

Enduring Anguish: Narratives of Aging Persons Deprived of Liberty in A Correctional Institution for Women

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Abstract— This phenomenological study focused on recognizing and understanding the challenges and coping mechanisms of the female Persons Deprived of Liberty or PDLs of the correctional institution for women in Sto. Tomas Davao Del Norte. An interview guide was utilized to gather data for the study, which employed a qualitative narrative design. Seventeen (17) female PDLs volunteered as participants. Results revealed that the participants had encountered challenges during their incarceration. It includes experiencing difficulty in adjusting and accepting the situation, feelings of sadness and emptiness due to limited communication with their loved ones, and a profound sense of failure in fulfilling their roles as mothers. The participants' coping strategies include leaning on one's religion and praying fervently. Additionally, by actively taking part in livelihood programs, members exhibit resilience and dedication to skill development and self-improvement. This experience encourages young individuals to avoid trouble, eliminating misconceptions about the simplicity of jail life. Such experiences offer valuable insights into the realities of incarceration, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation for the challenges faced within jail walls. Furthermore, participant's express adherence to rules and protocols as a means of maintaining order and discipline, highlighting a sense of responsibility and compliance with institutional norms.

Keywords— Challenges, Person Deprived of Liberty, Phenomenology, Coping Mechanism, Philippines.

I. INTRODUCTION

Aging is a natural process of growing older with physical, mental, and social changes. The rising population of aging prisoners, especially women, presents unique challenges, including mental health concerns and difficulties adjusting to prison life (Danely, 2022; Smoyer et al. 2019). Most of the literature highlights the difficulties faced by aging individuals in prison, emphasizing the obstacles they encounter when trying to adapt to life behind bars (Avieli, 2022). Strong societal stigma and substantial mental health requirements are traits of jailed women. Despite these weaknesses, little is known about their journeys toward recovery and rehabilitation or about their experiences (Bove & Tryon, 2018). The atmosphere of the prison, as well as inmates' social standing and connections within, all have an impact on the experience of being a person deprived of liberty.

Some women have spent much of their lives in prison, separated from their families. The problematic issue raised in this study is that individuals in correctional facilities may experience significant emotional and psychological distress during their incarceration. Basic needs like shampoo, bath, laundry soap, etc., and health care needs should be addressed by the prison system, which should provide a gender-sensitive system of care

while recognizing the opportunity for empowerment and encouraging healthy choices. According to the study of Dhiman (2022), Female PDLs encounter a range of challenges in prison, including cultural, social, economic, physical, environmental, and psychological issues. Because of the reason that some prisons are often underfunded, offering limited amenities and programs, and frequently failing to provide necessities for incarcerated individuals (Bucerus and Sandberg, 2022).

Flores-Barolo and Vicente (2019) highlighted the challenges and coping strategies of selected Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) in Sablayan Prison and Penal Farm. These individuals react differently to these challenges due to varying adaptation methods to the prison environment. Bucerus and Sandberg (2022) highlighted that women in prisons frequently face issues such as trauma, mental health struggles, and separation from their children. Consequently, ageing female offenders have a variety of mental and physical health challenges and issues, as well as problems with health care utilization and expenses associated with caring for aging prisoners.

The transition to prison life for aging women in jail is frequently impacted by several mental and physical health issues. Many inmates have distinct histories of

terrible life events, which puts them at risk of developing severe depression (Aday & Dye, 2019). The life transition of older women from the community to prison was highlighted by Solbakken and Wynn (2022). Comparatively speaking, people who are incarcerated have poorer mental health than the overall public. The benefits of social support extend to mental health. According to the buffering approach, social support makes it easier to handle stressful situations, but the primary effects model contends that being a part of social networks and engaging in constructive social interactions are beneficial to health (Waters et.al., 2022).

Previous research shows that individuals in solitary confinement lack meaningful social contact, and often experience depression, memory problems, difficulty concentrating, irritability, and anger (Stringer, 2019). Despite the challenges faced by these aging incarcerated women, they are still able to manage and find coping strategies. Gallant, Sherry, and Nicholson (2015) note that prisons facilitate coping by promoting sports and recreation programs that help enhance health and support behavior modification. It was supported by the study of Acevedo et.al. (2024) states that Correctional facilities work to create a supportive environment for rehabilitation and personal growth by providing programs like exercise, mental health counseling, education, artistic activities, social connections, and support for different spiritual or religious practices. Additionally, the research revealed that to cope with the correctional environment, participants rely on their faith in God through religious practices and draw strength from interactions with fellow inmates and loved ones as a support group.

