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Lived Experiences of Jail Officers on High Congestion Rate of Person Deprived of Liberty in Jail During Pandemic

Edelyn V. Claveria,* Jeralyn D. Jordan, Kyla M. Malasique, Adrian Christian D. Pugate

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented problems to correctional facilities globally, increasing issues of overcrowding and public health. This study delves into the lived experiences of jail officers during the pandemic, focusing on their experiences with high congestion rates among persons deprived of liberty. Twelve participants were given detailed semi structured interviews to investigate their lived experiences, and the data was analyzed utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis. This study exposes the many challenges that these jail officers encountered as they reached an intricate setting where health, safety, and justice all intersected. Findings discuss the emotional experiences, health risks, and personal problems experienced by jail officers while upholding their duty of care. Moreover, this study emphasizes the importance of lawmakers actions and reform within the criminal justice system to ensure the safety of both jail officials and inmates as well as following public health crises. The experiences of jail officers, who were first hand witnesses of the pandemic's outcome on the prison population, provide light on important facets of our society's behavior to these unprecedented conditions. This study informs concerning future readiness and change in the criminal justice system and helps us understand the intricate dynamics that existed within correctional facilities throughout the epidemic.

Keywords: *deprived, pandemic, congestion, lived experiences, jail*

Introduction

One of the most important parts of the criminal justice system is the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). A Jail officer is a member of the staff at a detention facility, prison, or jail who works to fulfill the aims of the institution by ensuring that order and control are maintained inside the confines of the institution. In spite of the fact that a jail officer plays a very important part in the operation of a prison, with the specifics of that part changing depending on the facility, it is essential that we recognize that these unassuming and unobtrusive watchmen are working inside of correctional institutions. Daily reasonability is faced by jail officers everywhere. They are responsible for all law enforcement responsibilities in country, state, and federal prisons. 469,500 prison officers work alternating 8–10-hour shifts, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015). The Bureau says jail officers face risk and stress. Every year, many inmates spread diseases to jail staff. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2015) also estimates that the total number of persons who are currently serving time in jail throughout the United States is around 6,741,400 according to Statistics from the Bureau of Justice (2015). It is predicted that having a knowledge of the reasons why other correctional facilities are overcrowded would likely give credible explanations for why the county jail is similarly overloaded. Despite the epidemic's broad nature, prison staff's experience with the huge flood of Person Deprived of Liberty remains unknown. To enhance detention facility administration and help detainees and jail officers, jail officials' life experiences must be understood.

According to Cook (2015), the issue of overcrowding is one that has plagued the country jail ever since the 1980s. In an effort to acquire a better understanding of the problem of overcrowding in prisons, a number of studies have been conducted, but each of them has concentrated on the role that jails play as temporary detention facilities. Jail congestion is the one that accommodates more prisoners than its ideal capacity (Bautista 2014). As stated by Paunan (2023), the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) has reported that the congestion rate of the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) per cell in their facilities has increased from 367% from the previous 600% on it. Currently there are 260,000 PDLs inside their 478 jail facilities nationwide according to their chief jail inspector named Jayrex Bustinera. The 367% congestion rate is a big drop compared to 600% which was recorded in 2018 during the war on drugs of the former president. But 367 is still a high rate for congestion and the facilities are not enough to accommodate everyone. Focusing in Calabarzon, there are 26,126 inside the jail including the sentenced and detainees as of September 30, 2022. To support the claims, according to Tabingo (2022), Calabarzon is host to the country's worst jails when it comes to overpopulation. The San Mateo Municipal Jail (Male dormitory) holds a congestion rate with over 2,696 percent and Dasmariñas City Jail (Male dormitory) with 2,283 percent.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) states that psychological stress is a relationship between the person and their environment, which also reflects on how they perceive their own lives. The concept of stress at the workplace, or occupational stress, can also be defined as a pattern of our emotional, psychological, cognitive, and behavioral states when workers are presented with work demands that are not fit for their own knowledge and skills or abilities and that also challenge their ability to cope. In the situation of jail officers, they may love their work, but the understaffing and their environment produce stress for them. Moreover, they are also exposed to risks and threats about the violence inside the jail (Pittaro 2017). In terms of what is happening during the pandemic, guidelines for responding to COVID-19 prisons. World Health Organization (2020), health organizations, and jail facilities are working together to share information and collaborate on crisis management, prevention and control, treatment, and the exchange of information. It is important to take immediate action in order to prevent the spread of the virus. At the same time, there is no initial plan or agreement on how to

resolve the problem because of overcrowding (Simpson et al., 2019).

Moreover, according to Bautista (2014), due to the high density of people and close living conditions, detention institutions like jails have been heavily affected by the pandemic. When a prison is crowded, it is carrying more inmates than it can safely hold. Because of these circumstances, it is difficult to prevent the spreading of the COVID-19 virus because it also poses a risk to the health and safety of both the detained individuals and the jail staff. Overcrowding in jail facilities is now the primary cause for worry. The city, the district, and the state all continue to struggle with the problem of traffic congestion. The presence of municipal prisons exacerbates other problems, which may result in gang violence, outbreaks of sickness, and even fatalities in certain instances (Taeza, 2000).

According to the research (Williams, 2014; Cuninif, 2002), the issue of overcrowding in rural correctional institutions is not as significant as it is in urban ones. Based on the findings of the prior study, the judicial system does not have the financial stability required to provide sufficient finances for the operation of the institutions. The problem of overcrowding in correctional institutions has to be investigated further in order to ensure that enough funding is allocated to these facilities. In spite of the efforts made by the government to enhance the circumstances of modern prisons, the vast majority of jails and prisons around the nation are in poor condition.

