



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

# IJDR

*International Journal of Development Research*  
Vol. 07, Issue, 11, pp.16861-16865, November, 2017



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

## A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INCARCERATED JOURNEY OF ADULT FILIPINO DETAINEES

**\*Jestoni D. Maniago**

Department of Nursing, College of Applied Medical Sciences, Majmaah University,  
Al Majmaah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 14<sup>th</sup> August 2017  
Received in revised form  
08<sup>th</sup> September, 2017  
Accepted 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2017  
Published online 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2017

#### Key Words:

Psychology, Adulthood,  
Detainee, Incarcerated,  
Phenomenology, Philippines.

#### \*Corresponding author

*Copyright ©2017, Jestoni D. Maniago. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.*

**Citation: Jestoni D. Maniago. 2017. "A phenomenological analysis of the incarcerated journey of adult Filipino detainees", *International Journal of Development Research*, 7, (11), 16861-16865.**

### ABSTRACT

This study explored the journey and life experiences of eight adult detainees who spent their adulthood inside the Zambales Provincial Jail. The detainee-participants were selected by the researchers. The experiences of the participants were subsequently collected and enriched by the following methods; 1) Interview, 2) Questionnaire, 3) Storytelling, 4) Projective Test, and 5) Focus Group Discussion. Three (3) levels of reflective explication were done on the narratives of the detainee-participants following the process specifically developed by the researcher and grounded on the philosophy of Interpretative Phenomenology. Through the process of reflective explication, three themes were formed: (1) Rusted Cuffs, Dented Past; (2) Prison Dorm, Cell of Reform; and (3) Rays between Bars, Radiance of Hope. These themes reflected their incarcerated journey as adult detainees spending their time inside the jail.

## INTRODUCTION

Jail is a correctional institution used to detain persons who are in the lawful custody of the government. This includes either accused persons awaiting trial or for those who are convicted of a crime. Jails are generally small prisons run by individual countries and cities, though some jails in larger communities may be a large and hold as many inmates as regular prisons. Jail is also a synonym for prison, especially when the facility is of a similar size as a prison. As with prisons, some jails have different wings for certain types of offenders, and have work programs for inmates who demonstrate good endeavor. Perhaps the most inhuman act that society commits against prisoners is the blatant disregard for their rights. The thought that prisoners have human rights escapes most people. While part of a prisoner's punishment is deprivation of certain civil rights, every prisoner has rights mandated and protected by the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

However, in the face of all these international instruments, society persists in violating the human rights of prisoners by omission and apathy — neglecting to do what ought to be done and turning a blind eye on what needs to be addressed. Consistent with universal standards, the Philippine Government established its own national standards in reviewing its correctional system for prisoners/ detainees administered by the Department of Justice, the Bureau of Corrections and Bureau of Jails Management and Penology (BJMP) of the Department of Interior and Local Government. This correctional system consists of rehabilitation, and organized care and treatment program aimed at the promotion of the dignity of the confined persons in particular and the correctional community in general. Foremost, the provision of basic needs of prisoners is the prime factor to be fulfilled before any effective rehabilitation program can be committed and tackled. Though prisoners, they are still endowed with the same basic rights for human rights in common parlance are rights inherent in the nature of every individual without which he cannot live as a human being.

In an exploratory study of the prison as a social system, Sykes (1958) examined the *pains of imprisonment* and the manner in which inmates in a maximum security prison perceived the conditions of their confinement. Focusing on deprivations of liberty, goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security, he found that the psychological effects of those deprivations could be as painful as the physical punishments that had been used in the past and that these deprivations could damage the inmate's personality or perception of personal worth. Sykes stated, The significant hurts lie in the frustrations or deprivations which attend the withdrawal of freedom, such as the lack of heterosexual relationships, isolation from the free community, the withholding of goods and services, and so on. And however painful these frustrations or deprivations may be in the immediate terms of thwarted goals, discomfort, boredom, and loneliness, they carry a more profound hurt as a set of threats or attacks which are directed against the very foundations of the prisoner's being. The individual's picture of himself as a person of value—as a morally acceptable, adult male who can present some claim to merit in his material achievements and his inner strength—begins to waver and grow dim (pp. 47-48).

