to navigate challenges both inside and outside of prison.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the TCMP experience, it is recommended to enhance initial support for new participants. This includes providing additional resources and guidance during the adjustment period to mitigate feelings of doubt and discomfort. Creating a supportive environment that fosters camaraderie and mutual support among participants is crucial for successful program engagement and rehabilitation outcomes. expand and invest in therapeutic community programs within correctional settings to enhance rehabilitation outcomes and support successful reintegration into society. Emphasize the importance of self-reflection, accountability, and vocational training to reduce the societal impact of incarceration and improve participants' long-term outcomes. Expand and invest in TCMP and similar therapeutic community programs across correctional facilities to enhance rehabilitation outcomes. Emphasize the importance of respect and structured activities to foster a supportive environment that encourages personal growth and reduces recidivism rates and expand educational and skills development opportunities within correctional facilities, focusing on holistic personal development. Emphasize the integration of emotional and psychological support alongside practical training to better equip individuals for a successful transition back into the community.

Interview Questionnaire

Before the interview begins, the participants will be informed that:

1. Their identity will remain confidential during the whole course of the study and in writing the report of the study.
2. They can discontinue their participation at any time.

Participant's Profile

1. Age:
2. Civil Status:
3. Gender:

Core Questions

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your experiences before you came to this program.
2. How long have you been participating in the program?
3. Can you think of any ways your behavior has changed since being in this program?
4. What are the positive contributors of the Therapeutic Community Program to your life as PDL?
5. What are your experiences as PDL during your transformation through the Therapeutic Community Programs?
6. Are there situations or feelings that used to trigger negative behavior for you? How do you handle those situations now?
7. Do you feel like you understand yourself and your choices better now? If so, how has that helped you?
8. How have your relationships with others changed, both inside and outside the program?
9. Who or what has been most helpful in supporting your positive changes?
10. What are your goals for the future after you leave this program?

11. What do you think will help you stay on track and avoid going back to negative behaviors?
12. What parts of the program have been most helpful for you?
13. Do you have any suggestions for how the program could be improved?
14. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience in the program or your journey of positive change?

Closing Questions

1. What are the learnings based on your experiences that you can share with other PDL in relation to the impact of therapeutic programs that were given and practiced by all of you here inside the Jail?

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