

# **“Enhancing Reintegration: The Role of Prisonbased Aftercare Programs in Supporting Persons Deprived of Liberty in Bureau of Jail Management and Penology of Cabarroguis, Quirino”**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative descriptive study focused on recognizing and understanding the learned and experienced aftercare programs of PDLs, the effects of aftercare programs in their social, economic, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspect, the challenges they faced upon reintegration, and some coping mechanisms of persons deprived of liberty or PDLs of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Cabarroguis, Quirino. An in-depth interview guide was utilized to gather data for the study. There are three (3) PDLs consented as participants; the results revealed that the lack of supervision in their newfound freedom allowed them to choose whether to apply these programs. The participants also expressed the different effects of the aftercare programs on their daily lives, regarding various aspects. On the other hand, the challenges they faced in applying the aftercare programs and upon reintegration revealed that there are both positive and negative impacts on their lives. In addition, the coping mechanism of the penal graduate in dealing with those challenges they faced had a significant role in their life as they continue to live and hope for the future.

**Keywords:** Aftercare programs, Persons deprived of liberty, Experiences, Challenges, Coping mechanisms

## **INTRODUCTION**

Imprisonment is defined as the state of being held in captivity through the due process of law. Individuals under legal custody—whether as detainees, inmates, or prisoners—are now more neutrally and humanely referred to as Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). However, the transition from confinement to the community is often fraught with systemic barriers. Imprisonment significantly diminishes an individual's likelihood of future employment, creating a "scarring" effect that persists long after release (Brown (2019)). This is often exacerbated by the fact that correctional facilities frequently fail to equip inmates with mainstream, employable skills, a reality corroborated by Obatusin and Ritter-Williams (2019), who found that many ex-convicts are unprepared for the modern job market.

To mitigate these challenges, the implementation of comprehensive aftercare programs is essential. An aftercare program is defined as the strategic package of support—encompassing psychological, social, and vocational assistance—provided after an offender completes a prison-based treatment program or a community sentence. As highlighted by Sneed (2024), formerly incarcerated individuals, particularly older adults, are often relegated to physically demanding and high-stress labor due to a lack of support, which can lead to poor health outcomes and further marginalization.

Consequently, the integration of aftercare programs within both community and correctional frameworks is vital for lowering recidivism rates. It is imperative that institutions move beyond traditional confinement and instead design, develop, and implement innovative reintegration programs that address the "active process" of a PDL's transition back into society (Villegas, 2023). Such programs are not merely a service but a necessary intervention to break the cycle of poverty and reincarceration.

This study aims to assess whether such aftercare programs are effective and have an impact on the lives of persons deprived of liberty and the challenges that they face during the integration of these aftercare programs. This will

serve as encouragement to actively promote and maintain aftercare programs to achieve successful reintegration. The study was conducted on persons deprived of liberty in the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology of Cabarroguis, Quirino, focusing on those who were released from 2020 to 2025.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Larsen, Hean, and Odegard (2019), many offenders struggle when attempting to reintegrate into society after release from prison, and the conditions they face after release often lead to reoffending. Internationally, there is limited understanding about how to improve these conditions and thereby reduce recidivism rates. Offenders' perspectives on the challenges they face and how to overcome these are absent. Poor communication between the prison, community services, and other organizations in the welfare system may be responsible for some of this shortfall. Prisoners reported housing to be a particular area in which the system failed to support them, and gave this as a central reason for reoffending. Housing needs are one of the primary risk factors associated with reoffending.

It also corroborates the study of Best et al. (2023), wherein the transition from jail to community is a high-risk time for individuals experiencing substance use disorders (SUD), with elevated risks of overdose and other substance-related harms, as well as high recidivism rates and re-incarceration. Gains made from successful treatment in prison are often lost in this transition. Convicts' experience of re-joining their families and faith communities was antithetical to what they expected upon discharge. Family members who knew them reacted with indifference once the ex-convicts were discharged. Typical of the experiences of the ex-convicts is that it was only in rare cases that family members celebrated their return. The ex-convicts were unable to gain the trust of family members, employers, and FCOs due to their blemished character.

As supported by the study of Boateng et al. (2021), the failure of the prison to equip inmates with employable skills reflects the economic realities of most ex-convicts; some search for jobs to earn an income, but to no avail. Children's well-being during and after paternal incarceration according to perspectives of recently released fathers, children's mothers, and extended family members, as suggested by the study of Charles and Muenster (2023). Parental incarceration and reentry are not so much discrete events for children but are instead linked experiences that endure and cross periods of pre- and post-release life. Furthermore, experiences are marked by personal challenges and notable impacts on their physical, mental, and social well-being. When they are kept in prisons or detention centers, they typically lose their independence, have less mobility, and have less access to opportunities and resources. There is also a noticeable lack of food and subpar amenities, including detention centers, restrooms, and ventilation. There is no area in the facility for the PDL to engage in physical activity. Additionally, the facility hasn't put in place a program that supports its PDLs' mental and emotional health. Banac, et.al, (2023).

However, in the study of Cagara et al. (2024), participants emphasized how BJMP's programs improve their employability, relationships, and general rehabilitation by fostering attitude transformation, skill development, and societal reintegration. The study concluded that BJMP's WDP greatly aids in successful social reintegration and suggested that the program be continued, improved, and collaborated with organizations such as TESDA. It also suggested partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies to guarantee successful execution. It emphasized the need for thorough rehabilitation programs for ex-PDLs, which are essential for both recidivism reduction and their reintegration into society.

In addition, based on the emergent themes that showed in the study of Luceño (2024), it was suggested that the former PDLs be given a more thorough aftercare program for a lengthier process of restoration. The Therapeutic Community Modality Program (TCMP), which fosters PDLs' total growth in themselves, is essential to the nation's rehabilitation process. The resident, who was previously prone to fights and quick to anger, has since learned to be more patient and amicable, thereby developing better self-control and understanding.

