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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### BEYOND BARS: UNVEILING THE TRANSFORMATIVE LIFE STORIES OF FORMER INMATES

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#### ABSTRACT

In the intricate tapestry of societal dynamics, the experiences of individuals within the criminal justice system constitute a profound and often overlooked facet. Among these individuals, former inmates bear the weight of a unique journey navigating incarceration, grappling with the consequences of their actions, and striving for redemption upon release. This research embarks on an explorative odyssey into the transformative life stories of former inmates, with a specific focus on their experiences within the confines of Mandaue City Jail. Guided by psychological frameworks such as Deprivation Theory, General Strain Theory, and Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, this study seeks to unravel the experiences, enduring impacts that characterize the lives of these individuals, and coping mechanisms. Utilizing a qualitative research methodology, including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, the study amplifies the voices of five informants, each offering a distinctive perspective on their incarceration and subsequent reintegration into society. The findings of this research unearth compelling themes encapsulating the experiences, impacts, and coping mechanisms of the informants within Mandaue City Jail. In the realm of experiences, the informants grappled with the profound challenge of confronting the aftermath of their actions, navigating the intricate terrain of confinement, and unraveling the intricate dynamics of respect within the confines of the correctional system. These experiences collectively form a poignant narrative that speaks to the complex interplay of personal agency and institutional constraints. Delving into the impacts that permeate the lives of these individuals post-incarceration, two overarching themes emerge with striking significance. The "Transformative Power of Faith" stands as a beacon of resilience for the informants, illustrating how a steadfast belief in a higher power serves as a guiding force through the trials of reintegration. Simultaneously, the theme "Seizing Opportunities for Positive Change" underscores the agency of the informants to actively engage with their circumstances, demonstrating a commitment to transformative growth and positive contributions to society. In the realm of coping mechanisms, the informants' narratives unravel a delicate dance between humility and transformative wisdom gleaned through life's lessons. "Embracing Humility" emerges as a powerful coping strategy, emphasizing the significance of respect, self-discipline, and interpersonal relations as tools for navigating the challenges of incarceration. Complementing this, the theme of "Transformative Wisdom Through Life's Lesson" highlights how the informants leverage their past experiences as invaluable guides, learning from mistakes, and emerging with newfound wisdom that transcends the boundaries of their confinement. Collectively, these themes not only offer a nuanced understanding of the informants' experiences but also provide a broader lens through which to comprehend the lasting impacts of incarceration and the coping mechanisms that shape their journey toward reintegration. Each theme encapsulates a chapter in the profound narrative of resilience, growth, and transformation, inviting a deeper contemplation of the human spirit's capacity to navigate adversity and emerge with newfound strength and wisdom.

#### INTRODUCTION

In the corridors of correctional facilities, where the echoes of societal judgment often drown out the whispers of personal redemption, lies a narrative seldom explored—the transformative odyssey of those who emerge "Beyond Bars."

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Behind every prison door, there exists a spectrum of experiences, challenges, and triumphs that remain concealed from the public gaze. The decision to embark on this study arises from a critical gap in existing research—namely, the lack of in-depth exploration into the post-incarceration experiences of former inmates. While the prison system is designed for rehabilitation, the intricacies of the transformative journey and the challenges faced by individuals after serving

their sentences remain largely unexplored. Understanding the nuanced narratives of rehabilitated individuals is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted experiences of former inmates. By delving into the challenges, successes, and coping mechanisms of these individuals, we aim to offer valuable insights that can inform policy improvements, correctional programs, and support systems aimed at facilitating successful reintegration into society. Secondly, the personal connections the researchers have with individuals from Mandaue City Jail add a unique dimension to this study. This insider perspective enables a more empathetic and authentic exploration of the lived experiences of former inmates. By focusing on a specific locale, Mandaue City Jail, we hope to uncover insights that are contextually relevant and can potentially be applied to enhance rehabilitation efforts in similar settings. Moreover, the study aligns with broader societal goals of fostering inclusivity, reducing recidivism, and promoting the overall well-being of rehabilitated individuals. By unraveling the stories of transformation, we aspire to challenge societal perceptions, reduce stigma, and advocate for more holistic approaches to criminal justice that prioritize rehabilitation and reintegration. Ultimately, "BEYOND BARS" aims to fill a critical void in the literature, providing a foundation for future research and fostering a deeper understanding of the post-prison experiences of individuals who have undergone rehabilitation. Through this exploration, we aspire to contribute to the ongoing discourse on criminal justice reform and advocate for a more compassionate and effective approach to the rehabilitation of former inmates.

This study was guided by three theories: Deprivation Theory, General Strain Theory, and Albert Bandura's 4 Principles of Social Learning Theory. This study was anchored on the Deprivation Theory which states or explains the behavior of inmates inside the jail. It also states their ways on how they cope up to every situation inside the jail so that they can survive. Ethnographic research on inmate adaptation conducted in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s revealed that inmates formed a social system or subculture that served to reduce inmate conflict, provide goods and services denied by the administration (e.g., drugs and protection), and insulate them from the harshness of the prison environment (e.g., Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). For instance, Sykes (1958) observed that imprisonment coincided with specific environmental and psychological deprivations (i.e., autonomy, freedom of movement, access to goods and services, heterosexual relationships, and security), which stimulated the inmate society or subculture as a system of action that served to alleviate the rigors of incarceration. Inmate behaviours were explained by how these "pains of imprisonment" were felt and how inmates prioritized their needs. Specifically, Sykes observed that inmates took on argot roles that were influenced by how they prioritized their needs and the degree to which particular environmental characteristics inhibited their satisfaction of each need. "Gorillas," for example, were inmates who overcame deprivations at the expense of other inmates. "Wolves" met their need for sexual relationships by aggressively taking advantage of weaker inmates. "Punks," in contrast, were inmates who frequently suffered victimization at the hands of more aggressive inmates (Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). Thus, deprivation theory holds that some inmates, when placed in a prison environment that restricts them from