However, there have not been many studies conducted on the relevance of safety and security in an overcrowded correctional institution. There was just one study that looked at occupational risk factors for SARS-CoV-2 infection in prisons. Work at a detention center or a stand-alone high security institution (cell-based housing) was protective among Federal Bureau of Prisons employees against contracting COVID-19, while work in a stand-alone low-security institution (dormitory setting) or correctional complex with multiple facilities increased risk (Toblin et al., 2021). As a result of our research, we discovered that there is a greater quantity of international literature than there is of local study. In addition to this, we discovered that there is a greater quantity of quantitative study regarding the jail officer on how increasing the numbers of persons' deprived of liberty with that there is an insufficient quantity of qualitative study regarding the lived experiences of jail officers.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the lived experience of jail officers in managing the high congestion rate of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) in jails during the pandemic. Through a phenomenological approach, this study seeks to provide insights into their challenges, well-being, and coping mechanisms when it comes to providing care and services to persons deprived of Liberty (PDL).

Research Questions

Given that living on congested PDLs during a pandemic can have both positive and negative consequences for jail officers, this study seeks to investigate and understand the experiences of jail officers in Calamba City, Laguna. The specific objective was to answer the following question:

1. What are the lived experiences of a jail officer in managing the high congestion rate of persons deprived of Liberty during the pandemic?

Methodology

In this section, we discussed the methodological processes that were used in order to obtain the data that was relevant to the study topics. It describes the research strategy, the study region, the sample, and the sampling methodologies that were used. The specifics are as outlined in the following description.

Research Design

The study is a form of qualitative research in which it explores personal lived experiences of other people particularly the jail officers. This provides insights in understanding their own perception and experiences. The researchers use an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) design to understand their experiences.

According to Smith et al. (2009), as a qualitative tradition, IPA comes with its own publication. It is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experiences and aims to be conducted in such a way that it also helps to express different experiences based on their own terms rather than depending on predefined category systems and this is how it makes an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). It will utilize the design in connection to the high congestion rate of PDLs and the lived experience of a jail officer in their work that needs to be studied and understood. Studying this matter will help jail officers be acknowledged for the work that they do and discover the real-life scenarios inside the jail that need improvement. The interviewee will provide their own experiences, and the researchers will be the one to interpret.

Participants

The study will be conducted in Turbina, Calamba City, Laguna; this is where the jail officers work. Lambert (2003) says that jail workers often deal with criminals. Jail staff contact a broad range of people, including serious criminals and non-criminals. Mentally sick, inebriated, aggressive, suicidal, and foolish. According to Griffin (1999), prisons are coercive institutions, and even ordinary contacts between officers and prisoners take place in a context of organized conflict. Thus, the risk and fear of jail employees being

sued for the performance of their duties may be greater than among many other professions. This selection of the sample will be based on the following criteria in order to qualify for this position: (1) The jail officer must have worked in a BJMP, as one of their primary responsibilities is to handle the Person Deprived of liberty. (2) They are required to have a minimum of three years of experience in their profession since, with more years of working in the profession, they get the ability to interpret their own lived experiences that they have had in their chosen field. (3) They must be assigned to Turbina, Calamba City, Laguna. who were afflicted by the high levels of congestion that were experienced during the pandemic. (4) There are no qualifications for jail officers, regardless of gender, who work in the prison.

Instruments

For the purposes of this research, face-to-face interviews will have a semi-structured format consisting of open-ended guiding questions that have been carefully developed and are pertinent to the topic at hand, with the opportunity to expound on and study certain areas in greater depth. According to DeJonkheere and Vaughn (2023), the primary objective of gathering information via semi-structured discussions for the purpose of data collection is to get information from critical sources who have their own experiences, ideas, thoughts, and beliefs regarding the subject matter of interest. Additionally, a specialist who is knowledgeable in both the fields of psychology and public safety will validate the objectives of these interviews. The goal of these interviews is to have a better understanding of the perspectives of jail officers about the experiences they faced in managing the high congestion rate of PDLs in jails during the pandemic.

Procedure

The following procedures would be used by the researchers during the data collection process. Before proceeding to the actual research interview, researchers will need to submit the proposed study to the ethics committee. Once the conduct study has been approved by the committee, researchers will validate the research instrument with the validators. Upon processing, researchers will look for participants who meet the participants' selection requirements. Following that, once the research instrument has been validated, researchers will obtain informed consent from participants. The process of signing to an informed consent will begin after the participants have been briefed on the purpose of the study. Once everything is in order, the researchers will conduct in-person interviews for approximately 1 hour, or as long as it takes. Participants will be asked to answer the questions accurately and honestly. An interview will use a semi-structured interview through using in-depth open-ended questions and follow-up questions. After the interview, notes will be taken to allow the researcher to keep track of important points that they'll bring up when analyzing the data. Researchers will ensure that all interview responses are verbatim transcribed. Following data saturation, the researchers will interpret and analyze the data collected. The researchers will strictly adhere to the participants' anonymity and will not reveal any personal information about them.

Data Analysis

The data analysis plan utilized by the researchers in this study is an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as a method to gather and look into jail officer's experiences in order to get thorough information from all participants about how they make sense of their personal and social worlds.

According to Smith et al. (2009), IPA is most appropriate for studies that aim to investigate detailed examinations of personal lived experience. In this case, the phenomenon of this study is how jail officers deal with the high congestion rate of persons deprived of liberty (PDL) in jails during the pandemic. The approach is particularly focused on the personal meaning and sense-making of experiences that are significant to a person (Smith & Shinebourne, 2010). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis explores how the participants are making sense of their world and consists of the following steps: The first step was to create a research question and select a sample, which in this case was "What is the lived experience of a jail officer in managing the high congestion rate of Persons Deprived of Liberty during the pandemic?" The researchers interviewed people until the data was saturated. The next stage was to collect data through interviews. The interpretative phenomenological analysis requires a versatile data collection device or tool, particularly for qualitative data. A semi-structured interview was used for this study to allow the researcher to investigate issues outside of the interview guide.

After determining the type of interview to be used, an interview schedule had to be created. An interview schedule allows us to focus on what the respondent is to be answered. The interview schedule served as a guide for developing interview questions. The study questions began with broad ideas and progressed to more details.

After effectively developing the interview questions, the researcher carried out the interviews in order to gather the data needed for the study. The option of recording the interview must also be looked into. The researcher asked whether the respondent agreed to be recorded or not. It was recommended in this type of analysis that the interview session be recorded so that the researcher did not miss any important details.