This topic has been explored in various studies, with some already highlighting key aspects of how aging affects female PDLs in the Correctional Institution. This could include looking at their health and well-being, how they get support, and whether existing programs meet their needs. Studying how long-term imprisonment impacts their lives and comparing their experiences with those in other facilities could also provide insights. This concludes that due to their unique social environments, often form close bonds with children and are less likely to break prison rules compared to men. Women face risks like isolation from outside support and turn to inmate activities for social support (Bartlett & Hollins, 2018).

This study aims to know first, what are the challenges and experiences of the female persons deprived of

liberty? Second, how do they manage and cope with the challenge? And lastly, what are the insights can the participants share with the community?

It will shed light on the challenges, experiences of the female person deprived of liberty provided within the prison. The community will be aware of such phenomena encountered by certain older females acting on this important topic because of this research. The findings of this study will specifically benefit those who are deprived of their liberty or in rehabilitative programs and require governmental assistance. The findings will be shared so that they can comprehend the severity of the problem. Furthermore, the findings of this study will push for new paradigms, which will be valuable for future discussions of the experiences and may lead to a more in-depth examination.

The study is anchored in Existentialism Paradigm. At first look, existentialism and phenomenology appear to be the rare branches of contemporary Western philosophy that constructively interact with feminism. They create a tradition that rejects impersonal, rationalist ideas and is dedicated to explaining concrete, "lived experience," such as feelings of emotion and subjectivity (Kruks, 2017).

Additionally, this study of jailed women is based on the Feminist theoretical perspective. Feminist theory in the modern world is a wide, productive, and diverse intellectual and political ensemble. Through innovative transdisciplinary work and active critical politics, it evolves. Feminist philosophy approaches the world via critical intersectional ideas even though it is about women (Ferguson, 2017).

Research shows that aging PDLs face more severe challenges from incarceration compared to younger inmates (Annaheim et al., 2018; Avieli, 2022). With this, women PDLs tend to be increasingly concerned about their well-being, family, and health, all of which are often jeopardized by imprisonment. Moreover, many feel depressed about their past lives and the future they will face during their confinement.

By addressing aspects of justice and institutional effectiveness, this thesis highlights the challenges faced by aging female PDLs and emphasizes the need for equitable treatment and access to justice. This aligns with SDG 16, which focuses on promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions by reducing violence and ensuring fair legal processes. Additionally, this research can shed light on how well correctional institutions

manage and support aging inmates, reflecting on the effectiveness and inclusiveness of these institutions. By exploring the experiences and needs of aging prisoners, this thesis contributes to the broader goal of strengthening institutions and promoting justice for all, particularly for vulnerable groups within the prison system.

With this, rising aging women in prison represent a highly vulnerable and marginalized group. They face compounded issues due to age, gender, and incarceration status. This study highlights the complexities of aging female deprived of liberty experiences and challenges they faced inside the prison facility and their coping strategies as they faced this challenging moment.

Understanding their stories helps reveal the unique struggles they face, like limited access to communication, lack of livelihood programs, and the psychological impact of prolonged confinement. The experience of incarceration profoundly impacts a person's self-image and sense of identity. By documenting the lived experiences of aging incarcerated women, this thesis provides valuable insights that can inform prison policy and reform.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Participants

The study participants consisted of 17 aging female Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) from the Correctional Institution for Women in Sto. Tomas, Davao Del Norte. They were selected using purposive sampling, with 10 participants for in-depth interviews (IDIs) and 7 participants for focus group discussions (FGDs). Purposive sampling was employed to carefully select participants whose experiences were deeply relevant to the study's goals, ensuring the inclusion of individuals who could offer valuable and insightful perspectives.

Participants in the study were selected based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria required that participants be female Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who had been sentenced to at least ten years of imprisonment and had been found guilty by a court of law. They needed to be currently incarcerated at the Correctional Institution for Women in Sto. Tomas, Davao Del Norte, and be physically and mentally capable of participating in interviews or focus group discussions. Additionally, participants needed to voluntarily agree to participate provide informed

consent and be proficient in the language used during data collection. Exclusion criteria included individuals with severe physical or mental health conditions that could hinder participation, those still awaiting a court decision, those who had already been released from the facility, and those who were unavailable or unwilling to participate during the data collection period.