satisfying certain needs, may suffer victimization at the hands of other inmates who use illegitimate alternatives to obtain need satisfaction (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). The relevance of the deprivation perspective may have diminished over time because many of the environmental deprivations described by scholars such as Clemmer (1940) and Sykes (1958) were lessened as a result of the prisoner rights movement and the evolution of prisons from closed to more open systems (Irwin, 1980; Jacobs, 1977, 1980). On the other hand, the prisoner rights movement also highlighted that prison conditions can have an impact in an inmate's life, and researchers still recognize the importance of environmental influences on inmates' need satisfaction and adjustment. Scholars have discussed the psychological aspects of adjustment, with a specific focus on prisoner needs (e.g., personal control) and the consequences of hindering need satisfaction (e.g., violence; Goodstein, MacKenzie, & Shotland, 1984; Toch, 1977; Wright, 1985, 1991). As a result, some researchers have continued to examine the relevance of environmental characteristics of prisons (e.g., crowding and prison architecture) for predicting victimization based on the compatibility of these predictors with deprivation theory.

General Strain Theory Explanations of prison violence and other forms of misconduct have been dominated by three competing models: (a) the deprivation model, (b) the importation model, and (c) the coping model. We propose that these three seemingly competing models can be integrated within Agnew's general strain theory (GST). GST enriches the deprivation model by revealing three distinctive categories of strain. GST encompasses the importation model in hypothesizing that criminal cultural values and affiliations will structure the response to the strains of imprisonment. And GST incorporates the coping model in its emphasis on how social support, social capital, and human capital can blunt the effects of potentially criminogenic strains. Finally, GST is sufficiently broad to include factors (e.g., emotions, self-control) in the explanation of prison maladjustment not covered by the three main models of prison inmate behaviour. In short, GST offers a general integrated framework for reconceptualizing our understanding of prison violence and misconduct. On the other hand, from his research, Bandura had formulated four principles of Social Learning Theory namely; attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. First, attention says that we cannot learn if we are not focused on the task. If we see something as being novel or different in some way, we are more likely to make it the focus of their attention. Social contexts help to reinforce these perceptions. Secondly, retention is we learn by internalizing information in our memories. We recall that information later when we are required to respond to a situation that is similar the situation within which we first learned the information. Thirdly, reproduction is we reproduce previously learned information (behaviour, skills, knowledge) when required. However, practice through mental and physical rehearsal often improves our responses. Lastly, motivation is about being motivated to do anything. Often that motivation originates from our observation of someone else being rewarded or punished for something they have done or said. This usually motivates us later to do, or avoid doing, the same thing. To sum up everything being discussed in the theories given, it can be applied since social modelling is a very powerful method of education. If children see positive consequences from a particular type of behaviour, they are more likely to repeat that behaviour themselves.

Conversely, if negative consequences are the result, they are less likely to perform that behaviour. Novel and unique contexts often capture students' attention, and can stand out in the memory. Students are more motivated to pay attention if they see others around them also paying attention. Another less obvious application of this theory is to encourage students to develop their individual self-efficacy through confidence building and constructive feedback, a concept that is rooted in social learning theory. For instance, these programs could give them a chance to enhance their skills or capabilities which will improve the chances of the inmates to become a law abiding citizen. The program must aim to chain those who want to change and recover their previous unlawful behaviour. According to the conducted research by Barbara E. Varner, D. Ed. and Irene C. Baird, D.Ed. of Penn State Harrisburg, Middletown Pa. based on the journey of a successful ex-offender's personal learning. It states that process for Jonathan, the process of change and growth in learning continues to create new avenues of learning for himself and those around him. He discusses how he learned to teach others to teach, to be teachable himself; he learned how to form relationships, to have empathy for others and above all and learned to change and changed to learn.

To understand more of deprivation, the topic of experiences of former inmate in a now classic ethnographic study of New Jersey State Prison, Gresham M. Sykes (1958/2007) argued that five fundamental deprivations characterized daily prison life, known collectively as the "pains of imprisonment." These were the loss of liberty, desirable goods and services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, and security. According to Sykes, the sum total of these deprivations explained why inmates found prison life undesirable. Their long-term effects could be to produce hardened criminal offenders. Under the so-called deprivation model, material and symbolic frustrations arising out of the prison environment could have criminogenic effects by compelling inmates to form an oppositional prison culture. Prisons are a relatively recent innovation in human history, as Foucault (1977/1995) observed, supplanting the previously prevalent forms of punishment that were chiefly aimed at inflicting physical harm or death, or excluding convicts from society through transportation and banishment. With the rise of modern societies, Foucault argued, punishing the soul (that is, the mental life of convicts) took the place of punishing the body. A gradual civilizing process (Elias 1939/2000) has caused a precipitous decline in violence of all kinds, including the DE legitimization of violent confrontations in daily life and the decline in casualties linked with warfare. Civilization, in Elias's sense, played a key causal role in the rise of the penitentiary in place of the gallows or the guillotine. Indeed, the rise of humanitarian ideals and the decline of public willingness to engage in "spectacles of suffering," to borrow a phrase from Spierenburg's (1984) work on the role of public executions and corporal punishment as morality plays, may have helped shape foundational documents like the US Constitution and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution prohibits "cruel and unusual punishments." The Universal Declaration of Human Rights bans "torture" and "cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." These documents reveal a growing awareness of the importance of limiting the corporal pains of punishment in the post Enlightenment era. But while most modern states have traded in the branding iron for the jail cell, Sykes's conceptual quintet reminds social observers that although prison sentences may

seem less immediately jarring or obviously pain-inducing than executions or torture, they do, in their way, nevertheless impose suffering. Contrary to the deterrence hypothesis, which claims that longer or harsher terms of imprisonment reduce crime by increasing the costs of offending, inmates may in fact react to prison pains by closing ranks against correctional officers and, more broadly, the social order as such, forming an inmate culture that could result in an elevated commitment to crime. Greater pains of imprisonment could therefore yield greater levels of recidivism.