Following the interview and transcription of the interview, the researcher read and re-read each transcript multiple times in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. The next step was initial noting, in which researchers included all significant data with regard to the topic in question. Researchers assure that they have recognized relevant statements and meanings being constructed in the step. In line with this, the data has been understood, clustered, and categorized according to common themes. Moving on to the

next case, previous themes have been bracketed to emphasize the distinctive characteristics of each new case. Then, in the next step, researchers looked for patterns across cases and patterns of shared attributes across cases. Then, in the last portion of the analysis, we deepened the claims by incorporating metaphors.

The data from this research was collected and analyzed using steps of Charlick et al. (2016) which is adapted from Smith (2009). Significant themes and meanings were interpreted through rigorous analysis of data to formulate the composite findings for this research study.

Ethical Considerations

Voluntary participation

The participants are jail officers from the City Jail in Turbina, Calamba City, with a minimum of three years of experience in the field. Researchers have informed the jail officers that they are always allowed to stop contributing if they change their minds and have asked them to openly inform the researchers if there are any negative impacts in the future after their involvement in this study. The researchers have carefully chosen participants who engaged in the study and will be willing to cooperate without being forced. Therefore, if anything happens in between, it is the right of participants to leave our program of this nature at any time. The researchers will clarify to the jail officers that there will be no pressure if they ever choose to discontinue their participation.

Informed consent

Researchers have informed the jail officers about all of the contents of the research and what it is for, which may affect their willingness to participate. Researchers honored the right of jail officers to decide for themselves whether or not they wanted to take part in the study by providing the officers with the chance to either agree to or decline participation in the study, as well as the option to end their involvement in the study at any point.

Anonymity

Researchers will ensure the confidentiality of information and the identity of participants by not mentioning their names or other personal information so that no one will be able to access their data but the researchers, as they are the program coordinators. Researchers will therefore exclude any reports or published documents about data privacy that might harm or cause negative effects on the participants.

Safety from potential harm

The participants' safety will be ensured by the researchers. Researchers will need the jail officers' suggestions and ideas to better understand their situation, particularly their point of view on the high congestion rate of PDLs, who probably have more responsibilities when it comes to managing PDLs in jail, in order to better understand them and not cause them stress, pain, anxiety, low self-esteem, or invasion of privacy. The evaluation process will protect and not harm the rights and lives of all participants.

Results and Discussion

This section of the study looks at the process of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to see how participants understand the significance of their experiences as prison guards dealing with PDL on congestion rates. Its implications include coping resources, workplace difficulties, personal obstacles, and job satisfaction. Standpoint. Aside from studying how they deal with their issues, this will investigate how they deal with the PDL. To protect their identity, the twelve (12) participants were identified as participants initially. Through the utilization of interpretative phenomenological analysis, the following themes were extracted:

Main Theme 1: Coping Resources

The first theme refers to the coping resources that are employed by the jail officers to manage the stress that they are experiencing while performing their jobs. This major theme includes the following subthemes: Healthy Coping Mechanisms and Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms.

Sub-theme 1: Healthy Coping Mechanisms

Jail officers' experience of stress in the performance of their jobs may lead them to employ coping mechanisms. Some individuals utilize coping mechanisms that are healthy and can actually help them improve themselves further.

“during pandemic ahmm mahilig ako sa basketball ayun yung aking ginagawang relax kapag ako ay na eexperiences na problem sa aking pag handle sa mga PDL. Kahit na ako magisa na e enjoy ko maglaro at magpapawis. Minsan din nag cecellphone ako para duon ako mag focus at para hindi ko maisipan yung mga situation” - (Participant K.L.; lines 41-44)

“coping mechanism edi kung hindi nakikipag usap sa kanila thru videocall sa mga mahal mo sa buhay pag yung kahit nung times na kahit yung pakikipag usap mo ay hindi narin nakakatulong yung ano yung samahan namin dito, yun na din yung naging coping mechanism tsaka yung mga activities na ginagawa naming dito sa loob so off kami, maglalaro kami ng ganto mga ganyan” - (Participant C.E.; 40-43)

“kami dito lalo nung pandemic ang ginagawa namin ay ano physical exercise, basketball, volleyball, tawag sa pamilya.. ah kung ano ano activities para maibsan ang boredom at para mawala yung stressed siyempre tatawag sa pamilya lalo kapag hindi nakaka-video call.” - (Participant B.A.; lines 96-97)

Three of the participants K.L., C.E and B.A stated that physical activity or exercise is a way for him to cope with the stressors at work. Just like in the study in this article, coping behaviors refer to what people do in response to the stressful situation during COVID-19 (Cypriyaska & Nezlek, 2020), and participating in various types of physical activities is considered a coping strategy to mitigate the negative effect on mental health and enhance well-being (Faulkner et al., 2020). It was mentioned that jail officers engage in activities to relieve the stress that they are feeling. Aside from that, the three participants are using social media to communicate with their loved ones. According to the research conducted by Brooks et al. (2020), social media platforms have become more important in facilitating and maintaining interpersonal connections. These platforms provide users with a method to stay connected with friends and loved ones, thereby reducing feelings of separation and boredom. These characteristics have been associated with elevated levels of stress and persistent psychological distress. As a result, these platforms have emerged as a significant recommendation for those experiencing isolation at home, with the intention of alleviating the psychological effects linked to their situation.