B. Material and Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was an interview guide designed for in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). The guide was developed based on the research objectives, ensuring they addressed the emotional, social, and psychological challenges faced by aging female Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). Semi-structured questions were used by the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection. It includes open-ended questions to allow participants to share their experiences. According to Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021), Semi-structured interviews stand out because they balance the structure of guided questions with the freedom for participants to express their views in depth.

C. Design and Procedure

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of aging female Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to capture the participants' personal narratives and emotional journeys. As Williams (2021) highlights, phenomenology is used in qualitative research to understand and interpret lived experiences, focusing on the essence of phenomena from the perspective of those who experience them. Alhazmi and Kaufmann (2022) further support this method, demonstrating how it can uncover detailed perceptions and meanings, particularly in cross-cultural contexts, revealing the depth of individuals' experiences.

The researcher played a key role in the data collection and analysis process. The role involved serving as the interviewer, transcriber, and translator throughout the study. As the interviewer, the researcher facilitated in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), guiding participants through open-ended questions while allowing them to share their experiences freely. Elhami and Khoshnevisan (2022), highlighted that the interviewer played a crucial role in qualitative research. They emphasized that the interviewer must make participants feel at ease, ask clear and open-ended

questions, listen attentively, and adapt as necessary to elicit detailed and meaningful responses.

The researcher went over the transcripts of interviews and carefully examines them. Then, utilized Thematic Analysis and coding techniques to summarize the data. By carefully reviewing the transcripts, key themes were identified and categorized, allowing for a structured understanding of the participants' responses. Thematic analysis is a flexible way to find and describe patterns or themes in qualitative data. They emphasize its versatility in handling complex data sets and its usefulness in various research paradigms (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

To ensure adherence to ethical considerations, the researcher ensured that informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to conducting the interviews. This process involved clearly explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and participants' rights, including their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Additionally, the researcher maintained confidentiality by anonymizing data and securing it against unauthorized access, and created a respectful, non-coercive environment during data collection to protect the participants' well-being and privacy.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the data gathered and analyzed are presented in this section based on the study objectives.

Experiences of Female Person deprived of Liberty inside the Correctional facility

This section presents the themes and the significant quotes referring to the participants' responses during the In-depth interview and the Focus Group Discussion. The emotional sharing of their experiences, feelings heartaches, and challenges they faced during their incarceration leads to the following themes: Experiencing difficulty in adjusting and accepting the situation; Feeling sad and empty for not being able to communicate constantly; Feeling hurt of failing to fulfill motherhood; and Trying to be strong, faithful, and positive amidst being deprived of liberty.

Experiencing difficulty in adjusting and accepting the situation.

For the first theme, the participants in the In-depth interview were mostly emotional when they shared how they felt from the start of being convicted up to the moment they received their final sentence. All of them shared the hardship and the difficulty they felt from the beginning as some of them were still in shock and could

not even believe that they were already inside the prison cell. They shared that it is tough to be deprived of liberty for they could no longer be with their families. They emphasized:

"Para sa akin mahirap bilang isang kasi napalayo ka sa pamilya mo lalo na

higit sa lahat sa mga anak na imbis na maalagan mo sila wala ka kasi andito ka sa piitan yun lang" (RQ1 ID11)

For me, it's difficult as a person because you're away from your family, especially to your children, you can't take care of them, you're not there because you're here in the prison, that's all.

"ahh.. lisod gyud kaayu mahimong pdl.. labi na dri sa Davao. Kasagaran man gud diri layo kaayu sa lugar na among gigikanan mao nang dili pa gyud nimo ma handle kung unsa gyud ang kinatibuk.an sa imong kinabuhi dri. Makaingon gyud ko nga lisod gyud kaayu." (RQ1 IDI 9)

ahh... it's really hard to be a PDL.. especially here in Davao. Most of us here are very far from the place where we came from, so you can't really handle the whole of your life here. I can say that it is really difficult.

Being incarcerated has an instant impact on an individual's life. The first part of incarceration is characterized by an abrupt loss of control, unpredictable behavior, and disarray, all of which can add up to a very stressful situation. Women who are incarcerated frequently struggle to adjust to the prison atmosphere, which results in a deep sense of loss and stress (Bove and Tryon, 2018). PDLs' adjustment from freedom to control and restriction is what makes incarceration difficult (Flores-Barolo & Vicente, 2019). Almost often, adjusting to incarceration is challenging and can occasionally result in unhealthy thought and behavior patterns (Sinha, 2010).

