Community extension program to the persons deprived of liberty in the Philippines

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Abstract: Philippine higher education institutions have a social responsibility to implement integrated community extension programs that address issues faced by marginalized groups. These initiatives empower communities through knowledge and technology transfer, workshops, and seminars. One extension program of Cebu Technological University Danao Campus focuses on Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), helping them acquire meaningful skills. This study explores the experiences of PDLs who participated in Cebu Technological University Danao Campus's extension initiatives, including health services, skills enhancement, livelihood programs, and jail visitation. Using a qualitative approach, the study engaged five purposively selected PDLs through active interviews and relational content analysis to examine their experiences and suggestions. Findings highlight the positive impact of these programs on the PDLs' mental health, personal development, and sense of purpose. Participants also suggested additional training to further enhance the program's relevance and sustainability. Based on the PDLs' experiences, a community extension model was created to meet their specific needs. It includes livelihood and mental health programs to support rehabilitation and prepare them for life after release. This model can be used by other institutions to offer similar programs, demonstrating that education-based initiatives can build hope, teach valuable skills, and support positive change.

Keywords: Community extension, Local higher education institution, Narratives, Persons deprived of liberty, Relational content analysis.

1. Introduction

In the Philippines, higher education institutions, as pillars of social development, have the social responsibility to conduct extension programs for marginalized groups as part of their core functions; this approach can empower communities and transform lives through knowledge and technology transfer via technical training and advisories [1] and workshops and seminars [2]. According to Gonzales (cited in Dilao [3]), an integrated community extension approach must address multifaceted community issues effectively. Dilao [3] further, the local government officials or the residents will not solely address those issues in the community. However, these require a knowledge-based sector and the academe to come up with a scientific diagnosis concerning problems in the community.

According to Republic Act 7722, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) of the country requires state universities and colleges (SUCs) and other higher education institutions to actively contribute to societal transformation. These educational institutions play a crucial role in enhancing the well-being of local communities by sharing their knowledge, skills, best practices, and resources.

Consequently, proactive learning institutions are encouraged to enhance the capabilities of their faculty members and extend their expertise to benefit the communities they serve.

In this study, the community extension program of Cebu Technological University at Danao (*CTU Danao*) is the sole project that is given emphasis. The data and participants of the study are taken from the beneficiaries of the current community extension program. The extension program "Skills, Attitudes for Productive Inmates of Bureau of Jail Management and Penology" or *SAKPI sa BJMP* is initiated with the purpose of helping the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) in a BJMP facility in the central Philippine province of Cebu to acquire skills that might be useful to them once they are reintegrated into society. This project also aims to provide a source of income for the PDL while still inside the jail, so they can help their families even though they are not with them. The response of the PDL and BJMP management was accommodating to the extension team. They were willing to organize themselves into an association. Several PDLs have already earned through their skills acquired, both for those who are already free and not.

2. Theoretical Basis

The Department of Justice and the Bureau of Corrections in the Philippines supervise correctional institutions. Nevertheless, the responsibility for district, city, and municipal jails falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior and Local Government, specifically the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology. This agency views prisons as facilities aimed at fostering reformation and rehabilitation. These institutions provide not only a place of confinement but also a conducive environment for education, social interaction, moral development, and personal growth.

Serving in these jails are persons deprived of liberty or PDLs who have limited opportunities to earn for themselves. Even when released, they still find it difficult to seek employment. There are various reasons for their predicament, including their lack of education and skills [4], violence and sociological problems [5-8] and stigma [9-13].

According to Western [5], a notable issue in the Philippines is that individuals deprived of liberty (PDLs) often face a lifetime of violence, both during their incarceration and after their release. They also encounter various challenges such as inequality, unemployment, difficulties reintegrating into society, mental illness, and ongoing suffering. Instead of offering a genuine opportunity for rehabilitation and transformation, imprisonment has unfortunately become a breeding ground for abuse, severe violations, power dynamics, and feelings of superiority or inferiority [6, 7]. As a result, the process of social reintegration becomes arduous since these individuals are often perceived as traumatized and prone to resorting to violence at any moment. Their reintegration into a fractured family and community, as well as the obstacles of unemployment and access to after-care services, further complicate their journey. Consequently, a crime-fighting strategy is crucial for offenders seeking successful reintegration. Human interaction plays a significant role in ethical decision-making, and when social isolation occurs, ethical decision-making is compromised [8].