Sykes was certainly not the first observer of prison life to note that correctional institutions were capable of imposing – indeed, in some cases, were intended to impose – extensive social and material pains on their dwellers. In a journalistic account of mid-nineteenth-century American life, the English novelist Charles Dickens (1842/1883: 678–679) argued that the Eastern Penitentiary of Pennsylvania imposed "rigid, strict, and hopeless solitary confinement" with effects that were "cruel and wrong." Dickens observed how social isolation and material deprivation combined to produce anguish and despondency among inmates; the typical inmate is "a man buried alive; to be dug out in the slow round of years ... dead to everything but torturing anxieties and horrible despair." Similarly, Henry Mayhew (1862), an English journalist and social critic, pointed out the costs associated with solitary confinement in an early tome on London prisons. Mayhew (1862: 127) believed that having one's life "hemmed in by four white walls" resulted in "intense misery," since inmates were deprived of the powers of autonomous decision-making and subjected to intense isolation. While very different from the mutilation and decapitation imposed by early European penal systems, these institutions showed that the practice of spatial confinement over extended periods of time resulted in its own set of frustrations and deprivations.

Crucially, no objective standard exists by which one can define what constitutes cruel, unusual, or inhumane punishment. Instead, societies have continuously redefined the legitimacy of differing forms of punishment, typically through conflicts in legislatures, courtrooms, and the media. Lacking consensus on the appropriate scale, scope, and mode of punishment, a broad array of penal measures and concomitant pains have historically been in evidence. While most advanced, industrialized societies have abandoned capital punishment, the death penalty remains a legal sentence in a majority of US states. While the Nordic countries have aggressively expanded the use of minimum security prisons – institutions with few restrictions on inmates' ability to move around freely – the United States has unfurled super-maximum security prisons with very significant limitations placed on personal movement and near-total solitary confinement. While countries like Brazil, Norway, Portugal, and Spain have shied away from life imprisonment, the United States and large parts of Europe maintain life imprisonment sentences. And the scale of incarceration is widely divergent in various regions of the world, from around 700 inmates per 100,000 persons in the United States to around 60 inmates per 100,000 persons in Sweden and Finland in 2012. Clearly then, and against the false universalization of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, conceptions of inhumaneness are contingent and highly variable. To understand further on the General Strain Theory, this theory is support by a study Strain theories state that certain strains or stressors increase the likelihood of crime.

These strains lead to negative emotions, such as frustration and anger. These emotions create pressure for corrective action, and crime is one possible response. Crime may be used to reduce or escape from strain, seek revenge against the source of strain or related targets, or alleviate negative emotions. For example, individuals experiencing chronic unemployment may engage in theft or drug selling to obtain money, seek revenge against the person who fired them, or take illicit drugs in an effort to feel better. The major versions of strain theory describe 1) the particular strains most likely to lead to crime, 2) why strains increase crime, and 3) the factors that lead a person to or dissuade a person from responding to strains with crime. All strain theories acknowledge that only a minority of strained individuals turn to crime. Emile Durkheim developed the first modern strain theory of crime and deviance, but Merton's classic strain theory and its offshoots came to dominate criminology during the middle part of the 20th century. Classic strain theory focuses on that type of strain involving the inability to achieve monetary success or the somewhat broader goal of middle-class status. Classic strain theory fell into decline during the 1970s and 1980s, partly because research appeared to challenge it. There were several attempts to revise strain theory, most arguing that crime may result from the inability to achieve a range of goals—not just monetary success or middle-class status. Robert Agnew developed his general strain theory (GST) in 1992, and it has since become the leading version of strain theory and one of the major theories of crime. GST focuses on a broad range of strains, including the inability to achieve a variety of goals, the loss of valued possessions, and negative treatment by others. GST has been applied to a range of topics, including the explanation of gender, race/ethnicity, age, community, and societal differences in crime rates. It has also been applied to many types of crime and deviance, including corporate crime, police deviance, bullying, suicide, terrorism, and eating disorders. Much evidence suggests that the strains identified by GST increase the likelihood of crime, although the predictions of GST about the types of people most likely to respond to these strains with crime have received less support.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers utilized a subjective strategy for inquiry about utilizing phenomenological look into the experiences of former inmates; follow up question will be made in a meeting guide question diving into the educational encounters of the former inmate. A qualitative research like this is the most suitable and appropriate, that is the qualitative phenomenological research. This study was conducted in the City of Mandaue. The city has a land area of 34.87 km<sup>2</sup> (13.46 sq. mi.), which is one of the cities in Region 7 or the Central Visayas located right at the heart of the province of Cebu. The City of Mandaue is one of the two highly urbanized cities in the region, the other one being the City of Cebu. The original facility had 36 detention cells, enough space for the population at the time. Bureau of Jail and Management and Penology built an annex after noticing an increase in the jail population. An infirmary was added to house 30 inmates. Within a decade, the population shot up. In 2009, there were 669 inmates. Today the number has ballooned to 1,113. (Mayol, 2015). Mandaue city's jail has the worst record. Congestion is more than ten-fold. The jail's male dormitory tops the list with 1,113 detainees. The facility was designed for 95 inmates. Some inmates just squat on the floor and lean their heads on the steel bars to catch some sleep.

Court officials point to the slow disposal of cases due to the lack of trial courts to handle the large volume of cases in Mandaue City, which has three Regional Trial Court (RTC) branches compared to 22 in Cebu City. Bigger detention centers are needed but there's no budget or inadequate funds. Another factor is the lack of legal representation for many inmates, who can't afford to retain a private lawyer to follow up their court cases. There is also a glaring lack of free legal aid volunteers offering their services for accused persons who are indigent. All inmates in the Mandaue City Jail are detention prisoners that are still waiting for their cases to be tried and finally resolved. None of them are convicted of the crime or crimes they are accused of, a fact that the public often forgets in stereotyping them as "convicts" found guilty of misdeeds. The Mandaue City Jail has been in the top 10 most congested jails nationwide for at least a decade. It was taken off only last year after a new facility was added but the jail still has an excess of over 1,000 inmates. As of March 2015, the San Jose District Jail in Occidental Mindoro is the most overcrowded jail in the country with an excess of 1,825 inmates. BJMP officials were forced to build an additional three-storey building within the compound of the Mandaue City Jail to address the congestion. Even with the new facility, which can hold up to 40 prisoners, the situation is still tight. "The number of inmates in the Mandaue City Jail just increases year after year," said Jail Senior Inspector Brian Roy Mercado. He served as a senior deputy jail warden until he was transferred to Cebu City last April 1. Mandaue City's jail used to be located in the police station near the City Hall in Barangay Centro. In 1993, BJMP constructed the Mandaue City Jail in Barangay Looc about two kilometers from the center of the city.

