

# Voices Behind Bars: The Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) and their Lived Experiences in the Prison Institution

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## ABSTRACT

The raising concerns among the Persons Deprived of Liberty with their incarceration has been a controversial issue worldwide due to the multiple challenges that they experienced during their incarceration. This study aims to determine the lived experiences of the PDL and how they deal with their experiences while incarcerated, with an end view of determining the PDL recommendations to strengthen the rehabilitation programs of the Prison Institution using a descriptive phenomenological approach of qualitative research. Eight (8) PDL from the Prison Institution of Santiago City, Philippines were selected as key informants of the study based from the PDL years of incarceration, with undergoing trial in no particular case and the language that they used. The data were gathered through semi-structured interview and were interpreted using a thematic analysis. Based on the analysis of data, eleven themes were developed based from the PDL's lived experiences, such as, engaging in productive, educational, recreational and religious activities, loss connection with love ones, dissatisfaction with prison meals, residing in uncrowded place, misunderstanding, unequal treatment, delayed justice, and physical sickness among the Persons Deprived of Liberty's; three themes were also developed as strategy to deal with the challenges they experience, such as, finding diversion through livelihood, TESDA, ALS, and sport participation, resilience through spiritual connection and counseling inside the Prison Institution; and three themes was developed based from the PDL's recommendations, such as, expediency of their legal proceeding, expansion of the livelihood programs along with the empowerment of product promotion and hygiene support for their better rehabilitation. In connection to the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that the PDL's experienced difficulty while undergoing incarceration, however their difficulties was overcome through their participation to various activities offered within the Prison Institution. In addition, the findings of the study provides an important foundation for increasing the public awareness and contributing to the reintegration process of the former PDL's.

**Keywords:** Persons Deprived of Liberty, Lived Experiences, Voices Behind Bars, Prison Institution, Qualitative Research

## INTRODUCTION

The raising of concerns about incarceration has been a controversial issue worldwide. Globally, it is estimated that there are more than 11.5 million people in prison worldwide on any given day, according to World Prison Brief's latest global data. The United States of America (US) remains an outlier with the largest absolute number of people in prison with 1.84 million and the highest prison population rate at 629 percent per 100,000 people. The US is followed by China with 1.69 million, with unknown numbers in pre-

trial and other forms of detention (Global Prison Trends, 2023).

Moreover, the excessive overcrowding levels in parts of Asia are largely due to punitive drug policies coupled with excessive use of pre-trial detention. In the Philippines, 126,590 people are in jails that hold mostly pre-trial detainees (as of April 2023) and 50,686 in the country's 8 prisons (as of February 2023), with congestion rates of 375 percent and 314 percent respectively (World Prison Brief, 2023). Additionally, as of 2024, there are 400 Persons Deprived of Liberty who are currently imprisoned at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology of Santiago City District Jail including the accommodation of Municipal Trial Court (MTC) and Regional Trial Court (RTC) detainees or prisoners (BJMP Santiago City, 2024).

The Commission on Audit (2023), reported that the rise of PDLs population in the Philippines can be attributed to the increase in the new admittance of PDLs in view of the government's campaign against illegal drugs and the court's slow or delayed/actions/decisions on pending cases due to lack of judges, postponement of hearings and slow disposition of criminal cases. Additionally, Carlos Conde (2016), states that prolonged detention without charged or trial violates international human rights instruments, including Article 9 of the ICCPR, which the Philippines ratified in 1986. As result of this injustice of lengthy detention, many detention centers in the Philippines fail to meet the minimum United Nations standards for such facilities, including inadequate amount of food, poor nutrition and unsanitary conditions.

Also, Ki (2023), stated that the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology has been striving hard to professionalize jail services and provide the medicines and basic needs of the Persons Deprived of Liberty's such as food and rehabilitation supplies. As a result, Faustino and De Guzman in 2022, stated that self-harming behavior (SHB) has become a significant health issue among persons deprived of liberty due to several stressful experiences while in custody.

Hence, many studies have already explored the impact of incarceration to the Persons Deprived of Liberty's and their reintegration into the community. They have often looked at the impact of these factors with regards to incarceration, but they have not sufficiently explored the general concerns for their rehabilitation. To address this gap, the researchers conducted this study to give deeper perspectives on the lived experiences of the PDLs and how they deal with those experiences that challenge them during their stay inside the prison.

This study fits in learning the lived experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty's which can be used as a basis to help them ventilate or voice out their concerns in the prison while being incarcerated with regards to the prison structure, within the prison walls and their personal concerns behind bars. The value of research in the administration of Prison Institution is its prison improvement in general. As a result, the focus of this study was to determine the lived experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) and how they deal with their experiences while incarcerated, with an end view of strengthening the rehabilitation programs of Prison Institution based upon the Persons Deprived of Liberty's recommendations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Skues et al. (2023), in a study entitled "Responding to the Needs of Prisoners with Learning Difficulties in Australia" exposed that offenders who are convicted of a crime in Australia are encouraged to participate in educational and vocational training programs during their time in prison. However, one of the significant challenges encountered by not only prisoners but also for the staff who teach into these programs, are prisoners' who experience learning difficulties. Given that unidentified learning difficulties are associated with poor educational, employment and psychological outcomes, it is critical that prisoners who experience specific learning difficulties are identified, and that educational and vocational training programs offered in prisons cater for the diverse learning needs of all prisoners.

Cain & Ellison (2022), in a study entitled “Identifying Individuals at Risk of Suicide and Self-Harm in Jail” describes the incarceration experiences in Americans Jails exploring the 736 individuals incarcerated in large metropolitan jail in the Midwest to examine the risk factors for attempting and threatening suicide and self-harm during incarceration. It was found that individuals with higher perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness were more likely to attempt and/or threaten suicide and self-harm during incarceration.

Edwards (2021), in a study entitled “Prisoners’ Perspectives on Limited Rehabilitative Program Opportunities” explored the 49 male prisoners towards their perspectives on limited rehabilitative program opportunities and his findings suggest that the prison’s operational structures impeded program access and the study’s participants who experienced blocked access were negatively affected, not receiving needed rehabilitative programming and, separately, suffering from the act of disenfranchisement from services.

Western (2021), in a study entitled “Inside the Box: Safety, Health, and Isolation in Prison” explored the prison and their role in rehabilitative programs and as venue for violence, health and healthcare, and extreme isolation through solitary confinement. Research shows that incarcerated people are participating less today than in the 1980s in prison programs, and they face high risk of violence, disease and isolation.

Tadros et al. (2020), in a study entitled “A Call for Mental Health Treatment in Incarcerated Settings with Transgender Individuals” indicates that the United States correctional system has become the epicenter for public health and mental health crisis. This article discusses the incarcerated transgender individuals’ mental health treatment in which the severity of mental illness treatment issues within the system among transgender and other LGBTQ + individuals, clearly displays the need for interventions tailored to this population. This shows that there is a need for a shift in mindset and available services to treat incarcerated transgender individuals.

Al-Issa (2020), in a study entitled “Psychological Resilience among Palestinian Adolescent Ex-detainees in Israel Jails” identifies the factors that affects the psychological resilience of Palestinian adolescent ex-detainees of Israel jails. The study sample consists of ten adolescent ex-detainees, aged between seventeen and nineteen. The findings indicates that resilience in jails is based on a high tolerance of stress resulting from traumatic events, such as arrest, and the ability to control life events, along with the reinforcement of a positive attitude toward social and political experiences, and the capacity to transform stress into an opportunity instead of debilitating threat. The results also show that resilience is correlated with various factors including secure attachment, supportive relationships, social support systems, conflict relationships – personal and collective aggression, challenge, commitment to principles and post hoc engagement in public events.

Baybutt et al. (2019), in a study entitled “Growing Health in UK Prison Settings” explored the impacts of prisoners’ participation in an innovative social and therapeutic horticultural program, Greener on the Outside for Prison (GOOP) in England. The participants of the study include the 16 prisoners and semi-structured interviews with six prison staff. Results of the study were presented under three overarching themes including health and well-being, skills development, employability, and work preparedness, and relationships. The findings suggest that engagement with and participation in GOOP were important in improving positive mental well-being, increasing physical activity and knowledge about healthier eating, developing skills and work reediness, and building relationships and catalyzing and strengthening prosocial behaviors, important for good citizenship and effective resettlement among the prisoners.