Moreover, as stated by Tan et al. [9], individuals who have offended often express concerns about the stigma associated with their past actions, which proves to be a significant obstacle to their reintegration. Additionally, respondents who viewed offenders as unwilling to reform and harbored stronger moral outrage towards their crimes exhibited a greater preference for social distance. Offenders are often labeled as lifelong criminals, as this stigma becomes an expected aspect of their identity [10]. The internalization of such stigmas has been shown to pose risks to mental health, promote the development of antisocial behavior, and lead to avoidance of social environments Moore and Tangney [11], Moore et al. [12] and Phillips [13]. Pansag et al. [14] proposed that adopting a coping mechanism as an observer of ex-convicts enables individuals to lead longer lives. Furthermore, research conducted by De Guzman et al. [15] revealed that the unfavorable atmosphere within prisons has a positive impact on elderly Filipino inmates. Additionally, jail experiences can either be beneficial or detrimental, with participants choosing to adopt a subjective perspective, accept the consequences of

their actions, stay occupied, and engage in religious activities as coping mechanisms within the prison environment [4].

In connection with this, a few volunteers for developing the PDLs had been concerned about how they seemed to lack a skill, as seen in pursuing such an outreach program. One cause is that they have a high level of stress among their mental health issues and intense feelings of helplessness that lead them to mediocrity in pursuing a specific task [4]. Concerning the lack of skills that PDLs have experienced who were granted access to the outreach program, Flores-Barolo and Vicente [4] said studies and research demonstrate that promoting a prisoner's education yields superior outcomes; many ex-offenders have resumed normal lives after receiving training and literacy classes. However, the skill needs are usually influenced by the inmate's adjustment, which is affected by both their pre-prison qualities and the jail environment [4].

Above all, the idea of having an absence of skill does not necessarily define every PDL's life aspect, but rather how things have affected them when they were put into jail. To address this, BJMP has a set of fundamental programs within its jurisdiction. These programs include: (a) provisions of basic needs, (b) health services, (c) educational programs, (d) skills training/enhancement programs, (e) livelihood programs, (f) behavioral management/modification programs, (g) interfaith programs, (h) cultural and sports programs, (i) paralegal programs, and (j) *e-dalaw*. The community extension *SAKPI sa BJMP* creates a program that facilitates four core programs. The scope of the community service provided to the PDL by the university aligns with its mission to share knowledge and transfer technology. These are the (1) health services, (2) skills training/enhancement programs, (3) livelihood programs, and (4) *e-dalaw*, or the term used to describe a remote and electronic form of jail visitation. The idea is that imprisonment should serve as a simple, gentle punishment and rehabilitate the offender with the assistance of other agencies like the academe. Thus, the researchers are interested in studying the university's services' impact on the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology. Hereafter, services delivered should be assessed to ensure their relevance to the PDL in rehabilitation and reintegration.

This paper focuses on examining the present condition and circumstances surrounding the implementation of community extension programs for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) and proposes a model for enhancing the effectiveness of these programs. With this objective in mind, the following questions will be addressed in this study:

1. What are the experiences of the persons deprived of liberty in conducting the extension program on health services, skills training and enhancement program, livelihood program, and electronic jail visitation?
2. What are the Persons Deprived of Liberty's suggested training and activities to improve the community extension program?
3. What model for conducting a community extension program for Persons Deprived of Liberty can be developed from these experiences?

Empowering Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) with training to enhance their skills and productivity during their incarceration is a crucial step in boosting their self-confidence and challenging society's perception of ex-offenders. PDLs are often marginalized as beneficiaries of community extension programs. Due to the rigorous monitoring conducted by the state correctional departments, changes in behavior among inmate populations can be more easily observed and quantified.

An illustrative example of successful programs implemented in correctional facilities is found in Florida, where vocational training has contributed to a 14.6% decrease in recidivism rates. Approximately 1,600 inmates receive vocational training annually, resulting in cost savings of $3.2 million for the state, which equates to approximately $2,000 per trained inmate. The University of Florida's IFAS Extension is currently developing a training program that will lead to the certification of state inmates as Florida Certified Landscape Technicians. This certification is among the five certifications offered by the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association. The training covers various topics, including Plant Identification, Plan Layout, Tree Planting, Tree Staking & Guying, Palm Banding & Propping, Grading & Drainage, Instrument Use, Irrigation Operation & Repair,

Pruning, Job Evaluation, Equipment Operation, and Retaining Wall Construction. Training modules and curricula are being developed based on feedback from the initial training class, which consists of female inmates.

In 2000, the Center for Urban Studies at Wayne State University received funding to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of a prisoner education program in a Midwestern state, with a focus on reducing recidivism rates. As part of this evaluation, researchers conducted several focus groups with former inmates to determine the value of their education in prison in securing and maintaining employment after release. The ex-inmates were also asked about the extent to which their education helped them avoid reincarceration and successfully reintegrate into society.

Focusing on the key programs emphasized by Sakpi sa BJMP, CTU has made efforts to enhance the capacity of BJMP by providing services. One area of focus is the provision of health services for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), which includes interventions for illness prevention, promotion, treatment, and rehabilitation. Upon admission, all PDLs undergo medical assessments, and during their confinement, they receive health and wellness education, including spa treatments, salon services, and massages. These activities not only teach valuable skills to the PDLs but also allow them to generate income while interacting with fellow PDLs. Moreover, this program can serve as a means for reintegrating PDLs back into society.