Feeling sad and empty for not being able to communicate constantly

For the second theme, the participants show a realization that being incarcerated affiliates less communication with their loved ones outside the facility. Inside the prison, individuals often face restricted opportunities for

social interaction. Some of the participants expressed what they felt when they were brought inside the facility:

“ay... sukad nga na convicto ko nadala ko dri, daghan na gyud kaayung mga babag. Unang una, wala nami contact sa amoang mga anak, talagsa lang gyud mi magkaroon ug call center, 5 mins. Lang, usahay ma luag man ang pamalakaran nila diri. Mag lain-lain man gud ang administration, usahay maka straight mi ug tawag sa isa ka bulan kaduha, pero mostly sa tulo ka bulan ka isa lang, 5 minutes lang gyud na. kana lang gyud ang amoang babag, kay dili naman gyud mi makagawas nasayod naman gyud mi nga diri lang gyud mi taman sa four square magtuyok2.” (PQ3 IDI9)

Oh... ever since I was convicted and brought here, there have been a lot of challenges. First and foremost, we hardly have any contact with our children. We rarely get a chance to use the call center, and it's only for 5 minutes. Sometimes it's tough for them to cope here. The different administrations have different policies. Sometimes we can make a call twice a month, but most of the time, it's only once every three months, and it's just 5 minutes. That's our biggest hurdle, as we can't really go out, and we know we're confined to this small square, just doing our time.

“guol kaayu uy kay akong ano, akong anak gagmay pa.. hadlok kaayu, pero naliwanagan pod ko pag abot nako dri kay kuan na lang na sya later na lang na kay maka laya ug makalaya lang diay mi gihapon dri. Pero magpa abot lang gihapon mi kay proseso paman mi kay apilado man mi. naa pay chance na makalaya ..chance na makauban ang among mga pamilya. di lang mawad.an ug pag asa.” (PQ2 IDI4)

Very sad because, my children are still small... very scared, but I was enlightened when I got here because it will be, free and we are still going to be free from here. But we are still going to wait because we are in the process. After all, we're also appealed. There is still a chance to be free...a chance to be with our families. Just don't lose hope.

Being separated from loved ones can be emotionally challenging for the PDL and their family. As the

participants stated, they feel emotional because of the limited time to have a conversation with their loved ones. The implementation of relationship maintenance activities is frequently hampered by familial separation brought on by imprisonment (Nickels, 2020). This theme shows that communication is very important. Lack of communication can lead to social isolation, increasing the risk of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety.

Feeling hurt of failing to fulfill motherhood

Incarcerated mothers experienced intense feelings of regret for the choices or actions that led to their separation from their children. The participants stated how hurtful it is to be apart from them. And they quoted:

“para sa akoo mam, ako kay single mother ko tapos ako poy nag kuan sa akong mama, sa akong pamilya. Sakit jud kaayu nga malayo sa ilaha. Pero kay nakalapas man ko sa batas, sa kuan .. gidawat na na nako, pero dili lalim nga naa ko diri kay tungod layo nako nila niya dili na nako sila maatiman ana. Sakit sa kuan pero gidawat nako, nagkuha ko ug strength sa kahitas.an. kana lang”. RQ1 (FGD5)

For me mam, I'm a single mother and then I'm also the one who looks after my mom, and my family. It hurts so much to be away from them. But because I broke the law, in the... I have already accepted it, but it is not easy to be here because I am far away from them and I can no longer take care of them. It hurt... but I accepted it, I got strength from the above.

“masakit po mam kasi iniisip ko rin po ang mga anak ko po. Na Matagal kaming di magkakasama, matagal kaming di magkikita”. (PQ2 IDI 6)

It hurts mam because I'm also thinking about my children. We won't be together for a long time, we won't see each other for a long time.

The most common type of imprisonment-associated pain experienced by the incarcerated women involved is the hardship of separation from their children. They feel hurt because of the moments they miss, such as birthdays, holidays, and milestones in their children's lives. Mother-child relationships are hard to cultivate in a prison setting, since most of them never get to see their kids (Kennedy et.al., 2020). The inability to physically comfort and nurture their children is truly heartbreaking.

For them, the inability to fulfill their maternal role leads to feelings of confusion and a loss of self-worth. According to research, children of incarcerated parents are more likely to be incarcerated themselves in the future (Ashdown, J., & James, M. 2010). Additionally, Young et. al., (2020) parental incarceration could affect children's developmental pathways, particularly regarding their mental health and behavior.