On the other hand, Goffman (1961) focused on the effects of the *total institution*, which he defined as “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (p. 19). According to Goffman, prisons are included in the category whose purpose is “to protect the community against what are felt to be intentional dangers to it, with the welfare of the persons thus sequestered not the immediate issue” (p. 21). Goffman (2007) described the mortification process that begins upon entry to the total institution and the various ways in which it is carried out. Elements of this process may include role dispossession, restriction of contact with important others outside the prison, loss of other valued social roles, demands for rigid compliance to prison rules and instructions given by staff. In addition, there is the depersonalization through loss of personal items and issuance of uniform clothing and possessions, structured dependence on staff, invasion of privacy, forced contact with other inmates, and loss of autonomy and self-determination. Goffman (2007) identified four ways in which inmates adapt to the total institution and noted that an individual may use different methods at different times. The first method, “situational withdrawal,” involves withdrawing from everything other than the immediate events around the inmate and is likened by Goffman to a mental health condition described as “prison psychosis”.

The second form is “intransigent line” and is identified as involving intentional refusal by the inmate to cooperate with staff. Goffman noted that this is usually a temporary and early form of adaptation with the inmate generally shifting to some other method if the institution administration decides to break this resistance. “Colonization,” the third adaptive method identified by Goffman, occurs when the inmate accepts what little contact with the outside world is allowed and “a stable, relatively contented existence is built up out of the maximum satisfactions procurable within the institution” (p. 50). The fourth method, “conversion” is seen when the inmate appears to accept the official view of his or her role and attempts to act like a perfect inmate. Goffman stated that most inmates in total institutions adopt a combination of these methods in an approach that “playing it cool”. He stated, “This involves a

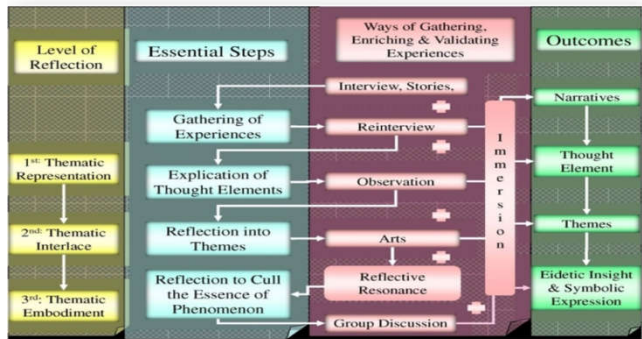
somewhat opportunistic combination of secondary adjustments, conversion, colonization, and loyalty to the inmate group, so that the inmate will have a maximum chance, in the particular circumstances, of eventually getting out physically and psychologically undamaged” (p. 53). Furthermore, one element of cognitive theory views depression as being associated with beliefs about the self, the environment, and the future. In this formulation, a negative self-concept, a view of a hostile world, and the belief that the future will bring failure and pain contribute to the development of depression among those already susceptible to depression (Sadock, Sadock and Kaplan, 2009). Stage 8 (Ego Integrity vs. Despair) of Erik Erikson's (1968) theory of Psychosocial Development states that as “we grow older and become senior citizens, we tend to slow down our productivity, and explore life as a retired person. It is during this time that we contemplate our accomplishments and are able to develop integrity if we see ourselves as leading a successful life”.

Erikson (1968) believed if we see our lives as unproductive, feel guilt about our past, or feel that we did not accomplish our life goals, we become dissatisfied with life and develop despair, often leading to depression and hopelessness. Success in this stage will lead to the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom enables a person to look back on their life with a sense of closure and completeness, and also accepts death without fear. This study is important because there is a dearth of research on lived experiences of late adult prisoners in the Philippines. Changes in the Philippine correction system and as well as later life psychological needs of detainees might have an impact on their life perspective. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences and projections of late adult detainees in a provincial jail in Zambales, Philippines. This addresses the psychological implications of imprisonment to adult life transition of the detainees.