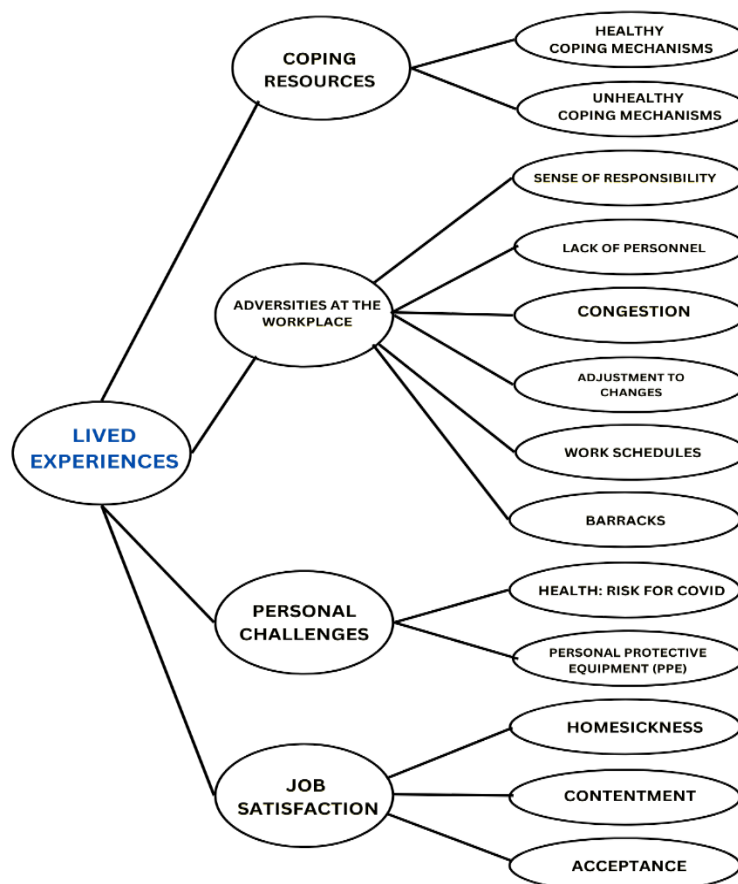


Figure 1. Summary of Themes

Sub-theme 2: Unhealthy coping resources

On the other hand, one way jail officers deal with stress is to drink alcohol after work. He thought it would help him get out of a difficult situation. He mentioned that this is a form of relaxation.

“kami ang totoo lang kaming mga lalaki syempre alcohol day pero hindi naman gabi-gabi Alcohol lang. relax time lang once a week. Alcohol tas yun paglabas lang sa gabi kami kami magkasama” - (Participant R.N.; lines 62-64)

One of the jail officers has mentioned that his coping mechanism is drinking alcohol to relieve his emotional distress in these situations. In addition, they provided individuals with a feeling of pleasure and emotional tension relief, which serve as his coping strategy while dealing with the PDL. According to Sinha (2012), alcohol intake is a popular stress-reduction approach. According to McGrath, Jones and Field (2016), stress is widely recognized to increase the amount of alcohol consumed as well as the chance of relapse, but little is understood about the psychological mechanisms that underpin these effects.

Summary of themes

Coping resources increase the mood and decrease stress among jail officers. Having social support is also vital for managing job stress, and utilizing social media during a pandemic is a means of connecting with someone and communicating to obtain emotional support from their family. On the contrary, alcohol can lead to addiction and stress rather than relaxation; even moderate drinkers are unhealthy.

Theme 2: Adversities at the Workplace

The second major theme covers how jail personnel handle adversity at work and how they respond to the institutions that employ them. The majority of work adversities they encounter are seemingly normal, and others seem impossible to overcome. This major theme includes the following subthemes: Sense of Responsibility, Lack of Personnel, Congestion, Adjustment to Change, Work Schedule and Barracks.

Sub-theme 1: Sense of responsibility

This sub-theme explores jail personnel's sense of responsibility toward the PDLs. Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) found out that employees' sense of responsibility for their jobs contributes to performance, which in fact influences their satisfaction. It shows that jail officers' power to direct as well as collaborate with PDL, even in an informal manner, can be an important attribute in taking responsibility at work. It also demonstrates preparedness and dedication for carrying out obligations and tasks in an effective and timely way. This type of action indicates that something needs to be addressed. Furthermore, this has a beneficial impact on someone's life, given that they are aware of a particular duty. It is useful in the development of strong personal and professional relationships or connections.

One of the participants mentioned that because he has been at his job for a long time, he has become familiar with carrying out job responsibilities in dealing with the PDL. According to an article by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2002), if you have enough qualities, you can fulfill an obligation within a certain function or work.

“sa una mahirap pero habang tumatagal ay nasasanay ka kase paulit-ulit lang yung ginagawa ko sa trabaho ko. Kaya nafa-familiarize ako sa pagha-handle ng mga PDL.” - (Participant P.P.; lines 24-26)

Participant R.N. added that as personnel, they were helping each other by escorting or assisting the PDL in and out of jail. According to the article Escort Officer—College Policing (2023), they are responsible for the secure detention, care, and welfare of detained individuals while escorting them to custody or other locations on behalf of arresting officers. Researchers have identified some of the factors that threaten officers well-being and safety during the time that they transfer and maintain the welfare of PDLs. It is due to the lack of resources and control mechanisms to provide safety and security through the increasing number of PDLs. (Lambert et al. 2018).

“nagtatawag kami ng mga kasamahan diyan sa custodial sa ibang team o kaya dito sa ibang administration namin ng jail. Nagpapatulong kami sa kanila para maescortan namin yan na safe sa labas para makabalik kami dito sa loob na safe din yung pdl” - (Participant R.N.; lines 32-37)

Meanwhile, participant B.A. expressed that his work is challenging in some ways, yet he is happy to do his job, given that it is a source of income that motivates him to do his responsibility as a jail officer. It was mentioned by Ray (2019) that challenges and diversity in the daily grind keep work interesting.

“masaya na may nabibigay na responsibility samien kase in a way na ito yung source ng aming income and yung responsibility ay hindi ganun kadali. Mas nabibigyan kami ng sense of responsibility dahil dito.” - (Participant B.A.; lines 15-17)

Finally, according to participant A.A., he established boundaries among PDLs to allow proper discipline by adhering to the jail's rules and regulations. According to Panaccio et al. (2014) on boundary conditions in which servant leadership influences follower outcomes and leads to followers adopting a serving orientation.