The skills training program aims to equip PDLs with technical and vocational skills that can enhance their employability or support them in starting their own businesses upon release. To ensure competitiveness in the job market, the preferred skills training programs are accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), enabling PDLs to obtain National Certifications. Participation in these specific skills training programs is limited to PDLs who meet the eligibility requirements.

The livelihood program offers income-generating activities for PDLs during their confinement, enabling them to support themselves financially and contribute to their families' well-being. The capital for these livelihood projects can come from BJMP for BJMP-funded initiatives or from a collective fund created by a group of PDLs for non-BJMP-funded projects. Some examples of ongoing and popular livelihood projects among PDLs include the creation of bags, purses, bonsai made of beads, pastries, rugs, paper crafts, and wood crafts. The Jail Unit Welfare and Development Officer (UWDO) facilitates the sale of these products through display centers, livelihood caravans organized by local government units and other service providers, as well as online or e-marketing initiatives.

The E-DALAW service provides an alternative to traditional face-to-face visitations between PDLs and their families. This service enables PDLs to connect with their families through supervised video calls and chats. The program specifically caters to PDLs whose family members are unable to visit the jail due to long distances from their residence or workplace. In cases where visitation is suspended due to a public health emergency and jail lockdown, all PDLs are given the opportunity to use E-DALAW to communicate with their families on a fair rotation basis.

3. Research Method

The study aimed to gather and document the genuine experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who have benefited from SAKPI sa BJMP, a community extension program. The research methodology employed a qualitative study approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the PDLs' experiences and perspectives. This approach involved active interviewing and followed a relational content analysis method to explore the PDLs' experiences and perspectives on the trainings and services they received from five phases of SAKPI sa BJMP, a community extension program of Cebu Technological University.

Research Environment. The study is conducted at one of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology facilities in Cebu Island, Philippines. There is only one foremost institution with which CTU Danao has collaborated for its community extension programs. Thus, making the PDLs the beneficiaries of the community extension program.

Research Participants. This study used purposive sampling and involved five PDLs who have undergone several training sessions conducted by the extension programs. All participants have participated in more than three phases of the extension program. Each stage accounts for one year. The participants are diverse in terms of gender, age, number of years in jail, and the number of trainings they have participated in.

Research Sampling. Five participants are interviewed, all of whom are PDLs of BJMP in Cebu Province, central Philippines. The five participants are interviewed repeatedly until data saturation is achieved.

Research Instrument. The study uses unstructured interview questions about the experiences of the five PDLs who are beneficiaries of Sakpi sa BJMP as supposedly appropriate. The interview is an effective procedure for obtaining information about the PDLs to gather facts and lived experiences from this group. The research expert assesses the content validity of the created interview questions. The applicability of the interview is tested.

Data Collection. This research paper conducts a structured interview with the five PDLs of BJMP in Cebu Province who are participants of Sakpi sa BJMP, a community extension project of CTU Danao. The participants are reached through face-to-face interviews. Initially, they are briefed about the study and its aims. Written informed consent is solicited for participation and audio recording to ensure accurate data retrieval. Based on their answers and feedback, the researcher revised and arranged the guide and follow-up questions, as well as the responses, to provide clarity necessary to differentiate between factual descriptions and inferences or the researcher's opinions. This process was undertaken to ensure the accuracy and objectivity of the information presented.

Coding and Categorizing Data. In this stage, the researcher repeatedly listens to all the transcribed interview data in the audio recording before the transcript is written to confirm the participants' exact ideas. Codes are constructed about notions connected to the significance of the training and experiences to their well-being inside prison security. Most perceptions are similar to each other. Themes are articulated through the development of translated coding, alteration, and scrutiny of ideas.

Relational Content Analysis. The methodology employed for data analysis is known as relational content analysis. This approach involves the researcher closely examining the recorded communication content to identify specific words, patterns, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences. Through this analysis, the researcher can draw realistic conclusions based on the identified elements within the data [16]. The interview is directed and is built on established perceptions and sub-perceptions from the discoveries of initial data gathered from the PDLs of BJMP, who are beneficiaries of Sakpi sa BJMP. Participant sampling is focused on emerging constructs derived from the participants' perceptions. Through the data gathering and analysis segments, emerging themes are constantly analyzed to look at the relationship of the relational concepts. In this study, the researcher used statements from respondents as the story narratives' relational contents from which the model is generated.