## METHODOLOGY

This study, grounded in the philosophy of interpretative phenomenology, seeks to understand the lives of adult detainees behind the bars. Phenomenology is a science whose prime intent is to describe and explore the meaning and essence of unconsolidated phenomena as lived experiences (Woodgate, 2006; Speziale, 2007; Taylor, 2007); thus, it is bridging the gap between what is familiar in our worlds and what is unfamiliar (Speziale, 2007). Eight (8) adult detainees were carefully selected as participants based on the following criteria: 1) They are willing to retell, share, participate and describe their past and present experiences that will be valuable for the study; 2) At least five months inside the jail; and 3) Age must be 56 and above. Following the step by step process, the researcher sought and granted permission from the Chief Administrative Section of the Provincial Jail. The institution was chosen since it was the focal jail in the province of Zambales and it was accessible to the researcher. Before the actual interview, consent was also obtained from the detainees to be the participants of the said study; the researcher also asked the permission to record the interview and narratives being stated by the participants. Gathering of data involved 1) Interview, 2) Questionnaire, 3) Storytelling, 4) Projective Test, 5) Focus Group Discussion; they were done during No-Visit hours (Monday and Thursday) to ensure confidentiality and avoid other factors in the surroundings that can distract conversations with the participants.

Also, interviews were performed in an informal and unstructured manner to facilitate a free flow dialogue and develop a harmonious relationship. Subsequently, conversations were transcribed verbatim to form the individual participants' narratives. These narratives were then reflectively explicated using a process grounded on the Interpretative Phenomenology.



**Figure 1. The Process of Reflective Analysis of the Experiences showing the level of reflections of each essential steps with ways of enriching the experience and subsequent outcome (Martinez, 2013)**

## RESULTS

### Level of Reflection: Thematic Representation

The narratives of the participants were condensed into significant thought elements to facilitate further reflective analysis. From the eight (8) narratives, 707 thought elements were gleaned upon which were then further reflectively explicated to yield three (3) themes.

### Level of Reflection: Thematic Interlace

After the first reflection was done and thought elements were derived, the second reflection then followed from which three (3) themes were gathered: 1) Rusty Cuffs, Dented Past (*Kinalawang na posas, lamat ng nakalipas*); 2) Prison Dorm, Cell of Reform (*Apat na sulok ng kwadrado, bagong pagkatao*); 3) Rays between Bars, Radiance of Hope (*Sinag sa pagitan ng rehas, aninag ng pag-asa*).

### Rusty Cuffs, Dented Past (*Kinalawang na posas, lamat ng nakalipas*)

For the participants, the rust in the cuffs constituted varied things. It symbolized the dented past they have had and the remnant of pains until today. Like rust, little by little, they developed negative feelings about themselves that could destroy their personality and the way they communicated with people. They felt like they were no longer accepted by the society because of their past. Their names were already blemished that even if they performed good things, some people would still doubt them. The emotional and psychological suffering was enormous. It was a social stigma for them to be considered by society as criminals even before they were convicted by law.

*“Kahit ano naman ang gawin namin, mahihirapan ng maniwala sa amin yung ibang tao kasi may lamat na yung tiwala nila sa amin, kumbaga may marka na kami. Kumbaga para sa kanila masama na kami kahit wala naman talaga kaming ginawa.” – Participant 8*

(Translation) Whatever we will do, we will have difficulty to get the trust of the people, and their trust to us has been tarnished. There is a mark that we are bad though we did nothing wrong.

They believed that the stains will remain through the ages, though some of the participants still hoped that their loved ones will forgive them.

*“Sana mapatawad nila ako kasi hindi nila alam ang sitwasyon ko dito, na nandito ako. Ang hirap, sobra. Namimiss ko na ang asawa ko.” – Participant 3*

(Translation) I hope they will forgive me because I am into a situation that they do not know. I am here far from them and it is so difficult. I miss my wife so much.

The criminologist Cappell and Sykes (1991) have listed the “pains of imprisonment” that both male and female inmates faced: first is the deprivation of liberty and the loneliness and boredom of imprisonment; the second is that prisoners are deprived of all goods and services from the outside world. Because they have been stripped of position, they often equate their material losses with personal inadequacy. The third ‘pain’ which is the deprivation for the majority, is the absence of heterosexual relationship; and lastly, prisoners are subjected to a vast body of institutional regulations designed to control every aspect of behavior.

### Prison Dorm, Cell of Reform

*(Apat na sulok ng kwadrado, bagong pagkatao)*

Changes occurred. Their vices like smoking were minimized because they did not have the penny to buy a stick. The participants learned to be obedient and follow the rules inside the bars.