Coping mechanism of Female Persons Deprived of Liberty

This section provides an overview of the themes and significant quotes extracted from the responses of participants in both the In-depth Interviews and the Focus Group Discussions. Based on their responses, I have come up with these themes; Having strong faith and fervent prayer, Working hard by joining livelihood programs, Requesting families, friends, and jail officers for basic needs, Abiding with the rules, and following protocols that made them go over the challenges they encountered while inside the correction facility.

Having strong faith and fervent prayer

As the Bible attests, prayer during difficult times is a source of heavenly consolation and a light of hope that helps people persevere through hardships. The participant's answers emphasize the great value of prayer and strong faith as coping strategies in the face of hardship, especially in the setting of incarceration. They stated,

“Magpray unang una sa lahat kasi yun yung magiging guidance ko mam whole day po mam.” RQ2 IDI 3

First of all pray because that will be my guidance for the whole day, mam.

“unang una po yung nagiging malakas yung loob ko, dahil kilala ko yung Dios mam. Doon ko siya talaga ma ina ano talaga na hindi ko makakayanan na mamuhay dito kung hindi ko kilala yung Dios.” RQ2 IDI 5

First, my faith has become stronger because I know God. It's where I truly find strength and I wouldn't be able to endure living here without knowing God.

Having strong faith and fervent prayer are timeless practices that have been essential in helping people overcome hardships in life. As what is written in Psalm 46:1 KJV “ God is our refuge and strength, a very

present help in trouble”. Strong faith in God serves as the cornerstone of resilience, offering a sense of comfort and certainty throughout turbulent times. Eytan (2011) explored the relationship between spirituality, religion, and mental health within correctional facilities, showing that these efforts provide participants with the tools they need to cope with the difficult reality of imprisonment. For female persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), prayer is the most crucial tool for overcoming their challenges while incarcerated, as stated by Ramirez (2023).

Working hard by joining livelihood programs

Most of the incarcerated women tend to commit crimes because of poverty. They did it because they wanted to support their family even though it is prohibited by the law. Inside the prison facility, these women often face scarcity in meeting their basic needs, despite receiving support from the government, which may not fully address all their primary necessities. When they were asked about how they deal with this shortcoming, they responded,

“maningkamot ako mam, syempre dugay ka tuig wala ako dalaw mam, wala ako pampalit sa gamit ko. Maningkamot ko diri, kanang adunay tubig, ang isa ka baldi mag igib ko, tag singko, mao rato ang gikinabuhi, trabaho dri mam para maka kuan naka sa shampoo, sabon.” RQ2 PQ1 IDI10

I'm striving, ma'am. Of course, for many years, I haven't received any visits, and I don't have money to buy things. I'm striving here. When there's water, I use a bucket to collect it for five pesos. That's how I make a living, working here to afford shampoo and soap.

“Amo na lang ginapangitaan ug pamaagi paano kami makakuha ang among mga kailangan. Kung naay mga kanang mga livelihood diri, musulod mi para makuha namo ang among mga kinakailangan diri sa sulod. Kay syempre di ta kabalo unsa atong pamilya sa gawas dili ta nila mapadad.an kay dili ta kabalo unsa ila panginabuhi. Maningkamot mi diri nga ma kuan among mga panginahanglan.” RQ2 PQ1 FGD1

We're just looking for a way on how to get what we need. If there are those livelihoods here, we will engage in it, so that we can get our needs here. We don't know what our family is like outside they can't always send us money because we don't know their living. We are trying to meet our needs in our ways.

Livelihood programs provide inmates with the means to earn in order for them to obtain their necessities. It also gives the initiative to cultivate skills and prepare for their eventual reintegration into society. These initiatives aim to impart the knowledge necessary for leading a dignified life upon release. The objective of livelihood programs is to promote positive changes in individuals by fostering attitudes, knowledge, and skills via an educational and service-oriented approach. These programs can be implemented in jails and other institutions to provide inmates with support services, vocational skills, and an improvement in their moral and spiritual aspects of life (Bondad, 2020). This can be achieved through offering seminars and training sessions focused on livelihood skills.

Requesting families, friends, and jail officers for basic needs.