Narrative Writing. According to LaRosa et al. [17] the generation of new concepts relies on asking thought-provoking questions that encourage researchers to think abstractly and theoretically. This aspect is a significant characteristic of open coding. Similarly, Strauss [18] advocates for the disruption of the coding process to develop narrative stories that facilitate the researcher's transition into the theoretical realm and aid in the creation of models. Throughout this process, there is a continuous examination of the data to identify emerging themes, involving a thorough and persistent analysis of facts. This constant comparative analysis allows for the emergence of themes, which are then carefully coded and rigorously analyzed within the context of new categories. This iterative process is repeated multiple times to identify emerging themes and develop a model, following the narrative study approach proposed by Willis and Grainger [19].

Ethical Considerations. Prior to their participation, all individuals involved in the study were given a written informed consent form that had been notarized. The study underwent review by an ethical review board to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. The researchers provided detailed

explanations to the participants, emphasizing their freedom to withdraw from the study at any point if they chose to do so. Participants gave their consent to have their interviews recorded, which were subsequently transcribed and anonymized. To ensure data security and confidentiality, the interviews were stored on a password-protected and encrypted computer that contained all research data. To protect the privacy of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to them for the purpose of this study.

4. Results

The subsequent sections show five story summaries to provide insights into the PDLs' experiences in the community extension program. To reiterate, the names used for this study are pseudonyms to further protect the participants' identities and information.

4.1. Erma's Story

Erma is a female PDL who has been a trainee *of SAKPI sa BJMP* for three years as of writing. Currently, she holds certificates in garland making, paper bag making, table skirting, and table and dining etiquette. As one of the youngest PDLs in her early twenties, she has participated in this training to utilize her time while inside the correctional facility. Her experience in the penitentiary facility and attending training and extension programs has provided her with advantages and benefits in acquiring new skills. She looks forward to these programs because her mind can create a good diversion. She explained,

> My perceptions in life have granted me a change of attitude toward my future. Before, I thought I had lost my will to live a decent life. My skills have been enhanced through my participation in the training, given my age. If given another chance outside, my thoughts will be diverted from nothing to a meaningful direction. The wardens and the trainers are approachable and accommodating.

For Erma, the most meaningful experience and skill is table skirting. When asked why, she claimed that this skill was empowering and helped her unleash her creativity in skirting. She could make beautiful designs out of common patterns. She added that her learnings could give her opportunities outside and would make her reintegration a positive experience in the future. Simple events and occasions would be more accessible for her as she would make it herself and not look for other people. She also said that one of her planned applications in skirting is building a business on it, which signified a positive outlook. Erma concluded that her whole experience is beneficial for her.

Erma also agreed to continue these programs when the time comes that she has to return as a free woman. For her, other PDLs can change their lives as what happened to her. She said other PDLs could be encouraged to have a normal life back on track.

Other skills she needed to acquire as part of her holistic growth inside the facility revolved around photo editing and Photoshop. Erma expressed a desire to learn computer-generated artwork, stemming from her value for creativity. She also suggested that community extension programs like *SAKPI sa BJMP* must be continued, especially for the PDLs, as she sees it as a massive opportunity for herself and her future self outside.

4.2. Pia's Story

Pia, another female PDL and beneficiary of *SAKPI sa BJMP*, and in her late forties, is a participant of four years. Among all the PDLs, Pia is one of the first to have attended and participated in the early stages of the community extension program, *SAKPI sa BJMP*. Like Erma, Pia has been part of training in skirting, including table and dining etiquette and paper bag making. Since she is one of the oldest participants, she has additional advanced participation in skills training such as bread, pastry, and laundry soap making, all of which have certificates. One of the changes in her life, as she mentioned, was acquiring all the skills she had while in the penitentiary facility. She added that she could not think of herself as someone who could learn all these things. Upon her arrival in the facility, she never knew what to expect. Pia stated that,

> *I never thought that at this age, I would be a renewed person with a renewed mindset and these new skills I acquired. I grew up as someone who limited myself, believing I could only reach that far. This changed mindset helped me evolve into who I am today, giving me a new sense of purpose.*
>
> *I am looking forward to my life outside. I am thankful to CTU Danao and to programs such as SAKPI sa BJMP.*

Based on her answers, Pia showed eagerness to participate, as she stated that what she liked most about the sets of training offered by *SAKPI sa BJMP* was the bread and pastry. It was her most memorable experience. Pia mentioned her plan to venture into business using her certificates and skills in bread and pastry, as her house is accessible by passers-by and a feasible venue for a snack business. Previously, she was already an entrepreneurial woman, making the most of her time selling goods like fruits and vegetables. She now sees an opportunity to expand her entrepreneurship skills through bread and pastry by starting with more uncomplicated recipes.

As stated, her experience in *SAKPI sa BJMP* could be a good stepping stone to start anew. Other PDLs could follow her suit by focusing more on rewriting their life stories and avoiding mischief by concentrating on business and supporting their families. This way, she claimed that it is one of the ways to ease idleness and boredom that could lead to insanity.