The TC and BJMP were instrumental in the implementation of this discipline, which the resident carried with them upon their release. This discipline improved their interactions with family and aided them in avoiding difficulties. Cannonier et al. (2021) investigate the effects of program reentry and aftercare services on the probability of ex-offenders going back to jail. Findings have some ramifications for how faith-based social services can help prevent reentry among ex-offenders in the framework of criminal justice reform. They also serve as a warning about the necessity of assessing programs on more than simply their total impact.

Moreover, it highlighted the significant need for community-based substance use treatment for adults reentering their communities after incarceration. Little is known about the benefits of programs that operate independently of the criminal justice system. Findings emphasize the need for further research on the implementation, cost-effectiveness, and racial/ethnic disparities in these treatment strategies as the reentry population continues to grow. Graves and Fendrich (2024).

However, having a personal relationship with God mitigates individual-level risk indicators and supports recovery through divine interventions. Participants detailed that their mindsets, beliefs, and social tendencies drastically changed to reflect the standards of their faith. The participants recalled having a divine supernatural experience in which God removed all desires for drugs and replaced them with His immeasurable love and passion for godly things. The participants disclosed that their faith in God improved their lives, and engaging in religious environments helped diminish the indulgence of substances and their negative effects. Stated that having a religious affiliation and upholding spiritual values correlate with a decreased inclination to engage in substance abuse. Voltaire (2024).

In the study of Bondad (2020), the Therapeutic Community and Modality Program (TCMP) is a model in the implementation of Inmates' Welfare and Development. Therapeutic Community within the realm of BJMP, of which this study is focused, is defined by the Philippine Department of Justice as an environment that helps people get help while helping others. TC helps promote change specifically on relational or behavior management; affective, emotional, or psychological; cognitive, intellectual, or spiritual, and psychomotor or vocational-survival skills. TC is a tool that the Parole and Probation Administration uses to prepare the client for reintegration to the community as a reformed, rehabilitated, productive, drug-free, and law-abiding person. Re-offending also creates financial and social burdens for taxpayers. There is some evidence that the consequences of incarceration for offenders can be buffered through resilience. Factors that promote resilience can be personal (internal) and environmental (external), and may directly or indirectly affect offenders' adaptation, well-being, and development as they transition out of prison. However, each of them developed and was using more positive coping methods by the time they reached the halfway house, such as staying busy with school, work, or working out, or connecting with family, as stated in the study of Pritchett (2022).

It also corroborates the study of Leonor (2023), which shows that a lack of resources and physical facilities is a significant obstacle to the execution of rehabilitative initiatives. Assistance to correctional facilities to guarantee the tools necessary to deliver efficient services for rehabilitation, correctional facilities should also make investments in the creation of new physical infrastructure to assist in rehabilitation initiatives. Physical activities of inmates can benefit from exercise by developing coping mechanisms, lowering stress levels, and improving their physical and emotional well-being. Participating in the community can assist prisoners in forming new relationships, picking up new skills, and locating resources for their rejoining the community. Moreover, there are differences in the way rehabilitation programs are implemented within correctional facilities; some programs are carried out well, while others need to be improved. Lack of funding and inadequate physical infrastructure are two major obstacles that prevent these programs from being implemented successfully. Consequently, it is essential to increase community and governmental support to guarantee the effectiveness of rehabilitation initiatives.

In addition, Vivares (2023) stated that ex-convicts faced economic and social challenges as they reintegrated into the community due to their criminal records. Not all ex-convicts share the same level of acceptance. Ex-convicts experienced challenges from their families, employment, and society, making it more difficult to make a living and sustaining their daily needs gets more difficult as they continued. However, ex-convicts were able to create a coping mechanism for themselves to handle their current situation, looking on the brighter side of life to survive all the challenges they encountered as they reintegrated into society. Further, the social treatment, motivation to live, and the presence of the Divine intervention upon liberation made the ex-convicts fully accept their life transformation for the better.

Thus, the repercussion of being in jail brings emotional distress to them as they pay the consequences of their actions. However, their incarceration has become a tool to renew their faith and become more careful of their actions. Agtong et.al (2023). Ex-offenders face discrimination, stigma, and a lack of emotional and material support from their loved ones, making it difficult for them to reenter society. Despite these challenges, ex-convicts found ways to cope and learn from these experiences. The coping mechanisms provide them hope and a positive

mindset in overcoming the challenges, such as their social and spiritual life, and mindful acceptance of their current situation, showing their resilience, Faith, and repercussions for their violations.

In addition, according to Hayes, T.A. (2024), incarceration does not just affect the convicted person; it has far-reaching consequences for their families, communities, and society as a whole. It shows that prison takes a significant toll on someone's mental health, both during their time inside and even after they are released. Yet prisons severely lack adequate mental health support, which is desperately needed. The study also revealed that incarceration creates major financial, social, and longlasting problems for the families left behind. It causes emotional and financial struggles, disrupts relationships, and especially harms the well-being of children.

Faruk et al. (2024) stated that reintegrating into society after being released from prison is a difficult process that requires assistance from a variety of sources. During the process of reintegrating into society, a released prisoner encounters various challenges that have an impact on the reintegration process.

### **Objectives Of The Study**

The study was conducted to determine the role of prison-based aftercare programs of persons deprived of liberty in the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology of Cabarroguis, Quirino. The objectives of the study were indicated under:

1. To explore the learned aftercare programs experienced by Penal graduates of Cabarroguis, Quirino.
2. To determine the effects of aftercare programs for Penal Graduates on their Social, Economic, Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual aspects.
3. To recognize the challenges experienced by the Penal Graduates at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology of Cabarroguis, Quirino.
4. To seek some coping mechanisms used by the Penal Graduates to overcome challenges.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold a theory to support a study.