As mentioned in the previous theme, not all incarcerated women have the privilege to be part of the livelihood program. In many cases, incarcerated individuals must rely on external sources, including their families, friends, and even jail officers, to fulfill these needs. With a heavy heart, one participant recounted,

“sa una mam, naa mi biyaya diri mam kada bulan, sabon, toothpaste, kadugayan nawala naman. Dayon, kugihan man pod ko mam maningkamot man gyud kog taman, kuan... tapos sa una man gud mam, nindot ang mga pribiliheyo sa among COP diri, makadoul mi ug mga maam, mag alaga mi ug mga maam, mag kanang sulugoon kanang “orderly” para lang, syempre in return naa silay mahatag sa amoa sa among pag serbisyo sa ilaha.” RQ2 PQ2 IDI9

Before, ma'am, we used to have benefits here every month, such as soap, toothpaste, and additional items. But later, those benefits disappeared. Then, I also worked diligently, ma'am, I really tried my best, you know... Then before, ma'am, the privileges of our COP here were good, we could ask for favors from our superiors, take care of them, and serve as an 'orderly,' just for the record. Of course, in return, they would provide something to us for our service to them.

As women age, they may develop specific chronic health issues that require prompt attention. I ask the participants if they have certain health conditions and what are their ways to address them. They responded;

“naga doul mi sa mga personnel kung naa mi pangangailangan, labi na sa health kay naa man pod silay mga regular check up dri.” RQ2 PQ2 IDI 4

We go to the personnel when we have needs, especially when it comes to health, as they also provide regular check-ups here.

“Akua pod mam, like sa akua mam, naa jud ko mayuma is need jud kaayu nako ang napkin.ana... so gi... amo gyud nang gi sulat sa kuan mam suggestion box nga matagaan mi... ma provide sa amoa ng napkin, sabon. Mao gyud na among gipangayu dri sa bureau mam nga makahatag sa amoa ana”. RQ2 PQ2 FGD5

For me maam, like me mam, I have a myoma and I really need napkins. That's why... that's what I wrote in the mam's suggestion box to help us... they will provide us with napkins, and soap. That's exactly what we request the bureau can give us.

The responses of the participants show their means to attain their personal needs. They have experienced being given “biyaya” by the government but suddenly now, they no longer receive any. This discontinuation of benefits such as soap, cloths, and toothpaste can have significant implications for the well-being and hygiene of the individuals in the facility.

As stated in the study by Luther et al. (2011), families are the primary source of support for many individuals facing incarceration. Incarceration often creates significant challenges for individuals, particularly in meeting basic needs such as food, hygiene products, and other essentials. According to Benisty et.al., (2020), incarceration is a difficult circumstance that may be perceived as a crisis, requiring a variety of resources. In such cases, incarcerated individuals must rely on external sources, including their families, friends, and even jail officers, to fulfill these needs.

Abiding with the rules and follow protocols.

This theme shows the fundamental aspect of social behavior and organizational culture that a PDL must observe. It encompasses concepts such as cooperation, obedience, and adherence to established guidelines. Here are some responses from various participants:

“ako mam nakig cooperation lang gyud ko dri, pag disiplin sa imong kaugalingon. Tapos

kung unsay bawal sundon gyud , musunod sa rules.” RQ2 PQ1 FGD 3

I'm just cooperating here if you discipline yourself. Then what is forbidden, just follow, follow the rules.

“Cooperation, obedience ug iwas sa gulo”.
RQ2 PQ1 FGD3

Cooperation, obedience, and avoiding trouble.

“ang diri lang gyud kay pakisama lang gyud ka sa imong kapwa pdl. Pakisama ug magbuhat lang gyud ang best way, magbuhat lang gyud ka ug maayu kay wala may mabuhat dri sa imo na dautan kung dili pod nimo ginabuhat”. RQ2 PQ3 IDI4

The key here is to be kind to your fellow pdl. Get along and do the best way, just do good because no one can harm you if you do not do it.

Abiding by rules and following protocols is essential for creating a harmonious, safe, and productive environment where individuals can work together effectively towards common goals especially when it comes to incarceration. Enforcing order in prisons requires the presence of prison officers. But in addition to what jail officers do, maintaining order also depends on inmates voluntarily adhering to rules and regulations and obeying their instructions (Barkworth & Murphy, 2021). A person who is deprived of liberty has to be conscious of his surroundings and dedicated to making the most of his unfortunate circumstances. Therefore, avoiding trouble is a social issue that needs to be addressed within the institution (Flores-Barolo & Vicente, 2019).

In addition, cooperation is important. Getting along means respecting the rules. Cooperation means working together, while obedience is about following rules from leaders. Cooperation and obedience in correctional facilities are crucial for maintaining order and supporting rehabilitation, as inmates who perceive fair treatment are more likely to follow rules and cooperate with authorities (Maguire et.al. 2021). Rules bring order, but being nice to others makes following them easier and more meaningful.