The researchers carefully chose five informants who could provide their individual experiences by answering the questions provided in the study. They also took responsibility, willingness, and showed interest in accomplishing the survey. Total of five participants for this qualitative study, and the interview was classified into two sets. The in-depth interview was participated in by two informants, and the second set was for the focus group discussion, which was participated in by the remaining three informants. The participants of this study were former inmates in Mandaue City Jail. For this research, the research interview guide for an in-depth interview and focus group discussion was used for the individual interviews for them to answer during the actual interview date scheduled. The research used an interview guide containing open ended questions. The researchers also used a note for transcription to write the responses of the participants in addition to voice recorder that recorded their responses during the interview. There was a transcript of the interview that was made as a part of the appendices.

### Research Procedures

**Data Collection:** The information was assembled through meeting on voice recording to the participants. The informant was requested to answer the questions genuinely, totally and were given letter and assent from expressing that the individual was educated of examination.

**Data Analysis:** In this examination, the recordings made during the data collection were transcribed and analyzed. The researchers identified major themes of the examination responses according to themes and categories.

The response of each informant during the in-depth interview and focus group discussion was presented in the transcription.

**Ethical Consideration.** For this, the researchers ensured that during and after the conduct of the study, research informants should not be subjected to harm in any ways. Also, respect for the dignity of research informants was also prioritized. On the other hand, an informed consent form was signed by the informants in order to know their rights before the conduct of the study. The signed form included the voluntary participation to the interview and to answer the questions according to their satisfaction. Also, after the collection of data, the researchers cinched an adequate level of confidentiality of the research data. Anonymity of individuals participating in research was also ensured. Hence, to justify that the researchers have address the ethical consideration aspect of this study, the following information was clearly stipulated in some section of this, to with; voluntary participation of informants in the research is important, the use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language needs to be avoided in the formulation of question/interview / focus group interview questions, privacy and anonymity of informants is of a paramount importance, acknowledgement of works of others authors used in any part of the study, maintenance of the highest level of objectivity in discussions and analysis throughout the research.

**Trustworthiness:** Trustworthiness was consisted of four different components — credibility: the validity of the findings; transferability: the applicability of the findings in other contexts; dependability: reliability of the findings at another time; and confirmability: objectivity of the researcher while carrying out his/her research. The combination of these four terms constitutes towards the trustworthiness criteria, thus forming conventional pillars for qualitative methodology (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004). Credibility was the first aspect, or criterion, that must be established. It is seen as the most important aspect or measure in establishing trustworthiness because credibility essentially asks the researchers to clearly link the research study's findings with reality in order to demonstrate the truth of the research findings. The researchers also established transferability by providing a robust and detailed account of his experiences during data collection. The researchers made explicit connections to the cultural and social contexts that surround data collection. This means talking about where the interviews occurred the general setup of the environment and other aspects of data collection that help provide a richer and fuller understanding of the research setting. Thus, constitutes to the idea that the research study's findings could be applicable to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. Dependability on the other hand was also important to trustworthiness because it establishes the research study's findings as consistent and repeatable. The researchers aimed to verify that their findings are consistent with the raw data they collected, making sure that if some other researchers were to look over the data, they would arrive at similar findings, interpretations, and conclusions about the data. This is important to make sure that there was not anything missed in the research study, or that the researchers were not sloppy or misguided in their final report. Confirmability was the last criterion of trustworthiness that the researchers have established in this study. This criterion has to do with the level of confidence that the research study's findings are based on

the participants' narratives and words rather than potential researcher biases.

## RESULTS

The data gathered were thoroughly reviewed and read many times in order to acquire the exact answers of the sub-problems. Significant statement was extracted from the informant's transcripts pertaining to the research phenomena. Formulated meanings from significant statements are developed into clusters. There were seventeen clustered themes created from the formulated meanings. The data were divided into three parts: the experiences of informants, the impacts of experiences and the coping of the informant's situation while inside the jail. In the experience of the informants, the researchers formulated two emergent themes, these were: Facing the consequences and Respect begets respect. In the impacts of experiences, the researchers formulated another two emergent themes, these were: Trust and Believe in Him and Today is a chance to be good. Lastly, in the coping of informant's situation while inside the jail, the researchers developed three themes which are: Be Humble, Lesson learned and Obedient is the key. These seven themes mentioned were developed from the responses of the sub-questions of the experiences of the former inmates in Mandaue City Jail.

### The experience of the informants

There were two emergent themes that recalled the experiences of the informants during their stay in Mandaue City Jail.

**Confronting the Aftermath** - The researchers delved into the data collected concerning the experiences of the informants during their time in prison. A predominant aspect of their narratives revolved around grappling with the repercussions of their actions that ultimately landed them behind bars.

According to Informant 1: *Locked away in those walls, each passing day was a stark reminder of the consequences I had to face. The solitude forced me to confront my own actions, the choices that led me here. It was a journey of self-reflection, a struggle to accept and learn from the aftermath of my decisions. In that confined space, I had no choice but to face the consequences head-on, a process that ultimately became the crucible for personal transformation.*

Statement from Informant 2 and 3 having the same thoughts: *Prison became a mirror reflecting the price I paid for the choices I made. It was a tough, humbling experience, but within those consequences, I found the strength to change.*

**Navigating Respect in Confinement** - The data analysis shed light on the paramount importance of respecting jail officers to maintain a semblance of peace within the incarcerated community. The researchers recognized the challenges in this regard, acknowledging the varied perspectives held by both inmates and officers. While the principle of mutual respect prevailed as an ideal, the researchers observed instances where this delicate balance was disrupted. As the researchers navigated through the narratives, a nuanced revelation surfaced: not all officers perceived inmates uniformly. A spectrum existed, ranging from officers who saw inmates as inherently 'bad' individuals to those adept at understanding the behavioral complexities.