This study is anchored in the Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura (1977, 1997), which posits that learning is a continuous, reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. Unlike traditional behaviorism, Bandura argues that individuals learn primarily through observation and imitation within a social context. According to Cherry (2022), this learning process is mediated by cognitive factors such as attention and motivation, where individuals observe the consequences of others' actions to inform their own behavior. In the context of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), this theory suggests that the social environment of the prison and the availability of positive role models significantly impact their readiness for reintegration and their ability to adopt pro-social behaviors.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized the qualitative approach, particularly the descriptive research design. Descriptive Qualitative Research is a method of research that is focused on understanding a phenomenon by examining its characteristics and qualities. It involves the collection of data analysis in the form of words, images, or other non-numerical forms of information. As we are particularly gathering data from groups of penal graduates.

The participants of this study had a maximum of five (t) Penal graduates who are residents of Cabarroguis, Quirino. The participants were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) penal graduates of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology of Cabarroguis District Jail (2) from 2020 to 2023, and (3) residents of Quirino Province.

This study utilized semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions in the data gathering to generate information regarding the experience, effects, challenges, and coping mechanisms of penal graduates in terms of the aftercare program. Semi-structured interviews are often qualitative in nature. They are generally used as an exploratory tool in marketing, social science, survey methodology, and other fields. According to Fauvelle (2019),

an open-ended question is a question that allows the participants to express themselves freely on a given subject. This is what we achieved as we explored their life to know the challenges and how they coped with them.

Thematic analysis was used in this study. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns in the meaning of the data to find themes. It is an active process of experience that is at the center of making sense of the data, Villegas (2023).

For the observance of ethical consideration of the study, all participants are ensured voluntary participation, ensuring the confidentiality and assurance of their privacy regarding the data that will be gathered.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data was collected from a group of five (5) penal graduates who participated in the study. Among them are two (2) cases of violation of Republic Act No. 9165, also known as the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, one (1) case of violation of Republic Act No. 8353, one (1) case of Article 310 of the Revised Penal Code which pertains to Qualified Theft, and the other one was a case of Article 265 of the Revised Penal Code, which pertains to Less Serious Physical Injury. Participant 1 represents the penal graduate who was convicted of violation of Republic Act No. 9165 and released in the year 2021. Participant 2 represents the penal graduate who was convicted of the violation of Republic Act No. 9165 and released in the year 2023. Participant 3 represents the penal graduate who was convicted of less serious physical injury and released in the year 2020. Participant 4 represents the penal graduate who was convicted of violation of Republic Act No. 8353 and released in the year 2024, and participant 5 represents the penal graduate who was convicted of qualified theft and released in the year 2020.

The participants in a face-to-face and in-depth interview were asked to narrate, describe, and share their experiences as penal graduates. There are sixteen (16) prominent themes surfaced from the collected data, categorized into four (4) groups, first refers to the lived experiences of the participants, the second pertains to the effects of the prison-based aftercare programs to the participants, the third pertains to the challenges encountered by the participants in applying the different aftercare programs and the fourth pertains to the coping mechanisms of the participants.

The first group pertains to the three (3) themes developed from their experiences on the prisonbased aftercare programs, which are different livelihood programs, livelihood engagements, and applying them to everyday life. The second group of themes emerged from the effects of the prisonbased aftercare programs in their emotional, economic, social, mental, and spiritual aspects, such as responsible community member, community engagement, spiritual development, mental aspect, and supporting family income. The third group of themes pertains to the challenges that the penal graduates encountered in applying the different aftercare programs, which are maintaining discipline, financial challenges, family relations, difficulty in seeking a stable job, socialization, and emotional disturbance. The last group has only two dominant themes that emerged from their coping mechanisms: moving forward with positivity and hope for the future.

### Experience Of Penal Graduates

A person's character cannot be defined by their past actions. A person deprived of Liberty has a chance to be reformed through the various prison-based aftercare programs, which make them ready to re-enter the community as a changed person. The aftercare programs have a crucial role in reducing recidivism and promoting successful reintegration into society for individuals after incarceration. There are three dominating themes that emerged from the experiences of penal graduates on the prisonbased aftercare programs in Quirino Province. These are different livelihood programs, becoming productive individuals, and are applied to everyday life.

#### Theme 1.1. Livelihood Programs

As penal graduates, the participants belong to a program called the Therapeutic Community Modality Program offered by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, which helped them be reintegrated into the community. The Therapeutic Community Modality Program (TCMP) is a selfhelp social learning treatment model that utilizes the community as the primary therapeutic vehicle to foster behavioral and attitudinal change. In this modality, the person learns and practices skills and responsibilities through structured activities that they can transfer to society

upon their release. Each participant is expected to be a contributing member of the community and develop the impetus to change by being a member of the community (TCMP Operational Manual, 2013).

Participant 1 mentioned that when asked what the aftercare programs they had learned and experienced in jail play a significant role in their daily life, he stated that "There are activities for betterment and reformation, like serving the Lord, massage therapy, and carpentry." Furthermore, supported by participant 2, he further stated that, "We have Sunday services every week, there are a lot of activities, we also have seminars until we get rid of our vices." In addition, participant 3 also narrated that "There were a lot of programs in the prison, there are a lot of activities, and different religious sects. I tried all of them just for me to be reformed. We also planted vegetables for income and extra food inside the prison." Participant 4 mentioned that, "Having different TESDA skills training gives us the chance to have certification which is useful upon our release." Moreover, participant 5 says that, "Actually, the livelihood program on carpentry made me more knowledgeable enough to build our family home upon my release."

The statements of the participants above show that the different programs experienced by the penal graduates changed and prepared them for their reintegration in the community. Different agencies also helped to provide discussions and initiate programs for their employment after release, one of the is the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), which provides skills certification. All the participants answered that the different activities helped them to stop their vices, generate income, and gain skills through the different livelihood programs.