*“Natigil ‘yong paninigarilyo ko kasi sino ba naman ang magbibigay sa akin ng pambili at saan ako bibili dito sa loob.” – Participant 5*

(Translation) I stopped smoking because no one will give me money to buy cigarettes and I am here inside the jail. The ambiance around them also became different. Before, the participants could do what they wanted; they could also communicate with the people they wanted to talk with and spend their leisure time with their families. But now there are restrictions in everything they do. Everything must be in consultation and supervision of their warden.

*“Masaya na kami kapag may kakuwentuhan o kaya pag may dalaw. Kung simple ang buhay sa labas, mas simple dito. Maliit na bagay katulad ng pagdalaw, napapasaya na kami.” – Participant 6*

(Translation) We are happy when we have visits. If the life outside is simple, life here is simpler. We become happy with small things like visits from family and friends. For the participants, time moved even slower and became momentous each day as they waited for their relatives to visit them. They wanted to savor every glimpse of it even for just a while.

“Sayang ‘yung oras na nandito ako sa loob na sana kasama ko ‘yung mga anak ko’.”

-- Participant 1

(Translation) My time should have been spent with my family and it is wasted here.

The participants also developed discipline and content behind bars.

“Nagpakatino at tumino ang buhay, kasi iba yung siste sa labas kumapara dito sa loob.” – Participant 2

(Translation) Tried to be upright and good. The story inside is different from the one outside. Inmates compared their life before being imprisoned behind the metal bars with being free to becoming restricted. As stated by Sykes (1958), the world of the detainee "is characterized by a multitude of rules and commands designed to control his or her behavior. Yet, some argue that the inmate is not much worse off than the individual in the free community who is regulated in a great many aspects of his or her life by the dictates of custom. However, regulation by a bureaucratic staff is felt far differently than regulation by custom". Most detainees express an intense hostility against their far-reaching dependence on the decisions of corrections officials, which is what makes their restricted ability to make choices one of the major deprivations of imprisonment.

### Rays between Bars, Radiance of Hope

(Sinag sa pagitan ng rehas, aninag ng pag-asa)

Some of the participants find their hope inside the jail because no family is waiting for them outside. They became satisfied and contented with the four corners of the prison cell.

“Okay na ako dito. Mas gusto ko pa nga dito kasi wala rin namang naghihintay na pamilya sa akin sa labas at ang namimiss ko lang ay ‘yung dating trabaho ko.’” – Participant 4

(Translation) I am now okay here. I prefer to be here because I have no family waiting for me outside but I just miss my work before.

Some still hope that there is a tomorrow when they can finally leave behind the life inside the metal bars. They wait for the moment when they will be free and live a normal life again with their loved ones, back to the time when it is all beautiful and favorable for them.

“Hindi pa rin ako nawawalan ng pag-asa na makakalaya rin ako.” – Participant 8

(Translation) I still hope to be free again.

### Level of Reflection: Thematic Embodiment

Upon further reflection of the themes of the co-researchers' experiences, the eidetic insight (eidosis) was called upon that the life of adult detainees is like the rust in cuffs. They were restricted. Like rust, their life had stains of the past, rejected and dented. Symbolically, this rust signifies how society labels them as criminals and that their time is being wasted inside the metal bars as time goes by. They feel like the circumstances of

life are robbing from them their adulthood. Adults at their age usually devote their remaining time making their family happy and giving advice to their sons/daughters for the sake of their grandchildren. This stage must be the time for sharing their experiences with other people and inspiring them to never lose the zest of living. But sadly, it will never be for them. They said their life journey is different from those they called “normal adults”; it is an incarcerated journey full of self-pity and remorse. Nevertheless, they still consider the prison cell as a place of reform where they can change their lives by learning to accept their mistakes. There is still a radiance of hope between the bars.