The dichotomy between good and bad officers became evident, painting a textured portrayal of the environment within the correctional facility. The following statements, drawn from the rich tapestry of inmate experiences, encapsulate the dichotomy of respect within prison walls, where the theme unfolds through the lens of diverse interactions with jail officers

*The jail guards treat us fine, they didn't abuse us and they gave us our rights as human being, they treat us fairly. IDII4:SS67*

Another statement is from focus group discussion informant number 1 states that:

*They are all good; you just need to follow their rules so that you will not be punished. FGD1:SS7*

A statement from informant 2 from focus group discussion states some the negative side of the jail officer:

*But there are some bad officers who don't know how to approach inmates because when they saw inmates they automatically think that we are a bad person. FGD2:SS8*

### The impacts of experiences in the lives of the informants

**Transformative Power of Faith** - In exploring the profound impacts of experiences on the lives of the informants, a compelling theme emerged: 'Trust and Believe in Him.' The researchers meticulously analyzed the data, unveiling a narrative thread that underscored the transformative power of faith in navigating the complexities of life within and beyond prison walls."

"As the informants shared their journeys, a consistent pattern emerged - the pivotal role of faith, particularly a steadfast trust and belief in a higher power, in steering them towards the right path amid the crucible of suffering and regrets. The researchers observed a remarkable resilience in the face of significant challenges, where the informants turned to prayer as an anchor, acknowledging their blessings even amidst adversity.

*To attend the religious activities inside the jail, like hearing the living word I learned how to trust the Lord which I fail to feel when I was still outside, when I was in jail I started to pray and become closer to the Lord. IDII5:SS81*

Another is from informant 4 which stated that:

*In terms of religion, yes we do believe before but not that heartedly, maybe it is from the heart but not that full and solid that you give him time. IDII4:SS70*

Another is from focus group discussion which stated that:

*Here outside we ignore the Bible, while inside the jail because of boredom we prayed and read the Bible and learned about the word of the Lord. FGD1:SS27*

**Seizing Opportunities for Positive Change:** As the informants shared their experiences, a recurrent motif emerged, highlighting a newfound sense of caution in every action. The researchers discerned a shared commitment among the informants to be exemplary citizens, steering clear of paths that could lead them back to incarceration.

The theme underscored the importance of treasuring the present, a pivotal juncture to redefine one's trajectory and embrace a life characterized by goodness and virtue. The researcher noted a collective wisdom within the informants, acknowledging that mistakes, while shaping resilience, also serve as catalysts for personal growth. The narratives resonated with the idea that learning from errors fosters strength and resilience, enabling individuals to appreciate the goodness life has to offer. Informant 4's poignant statement further illuminated this perspective, showcasing the transformative power embedded in the understanding that each day presents an opportunity for positive change.

*To change, now that I have the chance to be released I should continue to be a good person. IDII4:SS71*

Another statement is from informant 5:

*To follow the rules just like doing my assign task. Each one of us should do the assign task so that we will not be punished. IDII5:SS82*

**The coping of informants' situation while inside the jail:** Digging out the responses of the coping of informant's situation while inside the jail. The researcher formulated three emergent themes which are: Embracing Humility and Transformative Wisdom Through Life's Lesson.

**Embracing Humility:** The researcher meticulously delved into the narratives, extracting a collective understanding that underscores the transformative power of humility. This theme radiates the essence of staying grounded, fostering mutual respect, and navigating life with a profound sense of self-awareness. The researcher observed a collective encouragement within the narratives, urging individuals to be the best version of themselves. The theme resonates with the idea that true greatness lies in humility, a virtue that not only connects individuals but also paves the way for a more harmonious and interconnected society. Just like informant 4 which stated that.

*It is a big help for a person to lower his/her pride. IDII4:SS72*

Just like what informant 5 said:

*It is already enough lesson for me to be in jail, I will never do bad things again now that I am already released. IDII5:SS83*

**Transformative Wisdom Through Life's Lessons:** The researcher navigated through the data, revealing a collective understanding that transcends the confines of incarceration. This theme encapsulates the invaluable wisdom gained by the informants through the crucible of their experiences within the jail, illustrating a transformative journey fueled by resilience and self-discovery. The narratives underscore the informants' commitment to utilizing their past experiences as guiding lights, illuminating the path to a better, more virtuous life upon reentering society. The researcher uncovered a collective belief that each trial, no matter how arduous, contributes to the intricate tapestry of their personal development, providing profound insights that act as beacons for their future endeavors. These are the statements of informant 4 that will support the theme and these are the following:

*Inside the jail there are rules that must be followed; jail officers also have rules to help inmates to change so that*

*someday when they are reintegrated into the community they will be fully reformed. IDII4:SS74*

Another statement is from informant 5:

*The activities inside the jail that I have learned is to follow and obey the rules inside, because if you violate the rules you will receive a punishment. IDII5:SS85*

## DISCUSSION

This study utilized the qualitative method and employed the phenomenological approach. The data gathered was thoroughly read and reviewed many times to obtain vital informations for the description of the experiences of the informants. Accordingly, the research analyzed the data using the Colaizzi's method. The significant statements were extracted from the informant's transcript that is relevant to the research phenomena. Formulated meanings were created from the significant statements and put together into cluster. There were seventeen (17) cluster themes created from formulated meanings. From the cluster themes, the researcher developed seven (7) emergent themes. The emergent themes responded and answers the sub problems specifically the experiences, impacts, and coping of the informant's situation while inside the jail. The result of this study is supported by the anchor theory which is Deprivation Theory it is an ethnographic research on inmate adaptation conducted in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s revealed that inmates formed a social system or subculture that served to reduce inmate conflict, provide goods and services denied by the administration (e.g., drugs and protection), and insulate them from the harshness of the prison environment (e.g., Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). For instance, Sykes (1958) observed that imprisonment coincided with specific environmental and psychological deprivations (i.e., autonomy, freedom of movement, access to goods and services, heterosexual relationships, and security), which stimulated the inmate society or subculture as a system of action that served to alleviate the rigors of incarceration.