“pinapakita mo lang sa kanila na may gap tayo, kung ano trabaho namin ay ginagampanan namin.” - (Participant A.A; lines 61-62)

Moreover, according to Luthar & Cicchetti (2000), adversity is traditionally characterized as "the negative life circumstances that are known to be statistically associated with adjustment difficulties". A lot of individuals believe that when they experience change, it is a negative thing that is associated with them, even if they know it is something that is natural to experience. Since crises occur, protection and vulnerability qualities determine how well an individual adjusts when faced with adversity. Protective variables are defined as "factors that modify the impact of risk in a favorable direction," according to Luthar and Cicchetti (2000). Because the ability to adjust to changing circumstances is essential to managing the jail and the people confined within it, these occupational challenges have an impact on the participants' ability to adjust and acquire the resilience, skills, and strong relationships required to successfully manage the ups and downs in their employment. However, regardless of whether they experienced occupational challenges or adversities at work, it considerably benefits individuals' ability to adapt and develop the resilience, abilities, and strong relationships needed to successfully manage the ups and downs of working life.

Sub-theme 2: Lack of Personnel

This explores how jail personnel consider a personnel shortage in jail, which is one of the main issues facing the jail system. Participant A.A. claimed his job was challenging. Regardless of a shortage of personnel, the participant indicated that he performed his assigned duties. The study by Lentz et al. (2022) found that the COVID-19 pandemic has deteriorated public safety personnel (PSP) working conditions, while a staff shortage is increasing the impact on maintaining workers.

“oo, nagkukulang kami gayunpaman nagagampanan naman yung bawat trabaho kaso mahirap yun ah” - (Participant A.A.; 133-134)

In addition, participant K.L. and participant A.R. stated that there was also a lack of personnel during the pandemic. Each individual's duty hours are long, both in and out of jail. According to Hong et al. (2022), individuals working long working hours immediately raise workers' work requirements and increase the possibility of being exposed to factors that contribute to occupational stress.

“Yes, during pandemic siguro kasi gawa ng dutyhan natin dati ay medyo matagal tsaka matagal din nasa labas” - (Participant K.L.; lines 70-71)

“ mahirap kasi duty kami ng twelve hours ilang linggo bago kami nag shift tagal tagal kaming na ganon siguro isang buwan kami pang umaga ganon” - (Participant A.R.; lines 27-31)

Lastly, participant R.A. emphasized having or adding more jail personnel in or out of jail to be more effective in handling situations.

“ano din naman siguro yung karagdagang personnel lang para mas effective pa yung ano, mas effective pa yung paghandle namin sa labas” - (Participant R.N.; line 76-77)

Participants are perceived to be very resilient due to their strong image in the society they are serving. Investing significant portions in hiring more staff is an effective way to achieve institutional objectives or for the development of institutions (Hinkin & Tracey, 2000). In fact, they create the cornerstone of one institution; without them, there is no upward mobility.

Sub-theme 3: Congestion

This sub-theme 3 examines the high congestion rate in jail, particularly during the pandemic, and how it affects the emotional state of both inmates and jail personnel. This has been considered a threat or risk element in terms of emotional state. According to the World Prison Brief (2020), jail personnel's productivity is hindered by the physical construction of the building and the high congestion rate. Participant A.A. mentioned that when the facility is congested and not well ventilated, he sometimes experiences moodiness because of the atmosphere inside the jail.

“Nakakaapekto ito sapagkat kapag marami kang binabantayan minsan sa mga noise sa loob at sobrang init sa loob kapag kami nag roroving doon nakakaapekto sa atmosphere nagiging moody ka minsan kasi sobrang init sa loob at ingay di mo makontrol sa dami nila. Tapos minsan puyat pa at minsan shifting ang duty namin kaya nagiging moody ka talaga.” - (Participant A.A.; lines 11-16)

While participant A.A. and participant A.P. confirm that there is a high congestion rate of PDL during the pandemic inside the jail due to the delay of court hearings, According to Sourdin and McNamara (2020), there is a delay in court proceedings due to the crisis, which has shifted from traditional face-to-face sessions to online legal procedures helped by internet technology in order to maintain a focus on gaining access to justice.

“Oo, masasabi ko talaga high congestion rate kasi diba mayroon tayo meters meters sa bawat katabi natin eh diba sobrang dami nila sa isang dormitory yung space sa loob” - (Participant A.A.; lines 30-31)

“nung time kase ng pandemic 730 mahigit pa tas ngayon medyo bumaba na kase para sakin mas madami ang lumaya.. kase medyo na-delay sa hearing nung pandemic” - (Participant A.P.; lines 86-87)

Lastly, participant B.A. pointed out that one of the challenges that they experience during congestion is that when there is a new commit, they will try their best to just make them fit together in the dormitory.

“Yun yung isa sa mga challenges namin kapag may mga co-commit ng bago dun malalagay sa isolation area. Kapag ka sobrang puno na pagkakasyahin nalang sa mga dorm” - (B.A.; lines 48-50)

Sub-theme 4: Adjustment to changes

This examines how jail personnel cope with changes or deal with new challenges that arise during a pandemic. The fact that a crisis is not a common phenomenon has a major effect on participants (Tomczyk & Walker, 2021). In addition, according to Lawton-Misra and Pretorius (2021), in an emergency, officials must be able to perform under pressure and under unpredictable circumstances. Among all of them, participants P.P., A.A., R.T., and B.T. said that there were changes during the pandemic, given that it was essential to follow the new guidelines on how they would manage PDL.

“nagkaroon ng pagbabago kase kailangan natin iayon ang mga nangyari sa labas at kailangan sumunod sa nangyari sa labas at sa mga memorandum galing sa labas kung paano namin i-handle ang aming trabaho.” - (Participant P.P.; lines 27-30)

“sa paghandle ng pdl ang ginagawa namin kung ano yung sa rules and regulation namin yun ang pinapatupad dito sa loob” - (Participant A.A.; lines 7-8)

“meron mga challenges na kailangan namin i-adjust upang hindi magkaroon ng covid 19 ang populasyon ng buong dormitory katulad ng may mga bagong guidelines na ginagawa ang DOH dun kami nag-adjust hanggang sa paunti-unti hanggang sa napatupad ang mga policies ng DOH mas naging madali yung paghahanda ng situasyon ng covid 19” - (Participant R.T.; lines 29-33)

“yung mga challenges po kase dito bukod sa congestion rate yung.. yun nga yung security.. paano namin hinahandle 'yon. Mas pinapalawak namin yung intelligence namin.. yung 'pag collect ng mga information sa loob mas naga-undergo kami ng mga training kung paano mag-handle ng.. ng jail security and siyempre merong ano guidance ng aming warden.” - Participant B.A.