Employment is critical for a prisoner's reintegration into society. Vocational training programs in prisons aim to provide inmates with skills to find a job and earn a living wage. Multiple studies prove inmates who take vocational training are more likely to find a job and stay out of prison Gabor, et al (2021)

Therapeutic Community and Modality Program (TCMP) as a model in the implementation of Inmate Welfare and Development. The study is defined by the Philippine Department of Justice as an environment that helps people get help while helping others. TC helps promote change specifically in relational or behavior management, affective, emotional, or psychological, cognitive, intellectual, or spiritual, and psychomotor or vocational-survival skills. TC is a tool that the Parole and Probation Administration uses to prepare the client for reintegration to the community as a reformed, rehabilitated, productive, drug-free, and law-abiding person, as stated in the study of Bondad (2020).

## **Theme 1.2 Livelihood Engagement**

Even the most wretched person has the right to change and be accepted by the community. With the different livelihood programs, the persons deprived of liberty learned and practiced skills and responsibilities through structured activities that they can transfer to society upon their release.

Participant 1, when asked how the aftercare programs they experienced and learned in the penal institution helped in their daily life, stated that, "Carpentry is the one that I am applying right now in my daily life, I even work on the farm." Participant 2 further supported it with, "I became disciplined, and my life changed. I can do carpentry, furniture finish, and use a planner. I also do furniture finishing when someone orders a table." Likewise, participant 3 stated that, "At first, I had a hard time until I did a fried chicken business to earn." Participant 4 stated, "Because I had my electrical installation and maintenance certification in TESA, I was able to be accepted in one construction company that I applied for but it takes several application before I was accepted." As for participant 5, "I applied as a construction worker with a daily wage rate, enough to provide food for my family, it was so hard as I am still earning trust from my colleagues and bosses."

The statements of the participants above show that, being a penal graduate, you can still experience a normal daily life like the lives of ordinary citizens. The participants said that even though it was hard at first, they persevered and applied the different programs that they learned inside the jail, such as carpentry, farming, electrical installation, construction works and cooking, and they became productive as they continued living.

In the study of Cagara et al. (2024), participants emphasized how BJMP's programs improve their employability, relationships, and general rehabilitation by fostering attitude transformation, skill development, and societal reintegration. The study concluded that BJMP's WDP greatly aids in successful social reintegration and suggested

that the program be continued, improved, and collaborated with organizations such as TESDA. It also suggests partnerships with governmental and non-governmental agencies to guarantee successful execution.

### **Theme 1.3 Applied to Everyday Life**

Being accepted by the community after long years of incarceration is a blessing. There is a new hope beaming in their life as the community members open their hands and become their support system, which gives them inspiration to endure social conditions and sufferings.

When participant 1 was asked if there were positive or negative implications of the aftercare programs in their life, he answered, “Yes, it has positive implications, because I learned some different programs that I applied outside the prison.” However, participant 2 saw it from a different angle, he stated. “Yes, we can apply the programs here; however, there are a lot of programs that we can apply inside, but we cannot apply them here in the community.” As for participant 4, “There are, in fact, if livelihood and skills training are not provided or learned in prison, I am not be able to provide for my family today.”

The participants have different views on the implications of the aftercare programs. Two participants said that he can apply the different aftercare programs that they have learned from the prison when they were released; however, participant 2 said that he can apply some, but due to the freedom that they have after the release, nobody is supervising them, hence, they have the freedom to apply and not to apply those programs.

In the study of Leonor (2023), participating in the community can assist prisoners in forming new relationships, picking up new skills, and locating resources for their rejoining the community. Moreover, there are differences in the way rehabilitation programs are implemented within correctional facilities; some programs are carried out well, while others need to be improved.

### **Effect Of Aftercare Programs for Penal Graduates**

The key goal of the implementation of Therapeutic Modality Community Program by the Bureau of Jail Management is to facilitate the successful reintegration of penal graduates into society, reducing recidivism rates, and promoting long-term stability through access to crucial support services like education, employment assistance, mental health counseling, and community connections, ultimately enabling them to become productive members of society despite their criminal history. This reintegration has different effects on the aspects of life, especially when it comes to the social, economic, mental, and spiritual aspects of the penal graduates. These were different effects of aftercare programs for penal graduates that emerged from the data gathered in terms of social, economic, mental, and spiritual aspects.

### **Theme 2.1. Responsible Community Member**

Penal graduates have the responsibility of rebuilding their lives, managing the stigma of their criminal past, actively seeking employment, maintaining relationships with family and support systems, and navigating the challenges of reintegration into the community.

Participant 1, when asked how they conduct their daily lives after their release from jail and what their life is like as a penal graduate, stated that, “I can do a lot of jobs here, like farming, carpentry, and even drive a tricycle for hire.” Furthermore, participant 2 added that, “We work in the paddy fields and we plant bananas.” In addition, participant 3 said, “My life was changed when I worked in the LGU as a market enforcer and street sweeper.” Participant 4 explained, “Even if there are a lot of criticisms from other people as if we cannot change ourselves and remain to be swayed, my family trusted me, that is why I kept on working and do my best to gain other people’s trust again.”

The statements of the participants emphasized that being a penal graduate can still experience a normal life and can still work. That even if others may still see them as penal graduates who remain several years in prison and made mistakes in the past, they still strive to become a responsible member of the society and gain the trust of the people who they work with.

This provides evidence for the importance of continuity of care and integrated models of strength-building and recovery-focused interventions in successfully bridging the transition from prison to the community for offenders with a SUD history. Though there is evidence that re-offending rates are not generally impacted by interventions received in prison here is moderate support for prison- based interventions that use a Therapeutic Community (TC) reported in which participants are immersed in a shared and communal journey of personal and social identity change through active participation in community life and a phased journey of personal transformation Best et al, (2023).