Pia also challenged herself to learn more about new skills, such as metal welding, which is conventionally a man's job. Pia expressed that she could use this skill in doing her future store's metal works. Before, she could see her father doing such, and that fed her curiosity, but she did not have an opportunity to learn; now, she wants to acquire that skill, coupled with other related skills such as automotive, wiring, and repair. She said,

> *I can be a woman of many skills, doing a man's job, repairing bicycles and engines, fixing electrical wiring, and the like. A fundamental concept of these skills can make me a well-rounded woman outside.*

Pia valuably contested that what *SAKPI sa BJMP* achieved in the last four years of entrenching into their facility is not enough compared to the willingness of the PDLs to learn skill sets. Since *SAKPI sa BJMP* is appropriated and funded by the government, funds are limited and hard to dispense. Pia recommended that in one phase or year of the community extension program, they could learn more than one skill to better compete with the growing eagerness of the PDLs. She expressed that,

> *If there are more opportunities and training for us, it would be better if it could be done as early as now to sustain the demand from the PDLs. We can see that it is beneficial not only financially but also mentally. We should not focus on only one at a time since we are learning these skills at a faster pace.*

4.3. Tracy's Story

This female PDL in her early thirties has been a participant of *SAKPI sa BJMP* for 2 years. To name her, Tracy has only one certificate in basic computer skills. Tracy has witnessed her dark days upon entering the prison. She lost all her hopes and life's meaning. Not long after that, CTU Danao returned to BJMP to conduct another skills training, and she joined for the basic computer skills. She could not join the previous community extension program training because she was pregnant then and was advised to rest.

> *Through Sakpi sa BJMP training, we were allowed to learn new skills. That chance is significant for us, knowing that people outside still care for us. My breakthrough is that I am given hope to continue to have a new vision in life. I will use this hope to change my life.*

Tracy was a computer illiterate before entering the facility. She said that she had never touched a computer desktop. Tracy could not name a hardware piece. Apart from identifying the parts and operating the computer, Tracy learned how to fix them. But what she liked most was the skills in encoding and making slideshows. She felt happy and dignified when she was assigned to make a PowerPoint presentation in one of their group sessions. Tracy presented a story through a slideshow. In that activity, Tracy found a new tool of expression.

For Tracy, *Sakpi sa BJMP* is a big help, especially for those like her who do not have any experience in handling a computer. She believes that learning a particular tool in technology tool could make her a productive member of society.

For the following activities of the community extension program, Tracy wanted to explore learning wellness and spa. Since some other PDLs have already acquired some skills in this, she felt left behind. Tracy thought that healthcare and wellness, massage, waxing, and hair care skills could be helpful anywhere, as she plans to apply in a salon in the future. She also wants to do home services. For her, minimal capital is needed. Tracy expressed that, aside from the skills acquired, they need the tools to apply them.

4.4. Sam's Story

Sam, identified as queer, is a PDL in their mid-twenties who stays at the male dormitory. The pronouns identified are they/them. They have been trained in spa, wellness, and beauty care. Sam has been a participant and beneficiary of the community extension program for four years and has been very active. Sam specifically highlighted that their sanity is improved while being inside a maximum facility since they look forward to each week passing. Their experience assisted them with their mental health. For them, focusing on only one sector of skill gave them complete understanding and mastery. They could not be beneficial if forced with skills like welding and electronics. According to Sam,

> I have had good experiences during the training. The skills in beauty care, wellness, and spa, including massage, are relevant to me since these skills are appropriate to my preferences and liking. Through this skills training, I have gained new knowledge that could help me earn money. Without it, I could consider myself someone with no skills. I could have been swayed to destructive activities when I was still a free person with no skills.

However, during these positive experiences, Sam declared they feared losing their newly gained skills. According to them, because of the limited number of tools needed to perform their skills, they could not apply them and create a meaningful experience with them. Sam mentioned,

> I fear that Sakpi sa BJMP might lose interest in helping us and that our learned skills will be in vain. I hope the community extension program will continue and sustain throughout so that after acquiring practical skills, we could be provided with equipment and materials for massage, hair care, facial care, and spa treatments. With these, we could participate and enhance our new skills while practicing them.

Sam's overall suggestion could be explained by their fear of being taken advantage of, knowing that they understand how it worked both ways. The community extension program and all other programs must secure a sense of security to avoid the feeling of rejection from the PDLs.

4.5. Carlo's Story

Carlo has been a beneficiary and participant of *SAKPI sa BJMP* for four phases/years and has attended numerous beauty care and spa training, T-shirt printing, and silk screening. He is in his late twenties and was already a visual artist before, attesting that he had formal education in visual arts. Carlo attended the skills training offered to apply all his prior knowledge but was surprised by the diversity of offerings. With the skills training, he claimed that he enhanced his skills by using his old skills in conjunction with the new skills.