On the other hand, participant K.L. states that he had experienced adjustments to their lifestyles as the pandemic's stay in jail was extended.

“siguro yun sa isang tao na hindi ka sanay ng ganun yun yung ginagawa mo sa isang bagay na every duty mo di ba dapat pwede kang makauwi or every other day makakauwi ka pero dahil nagka pandemic medyo tumagal yung stay mo dito sa loob na hindi ka makalabas even bibili ka sa labas hindi ka makabili kaya medyo nagbago yung lifestyle” - (Participant K.L.; 27-30)

Sub-theme 5: Work schedules

This sub-theme explores the jail officers who put in extra hours on duty to deliver quality work. In line with this, Weston et al. (2004) stated that long working hours have a direct as well as indirect effect on both the individual and their family; it really affects family time and life. Participants: M.P., R.T., and A.R. claimed how challenging the long shift hours were to work in jail, which really affected their time with their family.

“halos 24 hrs kami dito for 3 days so minsan hindi balance yung work and family life namin. So minsan.. facilities so naga-adjust nalang kami sa off. Nandito lang kami sa facilities kung kailangan para at least kapag may emergency mabigyan namin na basic na panlunas sa kanila.” - (Participant R.T.; lines 59-60)

“mahirap kasi ano duty kami ng twelve hours ilang linggo bago kami nag shift tagal tagal kaming nagganon siguro isang buwan kami pang umaga ganon pag kami nakalabas nun pandemic pa labas kami mga isang linggo lang tapos balik kami dito swab pero pagka swab namin, dun na lang kami tengga muna kami dun sa may likod sa barracks loob hangga't wala pang result ng swab. - (Participant A.R.; lines 27-31)

“kami non 12 hours, straight straight kasi yung duty namin non. Straight ka pang umaga” - (Participant M.P.; line 71)

“medyo ano lang sya pag panggabi ka kasi straight ka, within 16 days ano ka panggabi ka lang so parang nakakasunog ng katawan unlike sa umaga regular yung tulog mo tas duty ka maghapon pagod ka, tulog ka ng maaga tas gising ka ulit ng maaga kumbaga hindi sya toxic sa katawan unlike pag panggabi ka kasi sunugan yung katawan mo” - (Participant M.P.; lines 78-81)

Sub-theme 6: Barracks

The final sub-theme discusses the experiences of jail officers when it comes to their barracks during the pandemic and up until now. According to the Association of United States Army (AUSA, 2023), the lack of barracks and conditions had a significant impact on military personnel's well-being. Participant R.N. states that even though the facility is large, it is still not enough to accommodate all the jail officers.

“may barracks dun sa likod. Malaki naman po pero kulang pa rin...” - (Participant R.N.; line 92)

“improvement naman talaga sa dito aah yung mismong facility na yung mas maraming ano yung dorm, yun lang naman talaga ang needs improvement ng buong bureau.” - (Participant C.E.; lines 58-59)

“dito sa Calamba, ang kulang dito ay barracks ng personnel.” - (Participant R.N.; lines 89-90)

Summary of theme

Overall, adversity at work presents diverse examples of how the majority of participants overcome it, while others are hoping for solutions to their issues. In general, they were still considered to be flexible and adaptable to change. Despite the differences in the challenges they've faced, it puts their organizational flexibility to the test. The most important thing is that they are knowledgeable about managing the unpredictable changes that are occurring, like COVID 19. It assessed participants' capacity to foresee any prospective threats.

Theme 3: Personal Challenges

Personal challenges are one of the main themes that have been part of this section in view of the fact that it discusses the involvement of personal experiences of jail officers that occurred to them during the COVID-19 pandemic. This tackles what they feel during that time and how they are able to cope in that kind of situation. The anxieties that they feel. Part of this main theme is the sub-theme of

health, wherein under this is the risk of COVID that jail officers encounter, and the second theme is homesickness, where they elucidate what they do in order to somehow get rid of their longingness for their family.

Sub-theme 1: Health

Sub-theme 1.1: Risk for COVID

The sub-theme 1.1 under the health section is the risk of COVID. Jail officers shared their experiences dealing with the circumstances that they faced during that time. The anxiety if they carry a virus when they get to visit their family and also the congested environment in jail dorms also make them wonder if the virus will easily spread throughout the dorm, and for them, it is very risky, especially their health, and their PDLs are also at risk.

“Siguro sa environment din, kasi sa loob medyo mainit ganun pag iikot ka sa loob mainit, tapos syempre maraming maraming sila maraming pdl medyo ah risky parang ganun... hindi sa security rin namin yung nakakaapekto siya” - (Participant K.L; lines 19-21)

“hindi kami agad nakakauwi sa amin kasi pandemic nga nun di ba kailangan pa ng mga pag uuwi ka kailangan iquarantine ganun so medyo matagal yung process bago ako makauwi sa inyo” - (Participant K.L; lines 23-25)

“Tapos kapag uuwi ka pa kailangan may mga swab test pa tapos quarantine ka pa pagbalik dito ..tas yung nami-miss mo yung pamilya mo lalo kapag nasanay ka so yun yung talaga nakakastressed dun.” - (Participant B.A; lines 71-77)

According to Taylor et al. (2020), studies have shown that the fear related to the fear of COVID infection, such as fear of oneself and fear of getting your family members infected, is also experienced by jail officers, and participant B.A. also shares that he can't help but also feel homesick and stressed because of the long time that he has been away from his family.