## **Theme 2.2 community engagement**

The implementation of the Therapeutic Community Modality Program manages and modifies the behavior of persons deprived of liberty to positively change their thinking and behavior through a structured group process. The program endeavors to teach and model positive thinking, prosocial values, good decision-making, and positive coping.

When participant 1 asked about the advantages and disadvantages of having aftercare programs socially, he answered, "When I was still inside the jail, there were still inmates who were silly, but jail guards taught us to be disciplined, so when I was released, I was able to apply it." Furthermore, participant 3 answered, "The program is great as it offers a lot of activities just like sportsfest, however, there is a disadvantage as there is a rule of the fault of one is the fault of all." He further stated, "I have friends who became distant; however, there are still a few who like to bond with me because they saw how I have changed." Participant 4 mentioned, "Before I became a prisoner, I was a member of the praise and worship team of our church, and when I was released they invited me again to play for the church." Participant 5 added, "I became friends with my co-construction workers, even if they do not trust me that much yet, but I believe there will be a time that I will gain their trust."

The above statements show that the different behavioral and structured group processes inside the jail played a significant role in the social life of the penal graduates. The penal graduates become more disciplined and active, which is a positive behavior in societal interaction with ordinary persons in the community. They engage in their work environment, their church and in their community.

Vivares (2023) stated that social treatment, motivation to live, and the presence of divine intervention upon liberation made the ex-convicts fully accept their life transformation for the better.

A continuous Community Assistance Program could be created or developed to assist and monitor ex-convicts' successful reentry into the community. The community may support the exconvicts in their plans through acceptance. Instead of the stigmas, the community may give encouragement and support for their renewal of life to be productive citizens.

## **Theme 2.3 Spiritual Development**

Spirituality is about seeking a meaningful connection with something bigger than yourself, which can result in positive emotions, such as peace, awe, contentment, gratitude, and acceptance.

When participant 1 asked about the advantages and disadvantages of having aftercare programs spiritually, he answered, "We go to church every Sunday and Thursday." Furthermore, participant 2 answered, "We go to church every Sunday. I was disciplined, and it changed my life." Participant 4 stated, "Even if I was in prison, I build a ministry and preach to my co-inmates and they accepted salvation, and upon my release I attended church."

The above statements show that having a connection with God can help them change their way of life. The penal graduates become more disciplined and become motivated to live their lives spiritually.

Having a personal relationship with God mitigates individual-level risk indicators and supports recovery through divine interventions. Corresponding with Caqueo-Úrizar et. al. (2022) examination, participants detailed their mindsets, beliefs, and social tendencies drastically changed to reflect the standards of their faith. The participants recalled having a divine supernatural experience in which God removed all desires for drugs and replaced them with His immeasurable love and passion for godly things. They perceived their connection with God as a source of spiritual upliftment, deriving comfort from knowing they were treasured by their benevolent heavenly Father.

Intimacy and closeness to God have been linked to a distaste for substance use, living a more disciplined life, less shame proneness, self-forgiveness, self-empowering behaviors, and interpersonal reconciliation (Voltaire, 2024).

#### **Theme 2.4. Mental Aspect**

A well-structured and well-implemented Intellectual component is a factor in establishing a Therapeutic Community for the residents. It helps the residents restore their self-esteem as their minds become open to ideas and their intellect does not cease to feed on a free and open interchange of opinion.

When participant 1 was asked about the advantages and disadvantages of having aftercare programs mentally, he answered, "After I was released from jail, I used to feel scared whenever I saw a police officer. I would avoid them, but now I'm doing well." Furthermore, participant 2 stated, "It's difficult to be in jail. Many people there are poor and never receive any visitors. Some develop high blood pressure or even die—they seem deeply depressed." Participant 5 stated, "There was a time inside the prison where I attempted to commit suicide because life is too heavy for me to handle, but the rope was cut off, then I realize that I should accept it and offer my life to the Lord."

The participant encountered different aspects regarding their mental well-being. Participant 1 said he was scared of the police before, but then he overcame it. However, participant 2 answered that life inside was so hard and depressing, hence, according to them, it has had both positive and negative impacts on their lives until now. Participant 5 almost took his life in prison but through realizations and reflections he mustered his strength to face life with offering his life to the creator.

Experiences are marked by personal challenges and notable impacts on their physical, mental, and social well-being. Banac et.al. (2023) stated that the PDL has received good treatment from the police or custodial staff; nonetheless, there is a noticeable lack of food and subpar amenities, including detention centers, restrooms, and ventilation. There is no area in the facility for the PDL to engage in physical activity. Additionally, the facility hasn't put in place a program that supports its PDLs' mental and emotional health.

#### **Theme 2.5 Supporting Family Income**

The livelihood program presents income-generating activities to PDL during their confinement, where they can earn for their personal upkeep and for financial support for their families.

When participant 2 asked when they were released from jail, whether they applied the aftercare programs that they had learned to support their family financially, participant answered, "Yes, number one is to support my family." Furthermore, participant 3 answered, "When I was released, I made a promise to myself to help anyone in need. If someone has a problem, I'll be there for them—because I know what it feels like to have no one to turn to. I experienced that inside. I told myself that if my plans succeed and the day comes, I will give back and help others." Participant 4 said, "After I was released in prison, I used every skill that I have learned to look for a job thinking that I must support my family who supported me when I was inside the facility, now I am providing for them."

In addition, participant 3 said, "There are still many challenges we can't avoid, even now that I've graduated from the penal system. Sometimes I think it was easier when I was inside because I could send them money, but being out here is still much better—because now I can be present and support my children when they need me."

The above statement shows the love and support of penal graduates despite the circumstances involving financial issues; they still do their best to support their families who are in need. In this aspect, helping loved ones involves the allocation of financial resources to support their well-being and prosperity; hence, individuals can make informed decisions about how to best allocate their financial resources to support their loved ones.