> I was already a painter before, working as a mural and graffiti artist and collaborating with local artists. These skills were learned through formal education and gave me a decent job as a human. However, I had been in a harmful company that led me here. But with the skills training of the SAKPI at BJMP, a new set of consciousness has emerged. By applying my old skills in the visual arts, I can design pastries, make T-shirts, and design shoes and bags. I am given this opportunity to enhance what I already know by integrating it into other objects beyond murals. It is like painting the walls of BJMP, but through arts and crafts.

According to Carlo, numerous jail wardens and CTU Danao personnel have taken an interest in his works. In fact, he has been accepting requests from their orders for canvas painting, charcoal portraits, and sculptures. His favorite experience in training was digital printing and silk screening since he enjoyed being creative and making things from nothing. He wants to pursue these skills outside of prison and not just limit them to walls and murals, but primarily to designing crafts like shirts, baskets, tote bags, pouches, shoes, and sandals, among others. Carlo expressed an idea of a business model where he could refurbish blank objects and sell them online with his designs. Carlo is seen as vigorous with this thought.

He wished that *SAKPI sa BJMP* be continued in case he could go out and continue living as a free man. He wants others to experience a positive change in their lives, just like what he went through. Through hard work, they can gain a whole new experience through *SAKPI sa BJMP*. When asked what could have been done better, he said now, but for him, he could explore another set of crafts requiring creativity. Carlo added,

> I think I can challenge myself to accept a more complex set of skills. I want to learn metallurgy and welding with a touch of my creativity. I initially went for digital printing because it is more related to my talent, but I want to work more than that. That is why I decided I could be creative through metal and metallic works. My hands are stable, and I think I can do an outstanding job with them. It is still applicable and relevant to me.

Carlo wanted to encourage other PDLs to continue learning and gaining new skills even with limited materials, tools, and equipment. He realized this was already a reality, and they needed to make something out of the inadequate tools.

4.6. Discussion of the Pdl's Experiences

This section presents story narratives from five individuals who were participants in the SAKPI sa BJMP community extension program. These narratives shed light on their personal experiences within the program, considering the underlying mandates of the Philippine Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the core programs focused on the welfare and development of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). The overall approach taken in this analysis is inductive, aiming to uncover emerging themes from the participants' experiences.

Inductive analysis involves delving into the data to gain a deeper understanding of the information and generating findings that address the research questions at hand [20]. In this study, inductive textual analysis was employed to extract meaningful insights from the data, drawing on relevant theories and literature to make sense of the participants' real-time experiences and provide answers to the research questions. The discussion in this section is interpreted within the context of community extension programs in the Philippines.

PDLs see the community extension program as a mental diversion. With the concrete summary of narratives, one of the emerging themes that came up for most participants is the act of diversion while confined. Several variables exacerbate the mental health of PDLs while they are imprisoned or before they are imprisoned. They have troubling behaviors that may arise due to internal and external causes of their situation. As a result, therapeutic communication is critical, as is providing specific attention to PDLs. The cognitive, affective, and volitional aspects and functions of personality are all affected by mental health issues in PDLs. A correlation between mental health and criminality has been identified as one reason why many mentally ill people have been imprisoned [21].

According to Nurse et al. [22], several factors contribute to the mental health of individuals in prison. The restricted environment, lack of mental stimulation, and overall prison conditions can have detrimental effects on the mental well-being of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), regardless of whether they have a diagnosed mental illness. These determinants can impact inmates from various backgrounds, including different ages, genders, and socioeconomic statuses. Consequently, these factors have a negative impact on inmates' psychological well-being, leading to a deterioration of their mental health [23].

The participants in the study have highlighted the significant support provided by Sakpi sa BJMP in addressing their mental health concerns.

A study conducted by Constantine et al. [24] indicates that the prevalence of mental disorders among prisoners is higher compared to the general population. Estimates suggest that the majority of severe mental illnesses among prisoners range from 10% to 15%, whereas the prevalence in the general population is around 2%.

The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) has well-defined objectives in fulfilling its legal mandate, which include adopting international norms, standards, and principles outlined in UN conventions and treaties [25]. These objectives encompass improving the living conditions of offenders according to accepted standards, facilitating rehabilitation and reformation in preparation for their successful reintegration into society, and providing professionalized jail services.

Correctional facilities, including the BJMP, strive to secure the community by incarcerating criminals while also offering services aimed at transforming their lives after serving their sentences [25]. Throughout the country, prisons have implemented various intervention programs to prepare inmates for successful reentry into society. Educational opportunities, such as acquiring a general equivalency diploma, studying English as a Second Language, and receiving job readiness training, are now available in many prisons. Some facilities even offer certifications and college credits [26]. This highlights the role of corrections as a system and process for reforming and rehabilitating individuals with criminal tendencies, aiming to transform them into law-abiding citizens through development programs within the prison or jail setting [27]. In certain prisons, inmates may also have the opportunity to gain vocational and technical skills through participation in various trades.