Sub-theme 1.2: Personal Protective Equipment

The sub-theme 1.2, which is also under the sub-theme of health, explores the vital role of personal protective equipment (PPE), particularly in the context of limiting workplace dangers or preventing the spread of illness. PPE is an umbrella term that refers to a variety of specialized tools and equipment intended for protection against various risks and health dangers. Oladeru (2020) states that in this desperate time, the nation must reassure correctional officials and healthcare workers that they won't be abandoned or further demonized for attending to the needs of those who are imprisoned. It is essential to the wellbeing of our entire society. Participant M.P., Participant P.P., Participant R.C., Participant K.L., and Participant A.R. stated that they are very thankful because they really feel the support and the needs that they need during that time, not just for themselves but also for the health of the PDL.

“like face mask, alcohol, pangdisinfect, nabibigyan po kami ng local government. Bale periodic po yung pagbibigay nila eh.” - (Participant M.P.; lines 105-106)

“ayos naman naaano naman ng local tapos may mga ano kase yun eh may mga ibang na galing din sa regional office na gamit” - (Participant P.P; lines 62-63)

“we are very thankful na ang Calamba ay suportado ng local government unit at syempre hindi lang yun dahil sa obligasyon nila pero dahil sa suporta at compassion sila sa pagbibigay ng suporta sa atin.”- Participant R.C

“nabibigyan kami nun like mga personal hygiene pati yung mga pdl nabibigyan din sila mga alcohol face mask yung mga essentials pa like food ganon nabibigyan na” - Participant K.L; lines 46-47)

“binibigyan kami, tapos galing din meron din sa ano galing region meron din” - (Participant A.R; line 24)

As reported by the World Health Organization (2020), one of the best methods for protecting patients and healthcare professionals against transmissible infections is the proper use of PPE. When there is no effective cure or preventative measure available for a disease, as is the case with COVID-19, this technique becomes even more crucial. Healthcare professionals must adhere to the strict regulations that call for the use of the proper PPE when caring for patients with COVID-19 that has been confirmed or is suspected.

“mayroon naman kami sinusuot kapag kami ay nag-roving sa loob at meron din kaming swab kapag kami ay papasok sa duty” - (Participant A.A; line 34-35)

According to Wallace (2021), At first, public health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention disputed the necessity of masks. Mask mandates then had a politicized component. The majority of the participants also explain that they are really supported by the government when it comes to their safety and health needs during the pandemic. and for them, they really supply their needs and feel the support of the government when it comes to their health.

Sub-theme 2: Homesickness

Homesickness is a common feeling of longing or distress that people often experience when they are away from home or familiar surroundings. This is characterized by a deep emotional connection to one's feelings of comfort and familiarity. It can also manifest in various ways and affect all ages, just like what jail officers experience. Here are the participant statements when it comes to their

experiences during the pandemic and being away from their family for a longer time than usual:

“Pero syempre at the end of the day paghiga mo, mami-miss mopa rin sila. Syempre dun sa pagmi-miss na yon gagawa ka ng paraan para maaaring makita sila tulad ng social media, mas maaano, buti nalang merong social media na mas mabilis mo silang aa makakapag-communicate, lagi mo silang kausap, syempre kamustahin at syempre samahan natin ng pagdarasal” - Participant R.C

“minsang hindi kami nakakauwi sa pamilya tapos may time na mami-miss mo sila pero may cellphone way of communication sa kanilang nawawala dun pagka-bored” - (Participant A.P; lines 35-37)

Participant R.C. and participant A.P. shares that at the end of the day, they still miss their loved ones, and as their way to cope and ease their longingness for them, social media is a great help to communicate and check on their family to see how they are. Prayer is also one of their ways to show how much they care for their family. Despite the experience of being separated from their family, they get into this kind of situation where they are far away from each other. Although it's hard for them, they have a duty as officers.

“3 months kaming walang labasan sa jail ay talagang kahit sinong, kahit sinong tao makakaramdam talaga ganon pagka ano, pagka-homesick din talaga kasi hindi naman kami sanay sa ano eh, sa ganong sitwasyon.” - (Participant J.M.; lines 61-65)

“nasanay kasi kami ng nung walang pandemic lagi kami nakakauwi after one week nung pandemic siguro bago may nakauwi mga three months three months, bago ako makauwi kaya kaya mahirap nung pandemic” - (Participant A.R.; lines 15-17)

“Nung times ng pandemic challenging talaga yon kasi syempre dati nakakauwi kami, nakakauwi kami sa pamilya katulad ng nangyayari ngayon. Pero noon halos isang buwan na nandito lang din kami parang considered as kulong lang din kami” - (Participant C.E; lines 35-37)

“Nakaka-stress talaga kase bigla yung ganong situation hindi ako makatulog ng ayos. Though galing kami sa training na may 6 months bago makauwi iba yung nandito na nasanay ka na palagi kang nakakauwi pagkatapos ng duty mo tapos bigla dadating yung pandemic na ganon di ka basta-basta makakauwi” - (Participant B.A.; lines 71-77)

“tas yung nami-miss mo yung pamilya mo lalo kapag nasanay ka so yun yung talaga nakakastressed dun.” - (Participant B.A; lines 76-77)

The long separation that jail officers experience from their families during that time can lead to loneliness, job exhaustion, and family conflict, according to Liu et al. (2020), and based on the statements of jail officer participants, their experiences are really challenging for them given that they have a long time before they can be together with their family due to COVID restrictions. Jail officers get used to being away from their families to work, but the pandemic really hits them because they have uncertainty about when they can be with their loved ones again, which causes them sadness and homesickness.

Summary of themes

The prison guard talks about the events that occurred during the pandemic. The difficulties they faced personally and how they overcame them. Because family is crucial to their ability to function, they call their loved ones whenever they are apart in an effort to lessen the feelings of longing that they have. Because of the cramped conditions in jail dorms, people can't help but occasionally worry about taking chances for COVID. They also agree that the local government does promote personal protective equipment (PPE) for their protection against the infection.