Inmate behaviours were explained by how these "pains of imprisonment" were felt and how inmates prioritized their needs. Specifically, Sykes observed that inmates took on argot roles that were influenced by how they prioritized their needs and the degree to which particular environmental characteristics inhibited their satisfaction of each need. "Gorillas," for example, were inmates who overcame deprivations at the expense of other inmates. "Wolves" met their need for sexual relationships by aggressively taking advantage of weaker inmates. "Punks," in contrast, were inmates who frequently suffered victimization at the hands of more aggressive inmates (Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). Thus, deprivation theory holds that some inmates, when placed in a prison environment that restricts them from satisfying certain needs, may suffer victimization at the hands of other inmates who use illegitimate alternatives to obtain need satisfaction (Clemmer, 1940; Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). The relevance of the deprivation perspective may have diminished over time because many of the environmental deprivations described by scholars such as Clemmer (1940) and Sykes (1958) were lessened as a result of the prisoner rights movement and the evolution of prisons from closed to more open systems (Irwin, 1980; Jacobs, 1977, 1980).

On the other hand, the prisoner rights movement also highlighted that prison conditions can impact inmate life, and researchers still recognize the importance of environmental influences on inmates' need satisfaction and adjustment. Scholars have discussed the psychological aspects of adjustment, with a specific focus on prisoner needs (e.g., personal control) and the consequences of hindering need satisfaction (e.g., violence; Goodstein, MacKenzie, & Shotland, 1984; Toch, 1977; Wright, 1985, 1991). As a result, some researchers have continued to examine the relevance of environmental characteristics of prisons (e.g., crowding and prison architecture) for predicting victimization based on the compatibility of these predictors with deprivation theory. General Strain Theory Explanations of prison violence and other forms of misconduct have been dominated by three competing models: (a) the deprivation model, (b) the importation model, and (c) the coping model. We propose that these three seemingly competing models can be integrated within Agnew's general strain theory (GST). GST enriches the deprivation model by revealing three distinctive categories of strain. GST encompasses the importation model in hypothesizing that criminal cultural values and affiliations will structure the response to the strains of imprisonment. And GST incorporates the coping model in its emphasis on how social support, social capital, and human capital can blunt the effects of potentially criminogenic strains. Finally, GST is sufficiently broad to include factors (e.g., emotions, self-control) in the explanation of prison maladjustment not covered by the three main models of prison inmate behaviour. In short, GST offers a general integrated framework for reconceptualising our understanding of prison violence and misconduct.

On the other hand, from his research, Bandura had formulated four principles of Social Learning Theory namely; attention, retention, reproduction and motivation. First, attention says that we cannot learn if we are not focused on the task. If we see something as being novel or different in some way, we are more likely to make it the focus of their attention. Social contexts help to reinforce these perceptions. Secondly, retention is we learn by internalizing information in our memories. We recall that information later when we are required to respond to a situation that is similar the situation within which we first learned the information. Thirdly, reproduction is we reproduce previously learned information (behaviour, skills, knowledge) when required. However, practice through mental and physical rehearsal often improves our responses. Lastly, motivation is about being motivated to do anything. Often that motivation originates from our observation of someone else being rewarded or punished for something they have done or said. This usually motivates us later to do, or avoid doing, the same thing. To sum up everything being discussed in the theories given, it can be applied since social modelling is a very powerful method of education. If children see positive consequences from a particular type of behaviour, they are more likely to repeat that behaviour themselves. Conversely, if negative consequences are the result, they are less likely to perform that behaviour. Novel and unique contexts often capture students' attention, and can stand out in the memory. Students are more motivated to pay attention if they see others around them also paying attention. Another less obvious application of this theory is to encourage students to develop their individual self-efficacy through confidence building and constructive feedback, a concept that is rooted in social learning theory.

For instance these programs could give them a chance to enhance their skills or capabilities which will improve the chances of the inmates to become a law abiding citizen. The program must aim to chain those who want to change and recover their previous unlawful behaviour. According to the conducted research by Barbara E. Varner, D. Ed. and Irene C. Baird, D.Ed. of Penn State Harrisburg, Middletown Pa. based on the journey of a successful ex-offender's personal learning. It states that process for Jonathan, the process of change and growth in learning continues to create new avenues of learning for himself and those around him. He discusses how he learned to teach others to teach, to be teachable himself; he learned how to form relationships, to have empathy for others and above all and learned to change and changed to learn.

### **Experiences of the informants**

Confronting the Aftermath - Delving into the narratives of the informants unveils a profound exploration of life's consequences. Each informant bore the weight of their past actions, acknowledging the repercussions of their wrongful deeds. Their experiences within the confines of incarceration stood as a poignant testimony to the payments required for the choices made. The informants candidly expressed their disappointment and the emotional toll of facing consequences that were neither easy nor forgiving. Despite the daunting challenges, they exhibited resilience, emerging from the shadows of their past into a realm of strength and personal growth.

The words of E.A Bucchianeri resonate profoundly with the experiences of the informants, echoing the sentiment that wisdom today safeguards against tears tomorrow. The narratives underscore the importance of thoughtful consideration and foresight in actions, recognizing that every decision carries inherent consequences. The informants' journey becomes a powerful illustration of the transformative potential found in adversity. The notion of being wise and a good thinker before acting takes center stage in the informants' reflections. The narrative aligns with the wisdom encapsulated in the quote, emphasizing the significance of making informed choices to avoid becoming a source of personal regret. The informants, having faced the consequences of their actions, advocate for a conscientious approach to decision-making, urging individuals to think twice and, in doing so, chart a course toward a more positive and fulfilling future. In essence, the discussion encapsulates the universal truth that life's journey is interwoven with choices and consequences. Through the lens of the informants' experiences, the discussion becomes a poignant reminder of the transformative power embedded in thoughtful decision-making, steering one away from the shadows of regret and towards a future bathed in newfound wisdom.