An article by Vicente [28] published in the Manila Bulletin, the article discusses how livelihood and educational advancement programs in the Baguio City Jail have positively impacted the self-esteem of female inmates, despite their separation from mainstream society.

Yarcia and Bernadas [29] conducted a study that highlighted the critical concern of mental health among PDLs in Philippine prisons. To effectively address these concerns, the Philippines must uphold its human rights obligations towards PDLs, which include implementing policy reforms in places of detention. These reforms should encompass the application of community standards for physical and mental health, the implementation of emergency release measures, and the adoption of non-custodial alternatives to alleviate long-term prison congestion.

PDLs view the community extension program as rehabilitation (Transformative agent). To support this concept, incarcerated individuals (PDLs) express positive experiences with the training programs provided by Sakpi sa BJMP, which prioritize rehabilitation as a primary objective. This focus on rehabilitation is rooted in the belief that individuals can be cured and deterred from committing further crimes. Rehabilitation was a central focus in early twentieth-century corrections, and although it declined in popularity during the 1970s and 1980s, it has recently regained recognition [30]. Rehabilitation aims to address behaviors that lead to offending, and when effective programs and opportunities are available and encouraged, there is a higher likelihood of successful reintegration into society upon completion of the prison term or order. Given the complexity of the rehabilitation process, correctional administrations must employ multiple aspects concurrently or in a predetermined sequence. This includes assessing socio-educational needs, attending educational and vocational courses, learning social behavior norms, engaging in cultural and sports activities, fostering family and community connections, providing moral education and religious support, and offering recreational activities.

In the Philippines, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) is responsible for implementing ten core programs aimed at rehabilitating individuals who have been deprived of their liberty. These programs, such as skills training and development and the livelihood program, share a common goal of equipping PDLs with technical/vocational skills and income-generating activities that can support their employment prospects or enable them to start their own businesses upon release from prison [31].

Within the context of rehabilitation, employment serves various crucial functions. These include providing the opportunity to earn income, meet basic needs, achieve self-realization, and fulfill obligations [32]. For incarcerated individuals, employment helps them develop positive habits and adapt to societal requirements, contributing to attitude changes. Moreover, engaging in work serves as a means of social rehabilitation and readjustment. Participating in certain activities also fosters respect and perseverance in overcoming life's challenges [33]. Studies conducted by other researchers support the finding that employed inmates cope better with isolation and exhibit lower tendencies toward aggressive behavior.

PDLs want the community extension program to be sustained. Sakpi sa BJMP is an essential program that is organized to help develop PDLs to unleash their full potential. The responses expressed by the PDLs of the current study revealed that they are still willing to undergo more skills training to make use of the time while being inside the correctional facility. This expression of continuation is also a challenge to institutions in higher education to create more opportunities for these clients. Carlo's statement, for example, reiterates that he needs more complex skills like welding and metallurgy, which are not currently offered by the community extension program being undertaken.

These institutions, including CTU Danao, are being urged to incorporate sustainable development into their organizational practices, driven by national and international events, policies, and environmental targets. The significance of education for sustainable development (ESD) has been emphasized in global events and declarations, such as Agenda 21 in 1992, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) in 2005, the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030, and the UNEP Greening Universities Toolkit [34]. As Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) face mounting pressure to integrate sustainable development, many have signed declarations, charters, and initiatives to demonstrate their commitment. However, the translation of this commitment into actual implementation has been limited [35]. There is still confusion surrounding the precise meaning of sustainable development, particularly from the perspectives of different stakeholders, what constitutes a sustainable higher education institution (HEI), and how to foster organizational cultural change [36-38].

HEIs play a crucial role in generating knowledge, fostering innovation, adaptation, and addressing societal and environmental challenges [39]. They bear the responsibility of educating future leaders across public, private, and civil society sectors [40]. HEIs have a profound responsibility to raise awareness, enhance knowledge, develop technologies and tools, and contribute to creating a sustainable future through education, research, policy development, information dissemination, and outreach [41]. HEIs need to transform themselves into more sustainable institutions and act as change agents due to their distinct societal roles and functions [39]. They serve as ideal platforms for experimenting with initiatives that aim to bring about societal transformations, starting at a small scale and later expanding to broader society [42]. Many HEIs have implemented a wide range of initiatives to embed sustainability into their organizational practices, encompassing education, outreach, research, operations, and governance [35].