Pelletier & Evans (2019), in a study entitled “Positive Outcomes from Higher Education Programs in Prisons” examines an in-depth interviews with individuals who participated in higher education programs while in prisons and identifies positive outcomes beyond recidivism. Participants in the study highlight the

development of personal skills and attributes, prosocial networks, and prosocial bonds to social institutions as positive outcomes attributed to participations in higher education programs while in prison.

Chamberlene (2018), in a study entitled “Coping with Imprisonment: Strategies of Survival In and Out of Prison” suggest that coping in prison relies on practices that engage the prisoner’s body in a paradoxical manner such as self-harming strategies which include prisoners’ attitude towards eating, drug use, and often also their healthcare routines. Less harmful yet arguably equally isolating strategies are also considered in relation to practices of bodily care in prison.

Taib (2018), in a study entitled “The Institutional Experience and Lesson Learned by Young Offender in Malaysian Prison” conducted a study with the Three (3) young offenders in Malaysia, basically requiring respondents in detail what experiences and/or lessons learned since first day of institutionalization. Findings discovered that, among other things, the institutional experience had given respondents a valuable change in themselves in many ways-especially in attitude and self-management. First, they were become more positive towards getting good education as if they were outside, secondly, they were become more aware of the many hidden talents that yet to be developed, thirdly, they were determined to be more careful in socializing with friends and establishing new relationships, and lastly, they seemed to appreciate the love and affection of parents and family members than ever before institutionalization.

Skowronski & Talik (2018), in a study entitled “Coping with Stress and the sense of Quality of Life in Inmates of Correctional Facilities” examined the differences between groups of prison inmates distinguished according to the sense of quality of life in terms of their ways of coping with stress during incarceration. The results of the presented research have confirmed that people with a high level of overall quality of life significantly more often than people with a low level of quality of life prefer active coping strategies, including strategies such as: Active coping, Planning, Searching for instrumental support, searching for emotional support, Positive revaluation and development. Thus, the use of constructive ways of coping with stress is based on seeking support, personal activity in coping with problems and drawing conclusions from wrong life decisions – is related to higher level of quality of life.

Cortez & Dioso (2023), in a study entitled “Education Behind Bars: A Phenomenological Study” explored the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms and suggestions of the ALS Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) learners of Maximum-Security Compound, Davao Prison and Penal Farm. There were ten purposively selected PDL learners who participated in the conduct of the study. With the used of In-depth Interview, findings revealed that ALS is essential in the transformation of the PDL learners but they have experienced many challenges in attending the ALS classes. However, there are several advantages that PDL learners gained some remarkable changes not only learning reading and writing but for the transformation of the self. The results implied that PDL learners have difficulty in understanding the lesson for reason of old age, lack of comprehension, and not serious with the program. Furthermore, the findings showed that ALS classes are quite challenging as they experienced lack of motivation, ailments, and family problem.

Basilio (2022), in a study entitled “The Mental Health Services among the Persons Deprived of Liberty at Santiago City, District Jail” reported a study with the mental health services among the five (5) Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) from Santiago City District Jail. The study concluded that the District Jail is still dependent to outside medical institution in determining the mental health conditions of the PDL and no outright available Psychiatric Health Doctor. Base on the findings of the study, we can conclude that PDL experiences a lack of a sensible and suitable health care and likewise a decent hospital for treating the PDLs mental illness while incarcerated.

Artizona et al. (2019), in a study entitled “The Phenomenological Study of Persons Deprived of Liberty suspected to be suffering from Depression” gathered the perspectives of ten (10) Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) who were suspected to be suffering from depression at Palawan Provincial Jail. The findings

indicates that the development of depression of PDLs were due to (1) biological factors that include the problem in their hygiene, cell unit, financial and physical problems (2) psychological factors involve the preoccupation and emotions that negatively affect the mental conditions of the PDLs and (3) the social factors that consist of family issues, lack of friends and maltreatment while incarcerated.

The above cited literature and studies helped in determining related studies about the lived experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty during incarceration. Through these literature and studies, the researchers identified that many Persons Deprived of Liberty from different correctional institutions are experiencing negative conditions which includes mental, emotional, physical and financial difficulties due to their incarcerations. Prison overcrowding was also determined as one of the biggest problems of some Persons Deprived of Liberty during their incarceration. Because of these conditions, some Persons Deprived of Liberty's ends up of suffering anxiety, depression and suicidal attempts in hope of ending their problems towards incarceration.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aimed at determining the lived experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty and how they deal with their experiences while incarcerated. It also determined the Persons Deprived of Liberty's recommendations to strengthen the rehabilitation programs of Prison Institutions.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following:

1. What are the lived experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty in the Prison Institution?
2. How do the Persons Deprived of Liberty deal with their experiences inside the Prison Institution?
3. What are the Persons Deprived of Liberty's recommendations to strengthen the rehabilitation programs of the Prison Institution?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used the descriptive phenomenological qualitative research method because it focused on determining the lived experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty and how they deal with their experiences inside the prison institution. The study used a semi-structured interview guide in gathering data from the Eight (8) Persons Deprived of Liberty at the Prison Institution of Santiago City who were purposely selected based on these criteria: (1) those Persons Deprived of Liberty who are incarcerated for one year and above, (2) are undergoing trials in no particular case and (3) those who permit to be interviewed only. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questions in the semi-structured interview guide, the following steps were taken: As to content, it was carefully analyzed by the expert on the field of the study and underwent face validation by asking the peers on the field to review the questions and to ensure that it captures the objectives of the study. For the reliability testing, test-retest interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis was used in analyzing the data as it is a method for analyzing qualitative. This study adopted the six-phase guide by Braun and Clarke (2006) such as familiarizing the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining the themes, and writing up. To observe the ethical principles of the study, all information was obtained through informed consent and interviews were conducted without coercion. All data obtained from the participants were treated with utmost confidentiality.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Lived Experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty in the Prison Institution**

Based on the findings of the study, the lived experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty in the prison

institution offered valuable insights into their daily realities and the challenges they face during their incarceration. These experiences had explored the difficult aspects of their lives behind bars shedding light on the following themes that were formulated. By delving into these experiences, the researchers can gain deeper understanding with the challenges of their life as PDLs inside the prison.

**Engaging in Productive Activities.** This theme highlights the different rehabilitation programs implemented by the prison institution for persons deprived of liberty which includes the livelihood programs that help them a lot, especially in the financial aspect wherein the PDLs are attempting to improve their financial status by participating in various income-generating or livelihood activities offered inside the prison as part of their rehabilitation. Moreover, the PDLs who are engaging in productive activities are not only improving their financial problems but have provided great opportunities to learn new skills for free.

Key Informant A shared that:

*“Nung unang punta ko dito natatakot ako kasi akala ko jujumbagin ako pero hindi naman pala kase madami akong experiences dito na humubog sa skills ko tulad ng organic activities sa agriculture gaya ng paggawa ng pataba, carpentry, electric wiring, basic electronics, plumber, basic installation at hilot wellness massage, nagbibigay din sila ng allowance sakin 3-4k per month pag nakagraduate ng TESDA scholar. Naglalaba ako ng damit ng kapwa ko PDL at bilang kapalit binibigyan niya ako ng pera kadalasan sila kasi yung mga PDL na may pera na natatanggap mula sa kanilang pamilya”* (“When I first came here, I was afraid because I thought they will punch me, but I was wrong because they taught me lot of experiences that develop my skills such as organic activities in agriculture such as making fertilizer, carpentry, electric wiring, basic electronics, plumber, basic installation and hilot wellness massage. They also gave me an allowance which is 3-4k per month, after graduating from the TESDA scholar. I also washed my PDL-mate’s clothes and in exchange they gave me money. Most of the time they were the PDLs with money received from their families.”)

It was also mentioned by Key Informant F that:

*“Nakiki-participate din ako sa mga programs ng TESDA tulad ng electrical gaya ng pagkakabit ng CCTV, pagkakabit ng alarms at bilang isang scholarship member ng TESDA Scholar kumikita ako 6-8k per month pero hindi naman yon palagi. Nakakatulong din pang survive ko dito sa loob yung tulong ng mga kabanda ko sa labas kasi binibigyan nila ako ng pera dito pag dumadalaw sila”* (“I have been participating in TESDA’s programs such CCTV connection and alarm connection. As a scholar of TESDA, I am earning 6-8k pera month but that’s not always. It also helps me to survive here inside. Also, the help and assistance I am receiving from my former bandmates everytime they make a visit is also a great help to me.”)