Themes on the conclusions drawn from prison experiences

This section presents the realizations and conclusions of the participants during their incarceration. These three

themes have drawn from their responses; Acceptance of fate and wrong doings, Being in prison, being far from the family is not easy and Family is the biggest support system.

Acceptance of fate and wrong doings

This theme shows that the female person deprived of liberty accepts the result of their wrongdoings. Several women responded when they were asked about their realization of their incarceration. And they quoted:

“Mali, Kay kabalo ko nga bawal jud akong jung gibuhat”. RQ3 IDI4

I know that what I did was absolutely wrong.

“naamguhan gyud na mali gyud kaayu akong gibuhat.. mali kaayu”. RQ3 IDI 4

I realized that I had done something wrong. It was wrong.

Acknowledgment reflects a crucial first step toward acceptance and accountability. By recognizing the wrongdoing, individuals confront the reality of their actions, laying the foundation for self-reflection and eventual reconciliation. The participants expressed,

“Ah.. lisod gyud pero wala may lisod mam kung imo lang gyung dawaton ang reality.”
RQ3 IDI2

Ah... it's really difficult but nothing is difficult mam if you just accept the reality.

“Dili naman nimo ma, dili najud nimo ma, kong masayup naka dili na jud nimo, ma correct man nimo pero nahitabo na, mao na gyud to”. PQ1 IDI2

You cannot, you just cannot, if you already made a mistake you cannot correct it because it already happened, that's what it is.

“Kung naa ko'y ginagawa sa labas nga kamailan nakapagbabago ako dri sa bilanguan”. RQ3 FGD1

If I have wrongdoings outside, I'm changing here in the prison.

As to the participants, acceptance, and acknowledgment are important in a deep path of reflection, responsibility, and change captured by accepting one's fate and transgression in the setting of jail experiences. The

statements of the participants show a reflection on themselves as a means of coping with their situation. According to Flores-Barolo, M. G., & Vicente, J. B. (2019), Self-reflection is the ability to evaluate oneself and the desire to understand the essence and purpose.

In conclusion, the concept of accepting one's fate and misbehavior during incarceration involves a subtle interaction between self-reflection, taking responsibility, and reform. In the study of Guitering et.al. (2018), it suggests that they merely yielded to their situation, or internally acknowledged it because it is the outcome of their actions. So, within the walls of a prison, these women learn to accept themselves by owning up to previous transgressions, facing the truth of their situation, and seizing chances for development and reparation.

Being in prison, being far from the family is not easy

These theme shows the responses of the participants when they are separated from their families. Incarceration affected them physically and emotionally. As they stated;

unang una no dili gyud lalim no nga malayo sa pamilya ug lisod nga naa dri sa sulod kay limitado gyud ang among kuan... RQ3 FGD2

First of all, it's not easy to be far from the family and it's hard to be here because our movement is really limited..

"mam... narealized nako nga ah... dili lalim na malayo sa pamilya." RQ3 FGD 4

mam... I realized that ah... it's not easy to be far away from the family

"kanang naa ko diri mam no dili gyud lalim nga malayo sa pamilya." RQ3 FGD5

being here, mam, is not really easy to be far away from the family.

Some of them thought it was time to end their life because of the difficulties they had interacting with other incarcerated individuals. One of them stated that;

"Makahunahuna kag pakamatay dri mam kay ma boryong ka, lisod e adjust sa mga kauban kay syempre lahi lahi man gyud mi ug gidak.an". RQ3 IDI9

You might even think of ending your life because it's hard to adapt to the companionship since, of course, we all come from different backgrounds and have different stories.

The statement shared by the participants shows the significant difficulties and effects associated with being separated from family members due to their incarceration. According to the study by Lee and Wildeman (2021), incarceration has serious negative effects on families. It can cause emotional stress, financial problems, and social challenges. Families lose financial support, face stigma, and deal with increased anxiety. Children may suffer from emotional distress, behavior issues, and school difficulties. Incarceration impacts not just the person in prison, but their entire family. With this, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of prison life and the importance of prioritizing family connections in promoting the well-being and rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals.

The separation from family due to imprisonment represents a profound loss, characterized by the absence of the foundational bonds that provide love and support. It may also develop depression because it was frequently believed that the loss of a family was the main sadness. According to Ramirez (2023), depression struck the female PDLs because of overanalyzing things and their longing to their families outside.