Navigating Respect in Confinement - As the researchers meticulously examined the responses provided by the informants, a disconcerting revelation emerged – some jail officers failed to treat inmates with the respect they deserved. The informants recounted instances where certain officers viewed them through a lens of judgment, branding them as inherently bad individuals. This perspective shed light on a critical issue within the correctional system – the importance of recognizing the inherent worth of every individual, regardless of their past actions. The essence of respect became a prevailing theme in the narratives, with the informants

emphasizing its significance in fostering unity within the confined environment. Regardless of their backgrounds or the circumstances that led them to incarceration, each informant voiced a fundamental human right – the right to be treated with dignity and respect. The narratives served as a poignant reminder that respect is not just a courteous gesture; it is the bedrock upon which a harmonious and supportive community is built. The Kantian theory, a philosophical perspective that has withstood the test of time, aligns seamlessly with the informants' plea for respect. Immanuel Kant's assertion that human beings possess 'an intrinsic worth, i.e., dignity' that transcends monetary value resonates profoundly with the experiences shared by the informants. Kant, standing in a long line of thinkers, believed in the exceptional nature of humanity. According to this perspective, humans hold a unique position, and their intrinsic worth demands recognition and acknowledgment. Contrary to this elevated view of human dignity, the informants' experiences highlighted the stark contrast in how some jail officers perceived and treated them. The Kantian principle, if applied universally, could serve as a guiding force in reshaping the interactions within correctional facilities. By recognizing the intrinsic worth of every individual, irrespective of their past, the correctional system could take significant strides towards fostering an environment rooted in respect, understanding, and the belief in the potential for positive transformation.

### **Impacts of experiences in the lives of the informants**

Transformative Power of Faith - The transformative power of faith is a profound force that reverberates through the lives of those who believe. Trusting in the divine will of God brings forth blessings and orchestrates the alignment of everything in its destined place. Patience becomes a virtue as we navigate the intricate tapestry of life, knowing that every challenge has a solution and every question finds its answer in the divine plan. Anchored in the unwavering goodness of God, individuals are called to carry out their endeavors with a profound reverence for the Lord and a commitment to goodness. As acclaimed journalist, producer, and author Germany Kent aptly puts it, 'Never give up hope. All things are working for your good. One day, you'll look back on everything you've been through and thank God for it.' This sentiment underscores the resilience embedded in the fabric of faith. Embracing the challenges with unwavering trust in God's plan, one transcends adversities and emerges on the other side with gratitude for the miraculous journey. Kent's words serve as a testament to the transformative nature of faith, where each trial becomes a stepping stone, and every tribulation unfolds as a testament to God's benevolence.

Prayer becomes the conduit through which one communicates with the divine, and the fear of the Lord becomes the guiding principle in every action. With God, as the source of strength and guidance, individuals find solace in the midst of chaos and assurance in the face of uncertainty. The call to 'pray and wait' encapsulates the essence of this transformative journey, where faith transforms challenges into opportunities and patiently awaits the divine unfolding of a greater, purposeful plan. In this sacred journey of faith, everything is not only fine but divinely orchestrated, leading to a profound sense of gratitude for the miracles bestowed upon those who trust and believe.

Seizing Opportunities for Positive Change - The overarching theme encourages a conscious departure from the shackles of

the past, recognizing it as a valuable lesson, and advocates a resolute focus on the present moment. Amidst the complexities of societal existence, the imperative to be a virtuous, reliable, and contributive member underscores the essence of meaningful living. The ongoing journey invites individuals to adapt to their societal milieu, embracing roles as active followers, attentive listeners, and continually evolving into better versions of themselves.

As articulated by Eckhart Tolle, a revered spiritual teacher and author from Canada, 'Realize deeply that the present moment is all you have. Make the NOW the primary focus of your life.' This profound insight emphasizes the transformative power embedded in the present moment. The call to focus on the now becomes a guiding principle, steering individuals towards a heightened awareness of the opportunities for positive change that exist in every unfolding moment. Tolle's wisdom serves as a beacon, urging individuals to anchor themselves in the present, recognizing it as the epicenter of transformative potential. In essence, the theme encourages a proactive stance in navigating life's journey, seizing every opportunity for positive change. The unfolding days offer a canvas for personal growth, societal integration, and the relentless pursuit of becoming a better, more enlightened individual. Embracing the philosophy that the present moment is a gateway to transformation, individuals are empowered to shape their destinies, instigate positive change, and contribute meaningfully to the tapestry of their existence.

#### **Coping of informant's situation while inside the jail**

**Embracing Humility** - In the intricate tapestry of life, discipline emerges as a guiding force, shaping how individuals navigate the complexities of their circumstances. A profound understanding of proper conduct becomes the bedrock upon which one can build responses to various situations. This facet of personal development underscores the importance of self-awareness – an intimate knowledge of one's strengths, weaknesses, and the nuances of one's character. Discipline, coupled with the virtues of respect and humility, stands as formidable weaponry against the adversities that life unfolds. The interplay between self-respect and external respect becomes a pivotal dynamic that dictates the tone of every interaction. An insightful quote from an anonymous source resonates with this sentiment: 'Your relationship with yourself sets the tone for every other relationship you have.' This dictum encapsulates the profound influence that personal comportment wields on the broader relational landscape. Essentially, the discussion underscores the transformative power embedded in humility. By cultivating discipline, understanding oneself, and nurturing an ethos of respect, individuals become architects of harmonious relationships. The call to 'compose oneself and be a person of value and virtue' emerges as an anthem, encouraging individuals to be conduits of positivity and fruitful interactions within the spheres of family and friendship. In essence, embracing humility becomes a catalyst for personal growth and the creation of meaningful connections with others.