This is supported by the statement of Key Informant H who shared:

*“Dito sumasali ako sa mga activities ng TESDA tulad ng agriculture, cabinet making at paggawa ng wallet na gawa sa beads. Tapos doon may natatanggap akong allowance na 4,600 per month at doon ako nagsusurvive”* (“Here I participated in TESDA activities such as agriculture, cabinet making and wallets made of beads. There I received an allowance of 4,600 per month and I used it to survive.”)

This is also supported by the statement of Key Informant B who stated that:

*“Graduate ako ng massage dito meron akong NC 2 halos one month din yon. Noon kumikita ako sa mga pagmamasaha sa mga personnel pero noong napalitan na yung warden pinagbawal na sa aming mga LGBT ang pumunta sa taas kaya ngayon hindi ko na nagagawa. Ngayon naglalaba nalang ako ng damit ng mga kapwa ko PDL tapos binibigyan naman ako 100.”* (“I graduated massage here and I have NC 2, I take that for almost one month. At that time I earned from massage with the personnel, but when the warden was

replaced, it was forbidden for LGBT people to go upstairs, so now I can't do it. Now I just wash the clothes of my PDL mates and they give me 100.”)

It is further stated by Key Informant D that:

*“Meron kaming wallet making at gardening sa parte ng livelihood program, 80 pesos ang kita namin kada isang wallet na nabebenta. Naranasan ko din mag TESDA at natuto ako ng electrical training”* (“Here we have wallet making and gardening as part of the livelihood program, I earned 80 per wallet sold. I also experienced TESDA and I learned electrical training.”)

Key Informant G also proved that:

*“Sa mga livelihood naman meron kaming mga ginagawa na alkansya, picture frame, mga bayong ganon, handcraft na may kasamang key chain tapos binibenta namin ito sa mga dumadalaw or di kaya pinapaorder namin iyon sa mga personnel sa labas. Tapos ibinebenta namin ito ng 200 kada isang piraso at 30-40 percent ang napupunta sa amin.”* (“In livelihood we makes alkansya, picture frame, bags, handcraft with key chains included, we sold it to the visitors or sometimes the personnel sale it online. Then we sold it 200 per piece and the 30-40 percent is given to us.”)

Based on the statements of the PDLs, it implies that programs inside the prison institution, especially the livelihood program, play a big role in order for them to earn money even if they are inside the prison institution. Moreover, it was observed by the researchers that during the conduct of the study, these PDLs who are participating with these activities are freely monitored by the prison officers making sure that their job is properly done. Samilo, et al. (2020), specified that program such as the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) livelihood program, can be successful in transitioning inmates from the prison to the workplace to enable themselves to grow and be developed. Through these programs, inmates may also learn valuable employability skills that may translate to opportunities for employment upon their release. Thus, livelihood programs through various training equips the Persons Deprived of Liberty to be more productive.

**Attending Educational Trainings.** This theme explains the educational training acquired by the Persons Deprived of Liberty which focuses on providing them basic literacy in order to help them gain skills and knowledge during their incarceration. The PDL's access to education is important because these trainings not only provide them with intellectual development but also give them a sign of hope and a sense of purpose while they are incarcerated.

Key Informant F shared that:

*“Marami akong natutunan dito tulad ng reading kasi sa totoo lang dito ako natutong magbasa sa tulong ng ALS program nila, nagkaklase kami tapos nag-eexam at yung mga nagtuturo sa amin ay mga guro din from DepEd. Meron din mga TESDA pero iyon kasi para sa mga PDL's na graduate na ng highschool.”* (“I've learned a lot here inside including reading. I learned to read with the help of their ALS program. We also undergo examination here and the teachers who taught us were also teachers from DepEd. There are also TESDA, but that's for the PDLs who graduates from high school.”)

The educational training experienced by the PDL proved the transformative impact of prison programs particularly to the Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) that helps improve the reading skills of the PDLs during his incarceration. Thus, incorporating formal education into prisons not only enriches the mind, but also promotes dignity and self-esteem among the PDLs. Moreover, during the conduct of the study, it was observed by the researchers that the PDLs often engage in educational trainings inside the prison. The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (2024), presented that the educational programs were implemented to provide opportunities for PDLs to achieve mandatory education. For this reason, the BJMP

adapted the Alternative Learning System (ALS) of the Department of Education for the PDLs to earn their elementary and high school diplomas.

**Joining Recreational Activities.** This theme explains the recreational and other contested activities offered by the prison institution to Persons Deprived of Liberty. These activities serve as an opportunity for PDLs to showcase their talents during their incarceration. However, these recreational activities inside prison provides more than just entertainment because these activities help PDLs cope with the challenges they face in prison.

Key Informant A shared that:

*“May mga contested activities din kaming sinasagawa dito sa loob tulad ng sine-celebrate naming yung NACOPO week kung saan naeexperience naming sumali sa miss gay, sports kasi may liga din dito tulad ng basketball, volleyball at sepak at meron din namang singing contest tapos may premyo din yon na useful naman para sakin. Meron din kaming mga exercises tulad ng zumba at sunning”* (“We also have contested activities here inside like we celebrate the NACOPO week wherein we got to experience participating in miss gay, sports because there is also a league here like basketball, volleyball and sepak and there is also a singing contest and then there are prizes for that too which is useful for me. We also have exercises like zumba and sunning.”)

This is supported by Key Informant D who said:

*“Lumalahok ako sa mga sports tulad ng basketball, volleyball, sepak tuwing NACOPO week meron kaming premyo don.”* (“I participate in sports like basketball, volleyball, sepak every NACOPO week and we have a prizes there.”)

Also Key Informant G said that:

*“Everyday may sunning kaming ginagawa at mga Zumba ganon mga 30-45 minutes yon. Sa mga activities naman merong mga palaro tulad ng table tennis at basketball ganon sumasali naman ako minsan.”* (“Everyday we do sunning and Zumba for about 30-45 minutes. As for the activities, there are games like table tennis and basketball, so I participate sometimes.”)

The above statements is supported by Key Informant B who said:

*“Minsan din naranasan kong sumali sa contest ng mga Miss Gay, nanalo naman ako at meron silang binigay na rewards tapos ang premyo ay mga items tulad ng sabon shampoo at toothpaste ganon which is nakakatulong talaga sa akin lalo pag matagal akong hindi nadadalaw kasi nauubusan din ako ng supply.”* (“I also once experienced participating in the Miss Gay contest, I won and they gave rewards and the prizes was items like soap, shampoo and toothpaste, which is really helpful for me especially when I haven’t visited for a long time because I run out of supply.”)

The statements of the PDLs illustrate the transformative power of recreation within the prison because their participation to these activities not only gave them chances to exhibit their skills but it also provided them valuable rewards which they can use in their daily lives within the prison. According to Zoukis (2014), every correctional facility in the federal prison system offers a variety of contests like sporting events. Thus, these contested activities had helped the PDLs to partly experience the outside life through the means of involving themselves to the activities and also fostering a better connection towards other Persons Deprived of Liberty.

**Reformation through Religious Pursuit.** This theme highlights the religious activities offered inside the prison that are provided to help PDLs have a positive influence during their incarceration. These religious



activities in prison can also be a catalyst for changing the negative behaviors of the PDLs during their incarceration. Their religious involvement provides moral guidance and spiritual support to help them develop a sense of responsibility for their actions and strive for personal change leading them toward a path of redemption and reform.

Key Informant A shared that:

*“Dati tarandato ako sa labas tapos nung nakapasok na ako dito ko nakilala ang panginoon. Meron kasi kaming programa dito na TCMP every Friday yon tapos magkakasama yung mga magkaka pareho ng religion kasi magkakaiba kami ng mga paniniwala dito. Meron kasing catholic, born again at INC ganon.”* (“I used to be a foolish around outside and then when I got in here I’ve learned about God. Because we have a program here called TCMP every Friday and then people of the same religion get together because we have different beliefs here. There is such a thing as catholic, born again and Iglesias Ni Cristo.”)

This is supported by Key Informant E who said:

*“Dito sa loob nagkakaroon din kami ng mga FBCFI tapos magkakasama yung mga magkaka-relihiyon. Nakakasali naman ako doon at ang maganda pa doon mas napapalapit ang loob ko sa kanya.”* (“Here inside we also have FBCFI and then those of the same religion get together. I participate with it and the best thing about it is that I feel closer to him.”)