Vivares (2023) stated that ex-convicts faced economic and social challenges as they reintegrated into the community due to their criminal records. Not all ex-convicts share the same level of acceptance. Ex-convicts experienced challenges from their families, employment, and society, making it more difficult to make a living and sustain their daily needs as they continued. However, ex-convicts were able to create a coping mechanism for themselves to handle their current situation, looking on the brighter side of life to survive all the challenges they encountered as they reintegrated into society.

## Challenges Encountered by Penal Graduates

No person is perfect in this world, and everyone faces their own challenges in life. Under the category of challenges encountered by the penal graduates, it shows that they have similarities in challenges encountered as compared to an ordinary citizen. These are the different challenges that emerged from the data gathered: maintaining discipline, financial challenges, family relations, difficulty in seeking a stable job, socialization, and emotional distress.

### Theme 3.1. Maintaining Discipline

The meaning of discipline changes with the stages of life and priorities. Not everyone can be disciplined because it requires a lot of hard work and dedication. Being disciplined in life can lead us to be more productive and successful in every decision that we make in our lives.

When participant 1 asked if they had experienced any challenges that they encountered as a penal graduate, he stated, "There are still some people who come around just to cause trouble, but I choose to stay away from them." Furthermore, participant 2 answered, "Life outside prison is better because I have the freedom to do things I couldn't before—like enjoying a drink when I want to, unlike inside where alcohol wasn't allowed." Participant 4 said, "It would be hypocrite for me to say that I am too disciplined but I maintained to be one because of my belief. And participant 5 added, "I cannot go back to prison, so I need to behave well here and not to make anymore mistakes."

The statement above shows that participants still encountered different challenges in their lives, and in overcoming them, they must maintain their disciplinary behavior. The prison practices reflects on how they behave on outside world and motivates them to be good and not to make and repeat the mistakes in the past.

Discipline and behavioral changes were made possible by the program's social support and community involvement. In addition to enhancing community and public safety, Therapeutic Community Modality Program increases the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in dealing with criminal conduct through the promotion of long- term rehabilitation outcomes. The fact that the resident, who was previously prone to fights and quick to anger, has since learned to be more patient and amicable, thereby developing better self-control and understanding. They are now capable of effectively managing their emotions, even in challenging circumstances Luceño (2024).

### Theme. 3.2 Financial Challenges

The financial aspect shapes our status, daily decisions, affects our access to essentials, and influences our aspirations. The participants are responsible for providing for their families, and one of their encountered challenges is their financial situation.

When participant 1 was asked about the most challenging problems that he encountered as a penal graduate and how he overcame them, he stated, "When I was released from jail, we didn't have any money to start over. We also lacked necessities and had no resources to invest in farming." Furthermore, participant 2 answered, "Most of the financial needs for the children's education were covered by the farm. Before, we didn't have bananas, but now we're investing in pigs and growing vegetables." Participant 4, "Before I was imprisoned, I do not have a job so I am not giving any money to my parents but after I was released I am now giving my all to them and strive to save for myself also." Participant 5 answered, "being a construction worker, I say that my wage is small to provide for my family and that is too hard."

The statement above shows that everyone faces challenges involving money, and it is one of the most important issues for all people, including those penal graduates who want to start a new life and to survive the life they have now. However, there are still circumstances that prison life helped them to achieve financial freedom upon their release in the community because of their hard-earned skills inside the correctional facility.

According to the study of Yin, Boateng, and Kofie (2021), the failure of the prison to equip inmates with employable skills corresponds with the work of Obatusin and Ritter-Williams (2019). These researchers found that most ex-convicts were not ready to work because the prison did not prepare them for the mainstream job market. The data also reflects the economic realities of most ex- convicts. Some searched for jobs to earn an

income, but to no avail. Those who were employed got dismissed once their past became known to their employers. This amounts to stigmatization. This data corroborates the study of Brown et al. (2019), who established that imprisonment makes people less likely to be employed.

### **Theme 3.3. Family Relations**

Maintaining good family relations after being incarcerated is so difficult. There are times when they miss special occasions in the life of one or more members of the family.

When participant 1 was asked about the challenges he experienced involving his family, he stated, “When I was released from jail, my family was the ones who suffered because I couldn’t support them financially. The income they earned from carpentry was very limited.” Furthermore, participant 2 answered, “When some of my family members got sick.” In addition, participant 3 said, “There is, but I choose to ignore it so it won’t lead to a bigger problem.” Participant 5 answered, “I had lapses on providing for my family when I was in prison and my child was in her tender year then, so it is hard for me to cope and rebuild our relationship.”

The participants above show that even when they reintegrated into society and back to their families, there are still challenges that need to be addressed in rebuilding their family relationships, which includes support that motivates them in dealing with every challenge.

Hayes, T.A. (2024), stated that incarceration does not just affect the convicted person; it has far-reaching consequences for their families, communities, and society as a whole. It shows that prison takes a significant toll on someone's mental health, both during their time inside and even after they are released. Yet prisons severely lack adequate mental health support, which is desperately needed.

The study also revealed that incarceration creates major financial, social, and long-lasting problems for the families left behind. It causes emotional and financial struggles, disrupts relationships, and especially harms the well-being of children.

### **Theme 3.4. Difficulty In Seeking Job**

The objective of the skill training program for penal graduates is to equip them with technical/vocational skills that they can use in seeking employment or starting their own business after release from confinement.

Participant 1, when asked about what he sought after release from confinement, answered, “When I was released from jail, my family and I faced the difficulty of not having enough money to invest in our farm.” Furthermore, participant 2 stated, “When I was released from jail, I found a job and noticed that I lost weight after just a month of working.”

The above statement shows that not everyone with a criminal background can find a stable job, and even if they have a job, they cannot manage to look for themselves, and it is a struggle for them to support their family. The lack of employment can exacerbate feelings of frustration, anxiety, and low self-esteem, which can be debilitating and demotivating.