## DISCUSSION

The psychological effects of being in prison are one that many psychologists, behavioral scientists and social workers have been studying for some time in order to measure or gauge the mental condition of one who has spent a considerable time behind bars. There is ample literature to suggest there is a psychological impairment that takes place from – incarceration. The longer one is imprisoned and the condition in which that person lives under while incarcerated determines the amount or degree of psychological damage that individual has incurred. This study supports Erik Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development that has eight distinct stages. Like Freud, Erikson assumes that crises occur at each stage of development. For Erikson (1968), these crises are of a psychosocial nature because they involve psychological needs of the individual (i.e. psycho) conflicting with the needs of society (i.e. social). According to the theory, successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues. Basic virtues are characteristic strengths which the ego can use to resolve subsequent crises. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages and therefore a more unhealthy personality and sense of self.

These stages, however, can be resolved successfully at a later time. In stage 8 of the said theory, *Ego Integrity vs. Despair* that as we grow older and become senior citizens, we tend to slow down our productivity, and explore life as a retired person. It is during this time that we contemplate our accomplishments and are able to develop integrity if we see ourselves as leading a successful life. Erik Erikson believed if we see our lives as unproductive, feel guilt about our past, or feel that we did not accomplish our life goals, we become dissatisfied with life and develop despair, often leading to depression and hopelessness. In line with the study conducted at the Provincial Jail, adult detainees experienced depression and hopelessness because they perceived their life with remorse. Because imprisonment necessitates a substantial curtailment of an individual's freedom and many other basic rights, deprivation is an inherent feature of being incarcerated. Travel distance for loved ones, privacy during visitation, privacy in cells and crowding were found to be serious problems encountered among detainees (Sabbath and Cowles, 1992).

In the community, age 50 or 55 would not be considered “older.” But incarcerated typically have physiological and mental health conditions that are associated with people at least a decade older in the community. This accelerated aging process is likely due to the high burden of disease common in people from poor backgrounds who comprise the majority of

the prison population, coupled with unhealthy lifestyles prior to and during incarceration. These factors are often further exacerbated by substandard medical care either before or during incarceration. The violence, anxiety, and stress of prison life, isolation from family and friends, and the possibility of spending most or all of the rest of one's life behind bars can also contribute to accelerated aging once incarcerated.

### Conclusion

As this research shows the incarcerated life journey of adult detainees, it emphasized that adults behind the bars need affection and love from their family. These will at least lessen their psychological deprivation. It will also encourage them to never lose the zest of life with their age. The study affirms that acceptance will be the best antidote to relieve and heal their dented past. Moreover, psychologists must work hand in hand with the Provincial Jail Officers to conduct activities which will be helpful to reduce the depression and hopelessness of the adult detainees. Facilitate also programs that will engage them to productivity and relaxation. As psychologists continually study the behavior of humans, there must be also an elevation of individual's self-esteem and resilience promoting a sound and harmonious way of living, especially for the adults who are spending their latter life behind the metal bars. Life in prison can challenge anyone, but it can be particularly hard for people whose bodies and minds are being whittled away by age.

### REFERENCES

Cappell, C. L. and Sykes, G. 1991. Prison commitments, crime, and unemployment: A theoretical and empirical specification for the United States, 1933-1985. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 7(2), 155-199.

- Erikson, E.H. 1968. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Goffman, E. 1961. *Encounters: Two studies in the sociology of interaction*. Oxford: England
- Goffman, D. 2007. *The early modern Ottomans: Remapping the empire*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge
- Martinez, R.C.K. 2013. "Masked": The lives of adolescents undergoing chemotherapy. *Philippine Journal of Nursing*, 83(2), 9-20.
- Sabbath, M. J. and Cowles, E. L. 1992. Problems associated with long term incarceration. *Forum on Corrections Research*, 4(2), 9-11
- Sadock, B. J., Sadock, V. A. and Kaplan, H. I. 2009. *Kaplan and Sadock's concise textbook of child and adolescent psychiatry*. Lippincott Williams and Wilkins. Philadelphia
- Sykes, G. M. 1958. *The society of captives: A study of a maximum security prison*. Princeton University Press.
- Speziale, S. 2007. The conduct of qualitative research: Common essential elements. In S. Speziale and Carpenter, D. (Eds.), *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.)*. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.
- Taylor, C. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Woodgate, R. L. 2006. Living in a world without closure: Reality for parents who have experienced the death of a child. *Journal of Palliative Care*, 22(2), 75-82.

\*\*\*\*\*