This implies that the Persons Deprived of Liberty participation in religious activities can be an important aspect of the prison experiences because it provides the PDLs with opportunities to personal growth in terms of their spiritual connection. Moreover, in connection to this findings, the social learning theory is relevant to this study because the Persons Deprived of Liberty’s were being introduced with a new environment which is the prison for them to learn positive behaviors as part of their reformation. The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (2024) pointed out that all PDLs are provided with the opportunity to practice their faith while under custody without discrimination, subject only to usual safety and security measures. Thus, having this religious programs is a great process to make a difference among the PDLs.

**Loss of Connection with Love Ones.** This theme highlights the negative experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty that damage their relationships with their families while in prison. It was determined that their long year of incarceration had damaged their relationship with their family and this circumstance often creates a distressing experience for the PDLs during their incarceration. The day-to-day experiences of the PDLs with limited visitations and support from their family can give them a deep sense of longing, isolation, and loneliness.

Key Informant A shared that:

*“Mahirap dahil namimiss ko ang pamilya ko, kasi hindi sila nakakapunta dahil malayo ito sa amin. Tapos parang pakiramdam ko kinalimutan na nila ako. Nung nailayo kasi ako sa pamilya ko feeling ko tinalikuran na nila ako. Nakakausap ko naman ang pamilya ko through call na pero namimiss ko parin presence nila kasi iba parin talaga kapag kasama ko sila.”* (“It’s hard because I miss my family, they can’t visit because it’s far from here. Then I feel like they have forgotten me because when I was separated from my family, I felt that they had abandoned me. Although, I can talk to my family through calls, but I still miss their presence because it’s really different when I’m with them.”)

This is supported by Key Informant B who said:

*“Malungkot kasi namimiss ko yung friend ko, pamilya ko, lalong-lalo na yung kapatid ko, kasi twice a year lang nila akong dinadalaw. Nung una mahirap, kasi hindi pa ako sanay dahil wala pa akong kaibigan*

” (“It’s sad because I miss my friends, my family, especially my sibling, because they only visit me twice a year. At first it was difficult, since I wasn’t used to it and because I didn’t have any friends yet.”)

Also, Key Informant C shared that:

“*Sobrang mahirap kasi yung relasyon ko sa pamilya ko nasira kasi sa tagal ko dito halos 15 years na, yung asawa ko nag-asawa na din ng iba.*” (“It’s very difficult because my relationship with my family has been broken because during my time here for almost 15 years, my wife has also married someone else.”)

This is supported by Key Informant F who said:

“*Malungkot dahil hindi ko nakakasama ang aking pamilya hindi ko na rin kasi alam ang mangyayari sa hinaharap ko at sa paglabas ko. Minsan dito sa loob nahihirapan ako sa pagtulog dahil sa kaiisip ko sa anak ko at sa pamilya ko kasi iniwan ako ng asawa ko at nagpakasal sa iba, nalaman ko lang ito noong dinalaw ako ng kabanda ko. Syempre sobrang nakakadismaya at madami akong naging tanong na hindi ko masabi-sabi kasi wala naman akong magawa kasi nandito ako sa loob.*” (“It’s sad because I can’t be with my family anymore and I don’t know what will happen in my future when I get out. Sometimes, I’m having trouble sleeping inside because I’m thinking about my child and my family because my wife left me and married someone else, I only found out when my friend came to visit me. Of course, its very disappointing and I’ve had a lot of questions that I can’t say because there’s nothing I can do since I’m here inside.”)

It is further mentioned by Key Informant G that his experiences is no different as he shared:

“*Malungkot dahil walang dalaw halos twice a month lang kasi akong dinadalaw ng pamilya ko, kaya kailangan talagang lumaban dito sa loob. Sobrang nahirapan din ako dito kasi nung namatay ang tatay ko kasabay non nag-positive din ako sa covid tapos iniwan pa ako ng asawa ko. Sa panahong iyon isa lang nilapitan ko, nagdasal nalang ako sa panginoon na sana malagpasan ko lahat ng iyon.*” (“It’s sad because my family only visits me twice a month, so I really have to survive inside. I also had a lot of trouble here because when my father died at the same time I also tested positive of covid and then my wife also left me. At that time I only approached Him, I just prayed to God that I hope He would help me overcome all of this things.”)

Also, Key Informant E shared:

“*Nakakalungkot kasi nakikita ko yung iba may dalaw tapos ako wala, malayo kasi sila, last time na may dumalaw sa kin December 2023 pa. Ang pinaka number one na cause talaga ng pagkalkungkot ko dito yung pagkamiss ko sa pamilya ko.*” (“It’s sad because I see that others have visits but I don’t, because they are far, the last time someone visited me was in December 2023. The number one cause of my sadness here is that I miss my family.”)

This is supported by Key Informant H who stated that:

“*Malungkot dahil sa sitwasyon ko dito sa loob, hindi naman kasi laging masaya dito sa loob kasi naiisip ko sila sa bahay namin. Kasi dito, limitado lang ang galaw ko unlike sa labas na nakakasama at nakaka-usap ko sila palagi. May tawag din naman at nakaka-usap ko parin sila pero mas okay parin talaga kapag personal.*” (“Sad because of my situation here inside, it’s not always happy inside because I think about my family most of the time. Because here, my movements are limited unlike outside where I can always be with them and talk to them. Although there are calls and I can still talk to them, but it’s actually better in person.”)

Due to long year of incarceration, the Persons Deprived of Liberty have experiences the struggles of being left behind while inside the prison because their family and relatives do not visit them. According to the

PDLs, they have stated that visits from family are allowed with the specific schedules and rules given by the administration of prison and the application of the Electronic Dalaw (E-Dalaw) are also implemented in which all PDLs are given a five (5) minutes call for every morning of Monday and Friday. Moreover, in connection with this findings, convict criminology and the pain and pleasure principle of classical theory is relevant to this study as its focus on the personal and social consequences of incarceration particularly the impact of the PDLs relationship with their love ones and to the emotional pain and sufferings that they felt by those experiences while inside the Prison Institution. According to Emory (2022), stated that most couples experiencing paternal incarceration will also navigate relationship dissolution, and many will integrate a new partner into the family. Quandt & Jones (2021), also stated that separation from family and friends emerged as a major stressor for incarcerated people and it was also associated with psychological distress and many people described this separation as the most challenging aspect of their incarceration.

**Dissatisfaction with Prison Meals.** This theme underscores the dissatisfaction with negative feedback about the quality, quantity and variety of food provided in prisons. This includes concerns about the nutritional value and taste of the food provided, and may reflect systemic problems within the prison.

Key Informant B said that:

*“May libreng pagkain dito kaso wala masyadong lasa in-short hindi masarap, binawal na din kasi ng bagong warden yung pagpasok ng mga raw foods dito, dati kasi allowed yon tapos dito namin niluluto pero ngayon bawal na. Saka na lang ako nakakatikim ng masarap na pagkain pag may dumadalaw sakin.”* (“There is free food here, but it doesn’t taste very good, in short, it taste bad, because the new warden has also banned the entry of raw foods here, it used to be allowed, then we cooked it here, but now it’s not allowed. Only then can I taste delicious food when someone visits me.”)

This is supported by Key Informant D who said:

*“Dito sa loob 3 times a day naman kaming kumakain pero noon ang mahirap, kasi isang tuyo lang ang para sa isang tao pero noon pa yon, around 2022.”* (“Here we were eating 3 times a day, but back then it was difficult, because there was only one dry fish meal for one person, but that was back then, around 2022.”)

As result, due to incarceration, the Persons Deprived of Liberty have raised their concerns about the quality of food provided in the prison institution. The PDLs stated that the free food given was unappetizing and due to restrictions about bringing foods from outside, incarceration became more difficult for them. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2015), finds that food is a central component of life in correctional institutions and plays a critical role in the physical and mental health of incarcerated people and the construction of prisoners’ identities and relationships. Thus, the government is hereby encourage to improve the provided funds for the prisons so that the PDLs can achieve their best prison food experiences.

**Residing in Uncrowded Cells.** This theme emphasizes the PDLs experienced of the placed in cells were described as not overcrowded. This means that the number of prisoners in each cell is maintained manageable, ensuring that each inmate has appropriate personal space and living conditions. Moreover, the practice of placing PDLs in decongested cells within prison facilities demonstrates a commitment to protecting their rights, dignity, and well-being during their incarceration.

Key Informant E shared that:

*“Dito sa loob wala namang overcrowding kasi decongested naman dito. Sa isang double deck apat na tao ang natutulog don dalawa sa taas, dalawa sa baba.”* (“There is no overcrowding inside because it is decongested here. On a double deck, four people sleep, two on the top, two on the bottom.”)