Family is the biggest support system

This theme shows the importance of family support during incarceration based on the responses of the participants from In-depth interviews and focused group discussions. They have shared their realization on doing things that led to outcomes they later regretted. According to them;

"naamguhan gyud na mali gyud kaayu akong gibuhat.. mali kaayu.. kay nganu layu na gyud kaayu ko sa akong pamilya". PQ1 IDI4

I realized that I did something wrong.. it was wrong.. that's why I'm so far away from my family.

"na realized ko na kailangan talaga na sumunod tayo sa mga magulang natin para di tayo mapahamak. then dapat iniisip din natin kung ano yung tama. Mag desisyon tayo hindi lang isang beses, dalawang beses kundi paulit ulit na tama yung magiging desisyon natin

para hindi na natin to pagsisisihan”.. PQ1 IDI5

I realized that we really need to obey our parents to avoid getting into trouble. We should also consider what is right. We should make decisions not just once or twice, but repeatedly make the right decisions so that we won't have any regrets.)

“I’ve realized that some decisions need thinking, don’t just make a quick decision. Think muna because if you are haste in decision making, you can make 5 mins. Of kasayahan for a lifetime of regrets”. PQ1 FGD7

I’ve realized that some decisions need thinking, don’t just make a quick decision. Think first, because if you are hasty in decision making, you can make 5 mins. Of happiness for a lifetime of regrets.

The participants also stated that we should value family for they are the ones who could help in difficult times. The one who wouldn’t turn their backs when needed is your family. They stated;

“Isa gyud sa akong na realize na dili gyud permente okay ang barkada. Kay parehas na naa dri, dili gyud mag last long ang barkada maayu ra gyud na sila sa kalipay, ang muonong gyud sa imuha imong pamilya”. PQ1 IDI7

One thing I've come to realize is that friendships are not always permanent. It's just like here; friendships don't last long. It's better to focus on the happiness and the well-being of your family, ma'am.

“Yung mga barkada mo is andoon lang sila pag meron ka, sa hirap wala po sila, yung magulang mo andun pa rin, yung pamilya mo ba, hindi ka talaga nila iiwan”. PQ2 IDI8

Your friends are there only when you have something, but they're not there during difficult times. Your parents and your family, on the other hand, will never leave you.

The theme that "Family is the biggest support system" emerges as a reminder of the profound significance of family relationships in shaping individual identity, values, and well-being. The involvement of family in a prisoner's life enhances their well-being, which in turn decreases the likelihood of self-harm (Benisty et al. 2020; Duthé et al., 2014).

Family support plays an important role such as reducing recidivism and promoting rehabilitation. The study by Naser and La Vigne, (2006) sheds light on the transforming effect of familial bonds on people's experiences after incarceration and emphasizes the critical role that families play in offering emotional, practical, and social assistance throughout the reentry process. Supported by the study of Pettus-Davis (2021), positive family support during this time is proven to help an individual succeed, offering that support can cause significant emotional, social, and financial strain on families. Through the lens of the provided statements, we gain insight into the enduring power of familial bonds to provide love, guidance, and support, serving as the bedrock of resilience.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Conducting a study inside a correctional facility has been quite challenging for me. Listening to their stories made me empathize with them as I came to understand the reasons behind their incarceration. I deeply admire their resilience, especially in coping with the hardships of imprisonment. They have shown acceptance of the consequences of their actions as they were making efforts to transform into better versions of themselves within the facility.

The experiences of the Aging Female PDL's revealed a disconnect between the actual care they receive and the intended goals of current policies. As a criminologist, I can advocate for raising awareness through research so that policy-makers can push for policy reforms that could improve their living conditions while incarcerated.

Recommendation

As a criminologist and researcher, I would want to provide a few small recommendations to assist in addressing the difficulties that our Aging Female PDLs encounter while serving their sentences. I recommend improving healthcare services in correctional facilities by ensuring regular medical checkups and access to medications for aging female PDLs. Mental health support programs should also be introduced to help them cope with stress and isolation.

Although the Bureau has created programs to address issues these are not always implemented consistently. Correctional facilities might have to make sure that their policies strike a balance between severe regulations and sympathetic treatment, particularly when it comes to the

distinct physical and mental health needs of aging Female PDLs.

As to researchers, it is important to explore the psychological and emotional impacts of incarceration on aging women, particularly focusing on how they adjust to and accept their circumstances and healthcare. By addressing these areas, I encourage future researchers to explore the impact of incarceration on the health of older individuals, as more research is needed to fully understand this issue. I hope future research will contribute to the development of more comprehensive and effective policies and programs that enhance the well-being and rehabilitation of aging women in correctional institutions.

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