Existing literature explores sustainability in higher education institutions (HEIs) from various perspectives. This includes specific case studies [43, 44], sustainability assessments and frameworks [40, 45], attitudes and perceptions [36, 46, 47], sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation [48], participatory approaches [49], barriers and opportunities for education for sustainability [48, 50], and curriculum and outreach [42, 51].

To date, the literature has primarily focused on on-campus actions and changes, with less attention given to outreach activities and how HEIs can extend their on-campus experiences and knowledge to wider society, including marginalized groups such as PDLs.

PDLs need the community extension program as a reintegration into society. The existing regulations prioritize inclusion, social justice, and equity, providing the basis for developing inclusive policies that focus on rehabilitation and social reintegration rather than just punishment. These policies align with the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, the Set of Principles for the Protection of All

Persons Subjected to Any Form of Detention or Prison, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which emphasize the importance of socially rehabilitating inmates as reflected in the narratives [52].

Retraining and restraining inmates are fundamental goals of the prison system, alongside the maintenance of security. However, there are additional program-related concerns, such as education and training, which aim to address the social effects of incarceration. Drucker [53] points out that incarceration has significant negative impacts on communities, particularly impoverished communities, leading to broken families, economic disenfranchisement, and increased criminal activity. To improve the living conditions of inmates and adhere to accepted standards of treatment, the agency implements a program in Cebu Island, Philippines, focused on training and continuing education for PDLs. This program aims to develop the potential and skills of inmates, allowing them to earn some income while in detention. The study suggests that these interventions are crucial for transforming the lives of detainees, preparing them to become self-reliant and productive individuals upon reintegrating into the community [54].

The reintegration of PDLs into society is essential as it empowers them to take charge of their lives and address the root causes that led to their involvement in crimes. Exclusion from society would not be ethically or socially just, and it would likely contribute to the failure of the system [52].

5. Conclusion

This paper further concludes by proposing a model for conducting community extension programs for persons deprived of liberty in the Philippines.

Throughout the country, reentry programs have been established to address the needs of offenders and facilitate their transition from prison to community life [55-59]. Various risk factors contribute to the likelihood of former inmates returning to prison due to criminal activity, including factors like gender, race, age, substance abuse, mental health issues, prior criminal history, length of previous incarceration, educational attainment, and socioeconomic status [58-60].

Despite the challenges, numerous higher education institutions across the country have taken on the responsibility of community outreach in innovative ways. For instance, Far Eastern University, a long-standing Philippine higher education institution, launched Project HOPE (Harnessing Offenders' Personal Empowerment) in partnership with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology's Manila City Jail Female Dormitory [61]. Similarly, the Agricultural Training Institute-Regional Training Center V Bicol organized an outreach activity at the Naga City District Jail, demonstrating their commitment to sharing blessings with the less fortunate [62]. Tennessee State University has also embraced its role in connecting academic work with mutually beneficial community engagement, aligning with its goal of becoming a model urban university [63].

Drawing from the definition of rehabilitation, BJMP mandates, and the experiences of PDLs in the skills training provided by SAKPI at BJMP, a proposed model is being developed for conducting a community extension program for PDLs in the Philippines.

1. Conduct community extension programs that provide a diversion to promote mental health support and continuous engagement with outsiders.
2. Conduct community extension programs that reignite PDLs' hope, even inside maximum security, to impact rehabilitation and reintegration positively.
3. Conduct sustainable community extension programs to continue the growth of programs and training for broader reach and capacity.
4. Conduct community programs that are significant and useful to each PDL when reintegrating into society to make life more meaningful outside.

The four identified aspects that model the conduct of community extension programs for PDLs contextualize the definitions of rehabilitation, reintegration, and creating positive change within correctional facilities through the experiences of the participants of *SAKPI sa BJMP* who are also PDLs in the same locale. Parallel studies have shown that most prisons and jails offer rehabilitation programs

to help offenders improve their abilities, and research has found that these internal rehabilitation programs can assist prisoners in reintegrating into society upon release [64]. However, other evidence indicates that rehabilitation programs within jails and prisons and assistance through monitoring in the post-release or reintegration phase may be even more successful [64, 65]. Every day, convicts are released from local prisons to return to resource-limited communities with little or no family or community assistance [66].

Outreach programs and engagement initiatives conducted by organizations and higher educational institutions are crucial in promoting social change and contributing to national and international socioeconomic development. However, many existing corporate social responsibility and outreach programs lack innovation and are outdated, which hinders sectoral engagement [67]. A critical aspect of correctional institutions is their focus on reducing recidivism rates, which has led to the implementation of various correctional education and rehabilitation efforts that align with the criminal justice system's goals.

Funding:

Institutional Review Board Statement:

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee of Cebu Technological University – Danao Campus reviewed and approved this study. All procedures involving human participants, including the survey, followed ethical standards set by the university and the 2017 National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research in the Philippines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Acknowledgement:

Copyright:

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