Key Informant F said:

*“Dito naman hindi overcrowded kasi may kanya-kanya kaming higaaan dalawang tao sa isang kama.”* (“Here, it’s not overcrowded because each have our own beds, two people in one bed.”) This is supported by

Key Informant H who further explained that:

*“Walang overcrowding dito kasi 400+ nalang ang mga PDL. Ngayon kasi 27 PDL nalang per cell, dati kasi 80 PDL per cell tapos pag ihing-ihing ka na talaga dapat gising na gising ka na para hindi ka makatapak ng leeg ng kapwa mo PDL.”* (“There is no overcrowding here because there are only 400+ PDLs. Now it’s only 27 PDL per cell, before it was 80 PDL per cell and then when you urinate you really have to be awake so you don’t step on the neck of your fellow PDL.”)

As result, being in uncrowded cells considerably enhances the lived experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty. By limiting the number of PDLs per cell, adequate personal space and better living conditions are ensured. This technique not only promotes a more humane environment, but it also improves the PDLs well-being and rehabilitation. The Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) (2023), Secretary Benhur Abalos pushed for reforms that would lead to the decongestion of jail facilities nationwide to attain what he described as an enhanced justice system in the country. During the National Decongestion Summit, he stated that the DILG remains steadfast in supporting initiatives to address jail overcrowding, and contribute to the enhancement of our criminal justice system in the Philippines.

**Misunderstanding.** This theme explains the misunderstanding between persons deprived of Liberty in the prison institution in different ways in which they experienced, behaviors, and circumstances that are frequently misread or misconceived by others which happen sometimes, however, the PDLs can bridge the distance caused by misinterpretations and misconceptions by communicating openly with one another. Through this communication, the PDLs can foster a culture of respect, tolerance, and collaboration within the prison walls by attempting to understand each other’s viewpoints and experiences.

Key Informant B shared:

*“Minsan hindi pagkaka-intindihan at plastikan ganon tapos minsan nauuwi sa pisikalan pero inaawat kaming mga kapwa naming PDL saka mga personnel tapos pina-padlock kami para mabigyan kami ng leksyon at para madisiplina. After non kina-counsel nila kami para marealize namin yung pagkakamali namin at sa huli naman nakakaayos din kami sa tulong ng mga personnels.”* (“Sometimes there is a misunderstanding between us and it’s all plasticity and sometimes it ends up being physical but we are separated by our fellow PDLs and the personnel, then we are padlocked for us to learn our lesson and to be disciplined. After that they counseled us so that we could realize our mistake and in the end we were able to fix it with the help of the personnel’s.”)

This is supported by Key Informant A who said:

*“Nagkakaroon din ako ng mga katampuhan lalo sa tulad kong mga LGBTQ pero hindi naman to the point na pisikalan, kasi naayos din naman sa tulong ng mga personnels at hindi talaga siya tumatagal.”* (“I also have problems, especially with LGBTQ people like me, but it’s not to the point that it’s physical, because it can be fixed with the help of the personnel and it doesn’t really take long.”)

This is supported by Key Informant G who shared:

*“Minsan nagkakaroon kami ng alitan o diskusyon pero pinupunta namin ito sa disciplinary board, mga personnels ang facilitator doon para maiayos yung di namin pagkaka-intindihan.”* (“Sometimes we have

disagreements but we brought it to the disciplinary board and the personnel's are the facilitators there to help us fix our misunderstanding.”)

This implies that misunderstandings in prisons between Persons Deprived of Liberty often occur due to misunderstandings of experiences and situations. However, these conflicts are usually resolved through group counseling of the PDLs and by the help of guidance and the intervention of prison officers as disciplinary boards. In connection to Bragg (2024), stated that in prison, communication becomes doubly important as incarcerated people are constantly dealing with fellow incarcerated people who have high levels of stress and who may be struggling and thus dealing with them is almost always a fragile endeavor and ineffective communication can bring heavy consequences, like vindictiveness or even violence. Thus, he stated that cultivating healthy relationships and fostering pleasant interactions is necessary to communicate effectively with others and thus, good communication can help to avoid fights in prison.

**Unequal Treatment.** This theme explains the gender discrimination against the Persons Deprived of Liberty particularly to LGBTQ PDLs who experience unfair treatment based on their gender within the prison system. This can also be shown in a variety of ways including variations in access to resources, opportunities, or services during their incarceration.

Key Informant B shared:

*“Nabubully ako ng mga personnel pero nailipat na sila sa ibang lugar. Noon kasi minsan tinatawag nila akong “hoy bakla” ganon, syempre pag tinatawag nila akong ganon noon nanliliit ako sa sarili ko kasi nakakulong na nga ako tapos ganon pa ang trato nila sa akin. Minsan din may mga personnel dito sa loob na biased kasi meron silang pinapanigan parang palakasan at hindi kami binibigyan ng equal opportunities kasi for example kung sino yung gusto nilang PDL sila nalang palagi yung kinukuha nila di syempre siya lang nabibigyan ng oportunidad para kumite.”* (“I was being bullied by the personnel but they have been transferred to another place. Back then, sometimes they called me “hey gay” like that, of course when they called me that, I was shrinking myself because I was already in prison and yet that’s how they treated me. Sometimes there are personnel here who are biased because of their unfair treatment and they don’t give us equal opportunities because for example, if they want PDL, they always hire those they know, of course they are the only ones who are given the opportunity to earn money.”)

As result of incarceration, the Persons Deprived of Liberty illustrates the extent of gender discrimination they experienced inside prison. This discrimination involves verbal bullying by personnel and discriminatory treatment, which leads to low self-esteem and uneven opportunity. The Penal Reform International (2021), even reported that LGBTQ+ people continue to be subjected to discriminatory practices and physical, sexual and psychological violence within prison settings, emanating from prison authorities, staff or other people in prison. Hence, such reports emphasize the important need for reforms that address and remove discriminatory behaviors in the prison system, ensuring that all PDLs are treated fairly and respectfully.

**Delayed Justice.** This theme highlights the prolonged wait of legal proceedings of the Persons Deprived of Liberty caused by several years of their cases without follow-up resulting in extended incarceration. Hence, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the judicial process is necessary to address the delay in justice among PDL cases. This involves clarifying procedures, timely access to legal representation, and expediting resolution for cases involving detained PDLs. Unfortunately, these objectives were impossible to achieve for the reason that criminal justice system of the Philippines has always been delayed.

Key Informant A shared:

*“Kadalasan postponed yung trial ko kahit may attorney, ang kalaban kasi namin ay yung laging*

*postponed.*” (“Usually my trial is postponed even with an attorney, because that is our problem here it is always postponed.”)

Also Key Informant C stated that:

*“15 years na ako dito pero hanggang ngayon wala pa ding follow-up yung kaso ko, ang bagal kase talaga ng proseso ng kaso ko.”* (“I have been here for 15 years but until now there is no follow-up on my case, the process of my case is really slow.”)

This is supported by Key Informant G who said:

*“Problema ko din dito sa loob yung pag-usad ng hearings ko kasi sa 13 years na pag-stay ko dito 8-9 palang yung hearing kung natuloy tapos hindi pa natatapos hanggang ngayon.”* (“I also have a problem here inside with the progress of my hearings because in the 13 years that I have been here, the hearings have only been 8-9 times and yet it wasn’t been completed until now.”)

Key Informant H also mentioned that:

*“Yung hearing ko problema ko kasi madalas lagi nalang postponed.”* (“My hearing is my problem because it is always postponed.”)

The Persons Deprived of Liberty reported that the process for obtaining a speedy trial is much delayed. Based on the underlying statements of the PDLs, access to the given lawyers is not enough since they experiences limited process of their cases. In addition, the PDLs long wait for legal actions highlights the urgent need for justice reform, because lack of follow-up and prolonged incarceration violate the rights of those PDLs. In this context, access to justice (ATJ) is one of the most important rights to guarantee the rehabilitation of Persons Deprived of Liberty (Chica & Arevalo, 2021). Since, Conde (2016), states that prolonged detention without charged or trial violates international human rights instruments, including Article 9 of the ICCPR, which the Philippines ratified in 1986.

**Physical Sickness.** This theme emphasizes the physical hardship experienced by the Persons Deprived of Liberty within the prison institution which includes a variety of health conditions that they face during their incarceration. Moreover, the presence of a physical illness among the PDLs can provide a possibility of far-reaching implications within their health conditions and if these are not treated, challenges of incarceration will increase along with the suffering among the PDLs.