**Transformative Wisdom Through Life's Lesson** - Within the intricate fabric of life's tapestry, every circumstance and experience unveil invaluable lessons, serving as the crucible in which transformative wisdom is forged. Each challenge, each triumph, becomes a chapter in the grand narrative of personal growth, contributing to an ever-expanding reservoir of

knowledge. These lessons, akin to treasures gleaned from the journey of life, offer profound insights that prepare individuals for the next set of challenges that lie ahead. The notion that 'lesson learned is a great idea for you to be ready and be wise' encapsulates the transformative power inherent in extracting wisdom from one's experiences. It is through these lessons that individuals not only gain practical knowledge but also acquire the foresight and discernment necessary for navigating the complexities of life. Drawing inspiration from the words of Julius Caesar, 'Experience is the best teacher,' reinforces the idea that experiences, both positive and challenging, are indispensable instructors in the school of life. They offer a firsthand understanding of what it means to face adversity, find solutions, and dispense advice rooted in lived encounters. The caveat to approach experiences with caution underscores the nuanced nature of learning – while experience is a teacher, prudent reflection and discernment are essential to distill the true wisdom embedded within.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study delved into the multifaceted aspects of the experiences of former inmates in Mandaue City Jail, unraveling a tapestry woven with resilience, transformation, and the indomitable human spirit. The thematic exploration navigated through the consequences of actions, the dynamics of respect within the correctional facility, the transformative power of faith, embracing humility, seizing opportunities for positive change, and the wisdom derived from life's lessons. First and foremost, the findings underscored the profound impact of consequences on the lives of the informants. The experiences within the correctional facility were construed as a form of payment for past transgressions. Despite facing disappointment and downheartedness, the former inmates exhibited remarkable strength, choosing resilience and personal growth over despair. The study resonates with the profound wisdom encapsulated in the words of E.A. Bucchianeri, urging individuals to be wise today to forestall tears tomorrow. It accentuates the importance of thoughtful decision-making, advocating for responsible citizenship and the avoidance of regretful actions. Furthermore, the discussion shed light on the nuances of interactions between inmates and jail officers, emphasizing the paramount importance of mutual respect. While some officers were perceived as not handling inmates well, the study evoked Immanuel Kant's philosophy, stressing the intrinsic worth and dignity of every individual. The Kantian perspective challenges the notion that humans are merely instruments serving specific purposes and underscores the universal right to be treated with respect. This insight advocates for a paradigm shift in correctional facilities, fostering an environment where respect is reciprocal, irrespective of an individual's past.

The thematic exploration also unveiled the transformative power of faith, with informants attesting to the solace, guidance, and strength derived from their beliefs. Germany Kent's poignant quote serves as a beacon of hope, urging individuals never to give up and affirming that all experiences, no matter how challenging, work for their ultimate good. The findings align with the profound message that with faith, one can overcome adversity, find gratitude in the midst of trials, and experience the transformative miracles that life has to offer. Additionally, the study highlighted the theme of seizing opportunities for positive change, encouraging former inmates to focus on the present and become valuable contributors to

society. The words of Eckhart Tolle resonated, emphasizing the significance of embracing the present moment as the primary focus of life. This theme advocates for a mindset shift, urging individuals to leave behind the baggage of the past and actively engage in the opportunities for positive change that the present affords. Embracing humility emerged as a key theme, emphasizing the transformative power of discipline, self-awareness, and respect. The study echoes the sentiment that one's relationship with oneself sets the tone for all other relationships. The anonymous quote employed in the discussion accentuates the ripple effect of personal values and behavior, asserting that one's conduct reverberates through all other relationships, thereby emphasizing the importance of humility and good manners. Finally, the discussion encapsulated the transformative wisdom derived from life's lessons. The experiences within the correctional facility were framed not merely as punitive measures but as profound opportunities for growth and learning. The words of Julius Caesar resonated, underscoring the invaluable nature of experiential knowledge. However, the study advocated for a cautious approach, acknowledging that while experience is a teacher, prudence and discernment are indispensable in navigating life's intricate journey.

#### IMPLICATION FOR PRACTICES

**Reformative Approaches in Correctional Facilities:** The findings of this study imply a need for reformative approaches within correctional facilities, focusing not only on punitive measures but on holistic strategies that foster personal growth, resilience, and positive transformation among inmates. Correctional institutions should prioritize educational programs, vocational training, and psychological support to equip individuals with the skills and mindset necessary for successful reintegration into society. The emphasis should shift from mere incarceration to creating an environment conducive to rehabilitation and self-improvement.

**Enhanced Training for Correctional Officers:** The study underscores the importance of respectful interactions between inmates and correctional officers. There is a clear implication for the enhancement of training programs for correctional officers, emphasizing empathy, communication skills, and an understanding of the intrinsic worth of every individual. By fostering a culture of mutual respect within correctional facilities, officers can contribute significantly to creating an atmosphere conducive to rehabilitation and positive behavioral change among inmates. Training programs should encompass psychological insights, conflict resolution strategies, and techniques to handle diverse situations with sensitivity and professionalism.

#### IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE STUDIES

**Exploring Long-Term Effects of Correctional Programs:** Future studies could delve into the long-term effects of various correctional programs and interventions on individuals post-release. This would involve tracking the reintegration experiences of former inmates over an extended period, assessing the sustained impact of rehabilitation efforts, and identifying factors contributing to successful community reintegration. Understanding the durability of positive changes can inform the refinement of existing programs and the development of new, effective initiatives.

#### Comparative Analyses Across Correctional Facilities:

Another avenue for future research involves conducting comparative analyses across different correctional facilities to identify variations in rehabilitation practices and their outcomes. By studying institutions with diverse approaches, researchers can pinpoint successful models and practices that contribute to positive inmate transformation. This comparative approach can provide valuable insights for policymakers, correctional administrators, and practitioners seeking evidence-based strategies for fostering inmate rehabilitation and reducing recidivism rates.

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