These statements highlight that not all penal graduates can secure stable employment. Even those who do find work often struggle to meet their basic needs and support their families. This ongoing difficulty may be attributed to financial instability, a lack of start-up capital for business or farming, or the physically demanding nature of available jobs.

The lack of stable employment post-incarceration can lead to increased feelings of frustration, anxiety, and low self-esteem. These emotional and psychological challenges can be both debilitating and demotivating, potentially hindering the rehabilitation and reintegration process.

Recent studies support this reality. According to a 2023 report by the Urban Institute, formerly incarcerated individuals face disproportionately high unemployment rates, and those who do find work are often limited to low-wage, unstable jobs. The report emphasizes that structured support—including job placement programs, continued vocational training, and access to small business funding—is critical for sustainable reintegration.

### Theme 3.5 Socialization

This is a structured social event where all those involved in an encounter will have ample time to mend fences with those they have offended or hurt in the past. The purpose is to achieve a close, reaffirming relationship and maintain the unity of the community so that all those involved can move on and leave the past behind.

Participant 2, when asked about their socialization, stated, “We go to church every Sunday, and there have been a lot of changes in our lives.” Furthermore, participant 3 answered, “I have many friends who once avoided me, but I still have a lot of friends who appreciate me because they have seen the positive changes in my life.” Participant 4 answered, “Sometimes if I am not with the church members, I felt that some avoided me because of my case, I cannot blame them because who would want to be friend with a person who has that case.”

The above statement shows that socialization for penal graduates can be challenging. Participant 2 said about how he socializes in church, and going to church involves interacting and communicating with others to develop and maintain social relationships. However, participant 3 said about how he deals with socializing with his friends.

Ex-convicts faced social challenges as they reintegrated into the community due to their criminal records. Not all ex-convicts share the same level of acceptance. Ex-convicts experienced challenges from their families, employment, and society, making it more difficult to make a living and sustain their daily needs, which became more difficult as they continued (Vivares, 2023).

### Theme 3.6 Emotional Disturbance

Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It plays a crucial role in every stage of life, from childhood traumatic events through adulthood. Understanding mental health conditions and their impact on daily life helps recognize and address various challenges.

When participant 1 was asked about any psychological challenges and how he deals with them, he stated, “Because of the hardships I’ve faced, I’ve learned to persevere. Whenever problems come into my life, I will face them with patience and overcome them one step at a time.” Furthermore, participant 2 answered, “When most of the family members got sick, especially the kids, I couldn’t stop thinking about it.” In addition, participant 3 said, “Sometimes there are troublemakers, and I end up confronting them because I get irritated and upset. But in the end, I’m still the one who apologizes.” Participant 5 said, “Now my mental aspect is not that disturb, cause I have found to reflect first before making an act, but before I had this suicidal tendencies.”

BJMP residents who are detained are psychologically and emotionally challenged. They share one thing in common, that is being incarcerated with uncertainties as to the outcome of their cases. They feel isolated, helpless, and at times hopeless, brought about by separation from their loved ones and society in general, and all other issues that confront them while incarcerated. Some might feel serious risk of self-harm which should be treated and assessed, but due to several interventions these self-harms can be cured.

Thus, the repercussion of being in jail brings emotional distress to them as they pay the consequences of their actions. However, their incarceration has become a tool to renew their faith and become more careful of their actions. Agtong et al. (2023) stated that ex-offenders face discrimination, stigma, and a lack of emotional and material support from their loved ones, making it difficult for them to re-enter society. Despite these challenges, ex-convicts found ways to cope and learn from these experiences. The coping mechanisms provide them hope and a positive mindset in overcoming the challenges, such as their social and spiritual life, and mindful acceptance of their current situation, showing their resilience, Faith, and repercussions for their violations.

## Part Iv. Coping Mechanisms

It is important to study how penal graduates handle life after being incarcerated. They have numerous challenges, and knowing how they overcome them can help us understand how they deal with those challenges. This category explores the coping mechanisms the participants employ, which may help us to understand and support them. The coping mechanisms that emerge from the collected data are moving forward with positivity and hope for the future.

### Theme 4.1. Moving Forward with Positivity

Moving forward with positivity serves as a powerful motivation that ignites hope, courage, and perseverance, pushing a person to have a forward journey of self- fulfillment, overcome obstacles, pursue dreams, and personal growth.

When participant 1 asked how he coped with all the challenges, he stated, “It’s truly a sacrifice—you just have to be patient with whatever problems come your way. You need to stay mentally strong so you won’t feel discouraged.” Furthermore, participant 2 answered, “I worked hard—doing farming and planting—and when we finally started harvesting bananas, it was more than enough to support our daily needs.” The same was answered by participant 4 and 5, that they will do anything to provide for their family.

Factors that promote resilience can be personal (internal) and environmental (external), and may directly or indirectly affect offenders’ adaptation, well-being, and development as they transition out of prison. However, each of them developed and was using more positive coping methods by the time they reached the halfway house, such as staying busy with school, work, or working out, or connecting with family Pritchett, 2022).

### Theme 4.2. Hopeful For the Future

Being resilient and adaptable helps a person to deal with life’s tough times. It provides strength to face changes, overcome problems, and do well even when things are uncertain. When these kinds of qualities are used well, people can handle difficult situations better and find chances to grow and change as life keeps moving.

When participant 2 asked how he coped with all the challenges, he stated, “It’s not like before—back then, I was just starting as a farmer. What others said was true: money doesn’t come right away. You have to be patient and wait for years to see the results.” Furthermore, participant 3 answered, “Don’t lose hope in God. If you can fix the problem, do it—and if you can’t, then keep working on it.” Participant 4 answered, “I am still young, I plan to study again and pursue my course before I was imprisoned.”

Improving coping skills, developing and maintaining support systems, and teaching them how to look at their situation and future through a positive lens will provide benefits that can enhance the quality of their life.