Key Informant B shared:

*“Naranasan ko din dito ang magkasakit tulad ng lagnat at sakit sa ngipin, at hindi lang ako kasi pati kapwa ko PDL at bilang pinaka health aid sa dorm namin, ako yung sumasama sa kanila sa clinic kaya malaking tulong din sa amin kahit papano yung clinic sa loob.”* (“I’ve also experienced getting sick here like fever and toothache, and it’s not just me because my fellow PDLs too, and as the health aid in our dorm, I’m the one who guides them to the clinic, so it’s also a big help to us the clinic inside.”)

The experience of physical illness is a serious concern for many PDLs, and can be seen in a variety of health conditions, from simple illnesses such as fever and toothache to more complex medical problems later-on leading to a higher risk of infectious among the incarcerated populations. Thus, the prison must be encourage to facilitate the use of an accessible healthcare within the facility for all the PDLs to ensure the well-being of the incarcerated PDLs. As Semenza and Grosholz (2019) stated, that the enhancements in prison healthcare may not only improve the general health of those in prison, but also contribute to a decrease in misconduct among inmates.

## The Persons Deprived of Liberty and how they deal with their experiences in the Prison Institution

Due to challenges of incarceration, the Persons Deprived of Liberty have developed strategies in order to cope up with their problems in prison institution. Some of their mechanisms involves participation to different activities, counselling, and the strengthening of their spiritual connection. These could be shown within the following themes presented below.

**Participating to Livelihood, TESDA, ALS and Sport Activities.** This theme highlights the activities that help the PDLs inside the prison institution to divert their attention and be temporarily free from the problems that are bothering them as part of their incarceration. Their participation in sports, livelihood programs, TESDA, and ALS serves as a means for them to make their selves busy which enables them to cope with their problems.

Key Informant A said:

*“Pag nalulungkot ako nililibang ko ang sarili ko sa paggawa ng livelihood activities gaya ng bayong, doon ko binubuhos yung atensyon ko para madistract ako. Minsan sumasali din ako sa mga volleyball, basketball at sepak para makalimot sa mga problema”.* (“Whenever I’m sad, I just divert my attention by doing livelihood activities like making bags, I’m giving all my attention in doing that to distract myself. Sometimes, I’m also joining volleyball, basketball and sepak takraw in order to forget my problems.”)

This also supported by Key Informant F who stated:

*“Nililibang ko sarili ko sa pagsali sa mga activities ng TESDA malaking tulong din sa akin yung pagiging narrator or commentator ko sa church namin dito sa loob. Normal naman ang ma-stress dito kaya minsan sumasali ako sa basketball at nag e-exercise ako para malibang ko ang sarili ko at para maging physically fit.”* (“I’m distracting myself through joining TESDA activities, it is a big help for me because sometimes I am the one serving as the narrator or commentator at our church here inside the jail. Here, it’s normal to feel stressed, but sometimes I’m just joining basketball and doing exercise to divert my attention and be physically fit.”)

Key Informant E also said:

*“Sa pamamagitan ng pagsali ko sa mga activities tulad ng TESDA nalilibang ako kaya kahit papaano nakakalimutan ko yung mga problema ko. Kapag nai-stress ako nakikisali ako sa mga chess games, tsaka table tennis, basketball, badminton tapos may mga premyo akong natatanggap gaya ng mga items gaya ng sabon na galing sa mga donations ng LGU.”* (“Through joining such activities like TESDA I manage myself to temporarily forget my problem. Everytime I feel stressed, I’m participating to chess games, table tennis, basketball, badminton then there are items given to me to serve as my prize like soap which usually came from the donations of LGU.”)

This also sustained by Key Informant D who mentioned that:

*“Tumutulong ako sa mga trabaho dito at nakikipag-kwentuhan ako sa mga kapwa ko PDL at mga personnels para mawala yung stress ko. Tuwing nai-stress ako nakikipaglaro ako sa mga kapwa ko PDL tulad ng board games, mga chess para malibang ko ang sarili ko”.* (“I am helping to do some chores and having conversation to other PDLs and also to the personnel’s in order to forget the stress I am dealing with. Everytime I feel stressed I’m playing board games like chess with other PDLs to divert my attention.”)

Thus, PDLs can managed to cope up with their problems as they divert their attention to sports and engaged themselves in learning new skills through livelihood, TESDA and ALS. Simply, PDLs regulates their

emotions and enable themselves to focus more in coping strategies rather than being stuck and manipulated by their problems. To support this, there's a theory called Coping Theory by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, which suggests that people are naturally conditioned to understand and analyze own thoughts and actions. That individuals face two tasks: they need to solve the problem and regulate their emotions. So in connection with that theory, PDLs proved that people are conditioned to analyze thoughts and actions in order to cope up. Because despite of the challenges inside the prison institution, they are motivated to solve their burdens by the help of livelihood, TESDA and sport participation.

**Resilience through Spiritual Connection.** This theme explains that praying serves as one of the solutions of the PDLs to address the problems that ruin them. They commit all their concerns and worries to the Lord and hope that He will answer all their prayers at the right time. Indeed, praying to the Lord does not just relieve the burdens of the PDLs but it also helps the PDLs to gain strength and keep hoping that they will be fine and acquire freedom once again.

Key Informant A stated:

*“Nakakaya ko naman na lampasan yung mga pagsubok dito sa loob sa pamamagitan nag pagdarasal na sana safe at maganda ang kalusugan at kalagayan ng pamilya ko at sana mapabilis ang pag-usad ng kaso ko para makalabas narin ako”.* (“I managed to overcome the challenges inside the prison through praying to God that my family is in a good condition and that they are safe and having a good health. Also, I'm always praying that my case would going to run properly without delays so that I can go out this cell.”)

This was supported by Key Informant B who mentioned:

*“Every night nagpra-pray nalang ako, at ang unang pinag dadasal ko ay sana okay pamilya ko, pangalawa sana makalaya na ako dito, pangatlo na sana paglabas ko meron pang tatanggap sa akin. Ganon nalang yung ginagawa ko minsan para mabawasan yung problema ko, kase wala na ding ibang malalapitan dito sa loob kundi ang may kapal.”* (“To get by, I just pray every night. I always ask the Lord to look over my family's welfare. I also pray that I get to be freed and that when I am a free man, somebody will still accept me as I am. Well, that's all I can do here to lessen my problem, since I cannot confide to anyone except the Lord during these trying times.”)

This was also proved by Key Informant D who said:

*“Ay nagdadasal po ako para malagpasan lahat ng pasanin ko, dinadalangin ko na sana maging maayos na lahat. Hinihiling ko din na sana matapos na ang kaso ko at makasama ko na ang aking pamilya para makapagsimula akong muli sa labas.”* (“Oh, I pray to overcome my challenges in life, and that hopefully, everything will be okay. I also wish that my case will be over soon so that I can be with my family and start all over again.”)

Key Informant F also attested this as he stated:

*“Nagdarasal ako para makabangon araw-araw. At ang una kong laging pinagdadasal ay sana mapabilis yung hearing ko at makalabas na ako dito, tapos pangalawa sana magkaroon ng good health yung pamilya ko, at pangatlo, sana magkaroon kaming mga PDLs ng masayang future.”* (“I pray to get by everyday. The very first thing I pray to the Lord about is to have my hearing as soon as possible so that I can be freed from here. After which, I ask him for my family's well-being and that I, and the other PDLs, will get to have a happy future after all of these.”)

This was also asserted by Key Informant G who said:

*“Para malagpasan ko lahat problema ko nagdadasal ako, na sana makalabas na din ako dito at makasama*



*ko na ang pamilya ko.*” (“To overcome all of my problems, I always pray hopefully that I can get out from here and be with my family again.”)

This was also supported by Key Informant H who mentioned that:

*“Pinagpapasa Diyos ko nalang lahat, yan madalas kong gawin para tuldukan lahat ng problema ko. Pinapanalangin ko nalang na sana maging okay ako dito at hindi ako pabayaang ng maykapal pagkalabas ko ng kulungan kasi baka mahirapan akong maghanap ng trabaho pag alam nilang galing ako dito sa loob.”* (“What I usually do is just leave and lift everything up to the Lord. I just humbly ask Him to look upon me while I am still here. I also ask Him to not leave me once I become a free man because my number one worry is how difficult it would be for me to apply for jobs once an employer finds out that I went here.”)

The PDLs spiritual connection enables them to put their trust to the Lord and surrender everything to Him, because PDLs do not have control within the problems that they are experiencing. Thus, the PDLs find solution through spiritual connection as they seek guidance to the Lord for them to be strengthened and continue their journey inside the prison institution. Through spiritual connection the PDL's acquires hope and courage to continue to be tough and not be shattered despite all the challenge that they are facing. According to Drakeford (2018), inmates confined to correctional institutions are exposed to stressors that induce psychological distress, and one factor that may be important for inmate mental health is faith and religion. Thus, it can be seen there that the People Deprived of Liberty's connection to the Lord is an important factor for them to conquer the problems that they are dealing inside the prison institution.

**Finding Hope through Counselling.** This theme highlights the coping mechanism of the PDLs to fix such misunderstandings, realize their wrongdoings, and correct them in order to unite with other PDLs and be a better version of themselves. Counseling also helps the PDLs to lessen the weight of their problems by speaking out and listening to the given advice by the counselors.

This was said by Key Informant A that:

*“Kapag nagkakaroon kami ng mga gusot malaking tulong yung counselling ng mga personnels kase sila yung humuhubog sa amin dito, dumidisciplina at bumubuhay ng loob namin para maging katanggap-tanggap kami paglabas. Mababait naman sila at parang sila na yung pangalawang pamilya namin.”* (“Every time trouble arises, counselling from personnels is a big help for because they mold, discipline, and encourage us, PDLs, to become someone acceptable once we get out from here. They are kind, and they serve as our second family.”)

This was supported by Key Informant F who mentioned that:

*“Nakakatulong din sa akin yung counselling dito sa loob, kasi ang mga jail personnels din yung mga facilitator doon tapos hinahayaan nila kaming e-voice-out lahat ng mga bigat at problema namin tapos papayuhan nila kami kaya kahit papaano gumagaan ang loob namin. Sa katunayan nakakagaan din talaga pag may nakakausap ka about sa mga problema mo. Kase dito sa loob pinipilit kong maging optimistic kase boring talaga para kang mababaliw lalo kung wala kang kausap.”* (“The counselling is helpful for me because the jail personnels are also the facilitators, and then they let us voice out all our burdens and problems. They also give out advises that somehow lightens the burden. In fact, it is really a relief when you can talk to someone about your problems. I am just trying to be optimistic about all of it since it could really get boring here inside, and it could drive you insane if you don't have anyone to talk to.”)

This was also shared by Key Informant E that:

*“Dito pag may kasalanan kami meron kaming tinatawag na pull-ups, dito binabanggit namin yung mga nagawa naming kasalanan o mga nalabag na violations sa dorms. Pagkatapos non nire-require kaming pumunta sa TCMP para mahubog yung ugali naming mga PDL, counselling yon pinagsasabihan nila kami*

*at pinapayuhan para mas maging mabuting tao. Kasi dito meron kaming mga officers na PDL sa aming selda tapos sila yung tumatayo bilang heads namin para maayos yung mga hindi namin pagkaka-intindihan.”* (“In here, when we commit a sin, we have what we call “pull-ups” where we mention the sins we did or the violations that were committed in the dorms. After that we are required to go to TCMP to get our behaviors as PDLs shaped, and where counselling and giving of advises takes place for us to become better people. Because here, as you can tell, we have PDL officers in our cell and they act as our heads to fix whatever misunderstanding among us, PDLs.”)

Key Informant G also agreed as he said:

*“Meron din kaming tinatawag na TCMP sa umaga, may mga open forum activities din kami tapos doon namin inilalabas yung mga problema namin at sama ng loob sa kapwa naming PDL at para maitama at malutas yung mga hindi namin pagkaka-intindihan. Parang ganon din yung counselling na ginagawa ko minsan inilalabas ko lahat mga sakit sa puso ko para mabunutan ako ng tinik at lagi namang nakaalalay yung mga personnels na nangangasiwa sa counselling meeting na yon. Wala lang, masarap lang sa pakiramdam kahit papano.”* (“We have what is called TCMP in the morning. We also have open forum activities where we voice out our problems and grudges with our fellow PDLs, and this serves as a platform for us correct and resolve our misunderstandings. The counseling that I attend sometimes is very much the same, it is where I bring out all the pains in my heart to pull out some thorns in it and the personnel’s who oversee that counseling meeting are always supportive. For a moment, then, everything feels lighter and good.”)

The counselling service inside the prison institution helps the PDLs to figure out their inaccurate attitudes and enhance it by learning from their mistakes. Simply, counselling gives the PDLs an opportunity to meditate things and helps them on how to properly respond to some of their challenges including mistakes, so that they will become smarter in choosing decisions to consider to be a more better person and improve their connection to other people. Furthermore, counselling help the PDLs to address their unsaid thoughts that bothers them by having conversation as part of the counselling process. Because the key informants also mentioned within their statements that they were being relieved when they have someone to share their problems. To support this, Braswell (2021), stated that correctional counselling involves professional humility or the act of accepting that life is not always fair, and that one cannot always win. Thus, the counselling inside the prison institution helps the PDLs to accept their situation and let them understand that one cannot always win so they must undergo with all their problems and do not stop hoping for a better future as they can win at the end if they will continue to fight for the betterment of their case and keep doing good.

### **Recommendations of the Persons Deprived of Liberty to Strengthen the Rehabilitation Programs of Prison Institution**

Due to the challenges brought by incarceration, the Persons Deprived of Liberty gave such recommendations to strengthen the rehabilitation programs of the prison institution. It involves the recommendation for an expediency of trials, more livelihood programs, hygiene support, and product promotion. For clearer understanding, themes are presented below.

**Expediency of Legal Proceeding.** The PDLs always having postponed hearings which serve as the main reason why numerous PDLs were being stuck at the prison institution and it is also the reason why their incarceration period being extended. Thus, the PDLs recommends that they should have access to a speedy trial.

Key Informant A suggested that:

*“Sana wala ng postponed na trial, iyon kasi ang isang dahilan kung kaya’t madaming tumatagal dito sa*

*loob.*” (“I hope there won’t be a postponed trial, because that’s one of the reasons why most of the PDLs spends a lot of time here.”)

This was also supported by Key Informant B who stated:

“*Umm...ano, sana bigyan ng government ng aks’yon yung mga trials naming natengga na dahil sa palaging nadedelay. Kasi patuloy akong tumatagal dito sa bagal ng usad ng kaso ko.*” (“Umm...what, I hope the government will take action on our trials because they are always delayed. With the slow progress of my case, I am still here and is continuously spending a lot of time here.”)

Key Informant D also agreed as he mentioned:

“*Sana matulungan kami ng gobyerno sa aming kaso, kase, palagi nalang kasing postponed kasi palaging lack of time. May attorney naman ako kaso kulang parin talaga yung time pag pumupunta kasi kami don marami na ang nakapila sa trial, kaya palaging post-poned trial ko.*” (“I hope the government will help us in our case, because it is always postponed, there is always a lack of time. I have an attorney, but there is still not enough time when we go because there are many people waiting in line for the trial, so my trial is always postponed.”)

This was also sustained by Key Informant E who said:

“*Sana mapabilis yung mga hearing para mabawasan yung mga PDLs dito sa loob, postponed na trials kase talaga ang pahirap kase ang ang bagal-bagal ng pag-usad.*” (“I hope the hearings can be expedited to reduce the PDLs here, postponed trials are really the torture because the progress is slow.”)

Key Informant F also testified as he said:

“*Sana maging fair yung justice ng pilipinas sa pagbibigay ng judgement, kalaunan kasi tulad ko nagdudusa ako dito sa loob sa hindi ko naman kasalanan.*” (“I hope the justice of the Philippines will eventually be fair in giving judgment, because for people like me, I am suffering here inside for things that I did not do and are not my fault.”)

It was supported by Key Informant H who said:

“*Dalawa lang naman yung gusto naming mga PDL, una laging dinadalaw, pangalawa sana mapabilis yung hearing at maging maayos yung justice system ng Pilipinas. Kasi dito sa ating bansa, masyadong mabagal madaming katulad kong nasasayang yung oras dito sa loob para pagbayaran yung hindi ko naman talaga ginawang bagay.*” (“There are only two things that we want as PDLs: first, to be always visited, and second have a speedy hearing and a properly working Philippine justice system work. Because here in our country, the process is too slow, and many people like me waste time here to pay for things that we did not really do.”)