A study by Sneed (2024) explored employment outcomes among older adults with a history of incarceration. While it did not directly address resilience and adaptability, it highlighted that formerly incarcerated individuals often engage in more physically demanding jobs, which could contribute to increased physical activity and potential weight loss. This suggests that overcoming challenges and adapting to new circumstances are crucial for successful reintegration.

Research indicates that improving coping skills, developing and maintaining support systems, and fostering a positive outlook are essential for enhancing the quality of life among formerly incarcerated individuals. These factors contribute to better mental health and successful reintegration into society.

For penal graduates, developing resilience and adaptability is crucial for overcoming the challenges they face upon release. Engaging in skill development programs, building supportive networks, and maintaining a positive mindset can significantly improve their ability to navigate post-incarceration life.

In summary, while specific studies on penal graduates are limited, existing research underscores the importance of resilience, adaptability, and coping strategies in facilitating successful reintegration and improving quality of life.

## SUMMARY

Three themes emerge from experiences: livelihood programs (e.g., TESDA carpentry, farming) equip PDLs for reintegration; engagement fosters productivity via jobs like construction; everyday application varies due to lack of supervision. Effects span social responsibility, community bonds, spiritual growth, mental resilience, and family support. Challenges include discipline, finances, family ties, employment barriers, socialization, and emotional distress, countered by positivity, hope, and faith.

**The major findings of the study are summarized below:**

1. Aftercare prison-based programs play a vital role in helping graduates transition back into society by equipping them with essential skills and fostering a sense of normalcy. While aftercare programs are critical for reinforcing these positive changes, the absence of supervision post-release creates both opportunities for autonomy and potential risks. A supportive framework that encourages continued skill application can enhance successful reintegration and promote lasting personal growth.
2. Participants who completed their jail time feel ready to live normal lives and find jobs. Their experiences helped them develop social skills and discipline through programs in jail. Many credit their connection with God for their positive changes. Despite financial challenges, they prioritize supporting their families.
3. Participants face challenges after prison, especially with financial stability. Many struggle to rebuild family ties and find jobs, leading to feelings of frustration and isolation. They often feel helpless due to their past incarceration and uncertain futures.
4. Enhancing coping skills, establishing support systems, and fostering a positive outlook can significantly improve a person's quality of life. A positive mindset motivates individuals, instills hope, and empowers them to confront challenges, ultimately supporting their personal growth.

**CONCLUSION**

TCMP and aftercare programs significantly reduce recidivism by building skills and attitudes for societal reintegration, though external stigma hampers full success. Penal graduates demonstrate resilience, proving character reform beyond past actions, yet systemic support gaps persist in postrelease monitoring.

**The following conclusions are drawn based on the results of the study:**

1. Experiences of Penal Graduates in Cabarroguis, Quirino

Penal graduates reported that the prison-based programs helped them quit vices, earn income, and acquire practical skills through various livelihood projects. These programs played a key role in preparing them for reintegration into the community. After release, participants described living normal lives and applying skills such as carpentry, farming, and cooking, which they learned during incarceration. While one participant highlighted the direct applicability of aftercare programs postrelease, another pointed out that the absence of supervision allowed them the autonomy to decide whether or not to apply what they had learned. This freedom presents both opportunities for growth and challenges in sustaining positive behavioral changes.

2. Effects of Aftercare Programs on Social, Economic, Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual Aspects

The aftercare programs were found to have a profound effect on the participants' overall wellbeing. Socially, the structured group activities and behavioral programs inside the jail enhanced their interpersonal skills and discipline, helping them reintegrate and form positive relationships within their communities.

Spiritually, many participants cited their renewed faith in God as a major influence on their transformation, providing them with motivation and a stronger sense of purpose. Mentally and emotionally, participants expressed a range of perspectives—from overcoming fear of law enforcement to reflecting on the emotional toll of incarceration. Economically, while financial struggles remain a challenge, participants remain committed to supporting their families. Their improved decision-making skills help them manage limited resources to ensure their families' wellbeing and long-term stability.

3. Challenges Experienced by Penal Graduates

Penal graduates face numerous post-release challenges, especially in achieving financial stability and securing employment. These issues are compounded by difficulties in rebuilding family relationships and reintegrating into society. Many participants reported feelings of frustration, anxiety, and low self-esteem. While some can reconnect with their communities—often through faith-based involvement—others continue to struggle with social isolation and stigmatization stemming from their incarceration. The uncertainty of their legal status and societal acceptance contributes to a persistent sense of helplessness.

#### 4. Coping Mechanisms Used by Penal Graduates

To overcome these challenges, penal graduates rely on improved coping strategies, the support of others, and a positive mindset. Embracing optimism and hope helps them remain resilient in the face of adversity. Building support systems, maintaining faith, and staying focused on personal goals enable them to continue growing, heal from past experiences, and move forward with purpose.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. **Continuous Support Mechanisms:** Effective aftercare frameworks are essential to bridge the transition from prison to society. Continuous supervision can mitigate risks and enhance the application of skills learned during incarceration, promoting a smoother reintegration process. Enhance TESDA-BJMP partnerships for post-release job placement and microfinance programs.
2. **Holistic Reintegration Approach:** Addressing the complex needs of formerly incarcerated individuals requires programs that focus on social skills, financial literacy, and coping strategies. Such comprehensive support is critical in helping individuals secure employment and rebuild family ties, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and frustration.
3. **Mental Health and Positive Mindset:** Promoting mental well-being is crucial for successful reintegration. Initiatives aimed at fostering resilience and a positive outlook empower individuals to face challenges and enhance their overall quality of life.
4. **Community Involvement:** Engaging the community in supportive roles can diminish stigma and facilitate social acceptance. Community involvement is vital in reducing isolation and promoting connections that aid the reintegration process. Launching anti-stigma campaigns with the Local Government Units to boost socialization and employment and develop community-based supervision to sustain discipline and skills.

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