Based on the statements of the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), the process for obtaining a speedy trial is not achieved due to unending delays. It is because of the limited access of given lawyers to process their cases, wherein it serve as the main factor for the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) not to proceed for their trial as their given time and schedule is limited as well. Thus, the resources of the judicial system in the Philippines is not enough to accommodate all the PDLs who are in need of a speedy trial. To support this, the criminology expert Raymund Narag (2023), stated that the Philippines has one of the longest litigation periods in the whole world. Detained persons stay behind bars for an average of 528 days before their cases are solved. Some stay for around 15 to 20 years and still await verdict for their cases. So in connection to this, the PDLs really determind to recommend expedite trials.

**Expansion of Livelihood Programs.** Livelihood programs inside the prison institution helps the PDLs a lot in order for them to earn money. So the PDLs suggest to expand this program to accommodate higher number of PDLs to engage to livelihood programs and get an opportunity to earn.

Key Informant B recommended that:

*“Mas dagdagan pa sana nila yung mga livelihoods programs para lahat ng PDL magkaroon ng oportunidad na kumita habang nandito sa loob. At sana magkaroon din dito sa loob ng trabaho about massage kasi graduate ako dito ng massage pero hindi ko naman ma-apply kasi wala naman ganon dito paano ako kikita.”* (“Hopefully, they increase the livelihoods programs so that all PDLs have the opportunity to earn while here inside. And I hope there will also be a job here about massage because I graduated something related to massaging, but I cannot apply it because there is nothing like that here. How am I supposed to earn money then?”)

This was supported by Key Informant E who stated:

*“Dagdagan pa sana nila yung quota para sa mga livelihood programs para lahat makasali. At magcreate pa sana sila ng mga programa na more on source of income na related sa livelihood programs para may maipadala ako sa pamilya ko.”* (“I hope they increase the quota for livelihood programs so that everyone can participate. They should also create livelihood programs that are more on being a great source of income for me to have something to send to my family.”)

Key Informant K also mentioned:

*“Mas marami pa sanang mga aktibidad pang livelihood para may pagkakitaan kami dito sa loob kase mahirap talaga lalo na at mahal ang bilingin dito sa loob ng kulungan.”* (“I hope there are more livelihood activities so that we can earn money here inside because it is really difficult and the goods are expensive here inside the prison.”)

The programs inside the prison institution especially the livelihood program plays a big role in order for the People Deprived of Liberty (PDL) to earn money even if they are inside the prison institution. Moreover, the livelihood programs not just help PDLs for income, but it also give them a chance to acquire new skills and talents that they can use for their future reintegration. According to the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (2024), the livelihood program presents income-generating activities to PDL during their confinement where they are able to earn for their personal upkeep and for financial support to their families. Thus, it shows how really beneficial the livelihood programs for PLDs. In which if this program being expanded, it can maximize the number of PDLs given an opportunity to earn.

**Empowerment of Product Promotion and Hygiene Support.** As part of the PDL’s livelihood program, they are creating products like bags, wallets, and such. But the PDLs are struggling to market their products as there were just limited people visiting the prison institution. And if the PDLs couldn’t market their products, their source of income will also be affected and they cannot buy some of their necessities like shampoo, soap, toothpaste, and quality food.

Key Informant A said:

*“Sana may mag-conduct ng outreach program dito sa loob para matulungan yung mga kapwa ko PDL sa iba naming kailangan tulad ng pagbibigay ng sabon, toothpaste, shampoo. Tsaka para rin may makakita ng aming mga produkto dito sa loob at matulungan kami sa pagpapaorder.”* (“I hope someone will conduct an outreach program here to help my fellow PDLs with other things we need such as giving soap, toothpaste, and shampoo. It would also be beneficial for our products if someone from outside will see what we have to

offer or they can be of great help when it comes to collecting orders.”)

This was supported by Key Informant D who mentioned that:

“*Sana matulungan kami magbenta ng mga produkto namin kasi mahirap din magbenta dito sa loob kasi kami-kami lang din naman ang nandito at saka lang naman kami nakakabenta kung may dalaw tapos bihira pa naman ang dalaw.*” (“I hope they can help us sell our products because it is difficult to sell them especially when all you have around are people who are trying to sell their products, too. Aside from that, we can only have little sales if there are visitors, which is also occurs rarely.”)

This was also sustained by Key Informant F who said:

“*Sana mabigyan kami ng sapat na personal hygiene kulang kasi yung ibinibigay nila sa akin, dahil sobrang dami namin. Matulungan din sana kami ng mga tao sa labas para maibenta yung mga produkto namin dito sa loob pandagdag din nga pambili ng pangangailangan namin tulad ng sabon at shampoo mahal kase ang bilihan dito sa loob, minsan nga eh ano, naglalaba ako ng walang sabon.*” (“I hope they give us enough supplies for personal hygiene because what they give me is not enough since there are so many of us. I hope people outside can help us so that we can sell our products here in addition to buying our needs such as soap and shampoo because the goods here are expensive. Sometimes, what I even do is do my laundry without soap.”)

Key Informant B also shared that:

“*Ang maire-recommend ko ay sana mag-provide sila at mabigyan kami ng sapat na supply gaya ng sabon, shampoo, toothpaste, kasi yung mga walang dalaw ang mga kawawa, kasi wala silang supply ng ganon dahil dito sa loob mahal ang mga bilihan.*” (“What I would recommend is that they provide and give us enough supplies such as soap, shampoo, and toothpaste. You know, those PDLs who don’t have someone visiting them are really pitiful since aside from not having supplies, the goods here inside are expensive to purchase.”)

Key Informant C also agreed that:

“*Yung mga programa dapat maextend pa ng government lalo na yung pagkakaroon sana namin ng supply na sabon, mga shampoo at toothpaste ganon kasi ang hirap dito lalo na ako na walang suportang natatanggap mula sa pamilya ko kasi hindi nga nila ako dinadalaw.*” (“The programs should be extended by the government, especially our supply of soap, shampoos and toothpaste because it is hard here, especially for PDLs like me who does not receive support from a family since they do not visit me.”)

The lack of money results in an inability to afford the PDLs daily needs such as shampoo, toothpaste, soap, and others. Especially to those who have no visits and just hoping for the hygiene supplies given inside the prison. Thus, empowerment of product promotion would be a big help for PDLs to earn money and sustain their hygiene necessities. Because as the PDLs can market their products, they can also generate income that can help them afford to buy hygiene supplies being sold inside the prison. As reported by the Philippine News Agency in 2020, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) District Jail at Balungao, Pangasinan were selling various handmade products made by persons deprived of liberty (PDL) which can now be bought through an online store shopee account where their goods can be availed, and through this the PDLs’ can generate income for their families and some saved for themselves. Thus, it is a great help for PDLs to support them in promoting their products for them to earn money and sustain their hygiene supplies.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. The study found out that there are

two factors making the Persons Deprived of Liberty's lived experiences inside the prison institution more difficult. First is that, their families couldn't afford to visit them; and second, is the delayed trials which serves as the main reason why their incarceration period is not coming to an end. However, instead of being hopeless and being drown into grief caused by these difficulties, the PDL's still choose to participate with the different offered activities in the prison to help their selves overcome the challenges and burdens of incarceration. Consequently, the researchers considered that providing a speedy trial is highly recommended to help the Persons Deprived of Liberty quickly acquire the judgment that they deserve. Thus, PDLs who were proven innocent would with be freed with the sufferings of their incarceration.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study with regards to the lived experiences of the Persons Deprived of Liberty in the Prison Institution of Santiago City. The following are hereby recommended.

Persons Deprived of Liberty are encouraged themselves more to actively participate to productive activities offered within the prison institution for their future reintegration and to overcome the challenges they are experiencing while incarcerated.

Prison Institution. To develop alternative programs regarding family re-connection of Persons Deprived of Liberty with their families.

Local Government Unit of Santiago City. To enhance their collaboration with local organization and groups to increase the offered services for Persons Deprived of Liberty like counselling and job placement for their future reintegration in the community to avoid re-offending.

Community. To provide employment opportunities for after release Persons Deprived of Liberty to enhance more the worth of giving second chance to these offenders.

Readers. To use this study to acquire deeper perspectives of what life be like inside prison and thus may develop a more productive awareness of their lives away from incarceration.

Future Researchers. To conduct a study with regards to the conditions of the Persons Deprived of Liberty with their trial proceedings and determine any alternatives that can expedite such hearings to achieve the judgement that the PDL's deserve without any delays.

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