Theme 4: Job Satisfaction

The last main theme is about the job satisfaction of jail officers when it comes to their work experiences. Moreover, the first sub-theme, Contentment refers to their level of satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment through their job. This reflects on how well the jail officers' expectations and desires align with their actual work situation. And the last sub-theme is Acceptance which research participants share that it is part of their job.

Sub-theme 1: Contentment

Contentment within a workplace is a fundamental sub-theme of job satisfaction that embodies the sense of fulfillment that employees acquire through their work. As jail officers provide their statements, participant J.M. explains that his work is a mixture of challenging work but also a fulfilling duty for him.

“Mahirap na masarap. Masarap kasi syempre pag naka nakapa.. tawag dito, nalilibang mo ba uuh kahit papano naiibsan yung pagkaburyo nila during lockdown time nung pandemic” - (Participant J.M.; lines 6-7)

Moreover, participant A.A. and participant C.E. express passion for their chosen profession, which is why they really enjoy doing their job because it was one of their dreams and desires during their college days. They often express gratitude for their professional opportunities and report a heightened sense of purpose in their work.

“Oo, gustong gusto kasi ito naman ang propesyon talaga namin eh yung sa tribu kasi kami eh ano ako ay graduate ng criminology yun ang propesyon talaga namin..” - Participants A. A

“Oo, kasi yun talaga yung ano eh yung pinili mong landas eh simula nung first year college” - (Participant C.E; line 45)

In every goal that we have for ourselves, there is an embedded passion that we hold. However, passion cannot simply manifest everything in our good lives, and jail officers work for it. Every goal that they have for themselves is embedded in a passion that they hold through their work. Working for their dreams and working for their family is what keeps them going. Just like Delos Reyes (2023) says, optimism and hope can get you so far; they must be ready to recognize and accept the advantages and disadvantages of every course or path they choose for their future.

Sub-theme 2: Acceptance

When it comes to acceptance, sub-theme 2 discusses the statement of jail officers that even though they experience getting tired of their work, they have no choice but to continue because it is their chosen work to do in order to fulfill their duties.

“Oo, ito talaga kasi yung pinasok namin yung trabaho, so kailangan dapat sa trabaho lagi kang masaya lang para hindi ka mistress” - (Participant K.L.; lines 59-60)

“wala naman kaming choice talagang ano namin trabaho talaga namin yun..” -Participant A.R

A simple way to move beyond the idea of acceptance is to first clearly identify the situation in which you must make a decision, then expand your perspective to begin seeing more options. According to Thompson (2021), every action you take is a choice of one thing over others in terms of what to do, what to say, what to believe, and how to respond. When thinking of having a “choice-less” dilemma, take the time to become aware of your continuum of choices, drop the helpless language of “being without choice,” and trust in the ability to decide. Every time people make a decision, their awareness of their authority over their lives will gradually grow and that is how acceptance works. Jail officer knows how to deal with the situation.

Summary of theme

Job satisfaction was one of the great factors that influenced jail officers to do better through their work. This main theme shares the insights of every participant and their own thoughts when it comes to their experiences at work. contentment and also the lack of options at their work, but at the end of the day, they still choose the things that they love and enjoy doing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explores the lived experiences of different jail officers in handling PDL on congestion rates during the pandemic. Through an interpretative phenomenological approach, this study seeks to provide insights into the challenges, well-being, and coping mechanisms of these officers when it comes to providing care and services to Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL). These findings show that jail officers have dealt with the stress and risk of their duties as well as the extra stress of working in a prison during a pandemic. that can affect their well-being and the productivity of their performances. Jail officials claimed that several things inside the BJMP face these challenges, such as needing to wear massive personal protection equipment (PPE) before entering the dormitories, which makes it difficult for them to function properly. Aside from that, we found out that working the 12-hour night shift, not being able to go home as they are in lockdown, a lack of personnel, and being congested

The stressors of each participant were somehow similar, as well as the ways they coped with them. A lot of the participants, based on an in-depth investigation, know how vital technology is for keeping these officers in touch and helping them deal with their feelings when they are away from their families. In addition, this study shows the many ways that jail staff dealt with the large number of PDLs during the pandemic. Since they are experienced, they are aware of how to deal with those difficulties, which probably helps them adjust to the situation during a pandemic. In the end, it's clear that knowing what it was like to work as a jail officer during COVID-19 is important for the establishment of safety measures and support systems that will help field jail personnel deal with stress and stay healthy during future breakouts.

The following are the recommendations of the researcher to further improve the research study for the future interest of the readers or other researchers and eyeing to explore using an interpretative phenomenological approach. (1) Adding health care professionals inside jail. Integrating healthcare professionals into the jail system can significantly enhance the overall health and well-being of inmates as well as jail officials, reduce the burden on emergency services, and enhance public safety. This would be an essential intervention approach in times of crisis for de-escalating situations involving mentally ill inmates. (2) Additional barracks for Jail Personnels. Adding barracks for jail personnel during times of crisis when they are not allowed to go home can be a strategic move to ensure the continued operation of the correctional facility. This approach provides a safe and practical solution for staff who must remain on-site for extended periods. This addition of barracks will serve as equipped with essential amenities for jail staff comfort, including sleeping quarters, restrooms, and communal areas. (3) Additional Dorms for an Isolation Area. Overcrowding in jail is one of the serious issues. Adding additional dorms can be a practical solution. This approach helps improve the living conditions for isolated inmates while enhancing safety and security in jail. But first, conduct a thorough space assessment to determine the feasibility of adding new dorms. Consider available space, budget, and the facility's capacity. (4) Upgrade Ventilation System. Practicing proper ventilation that incorporates ergonomic considerations within congested jail settings is crucial for maintaining a healthy and safe environment for both inmates and staff. Investing in efficient Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning or HVAC systems with adequate capacity for the

number of occupants Use high-efficiency filters to improve air quality while optimizing the use of available space.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Edelyn V. Claveria

National University – Laguna, Philippines

Jeralyn D. Jordan

National University – Laguna, Philippines

Kyla M. Malasique

National University – Laguna, Philippines

Adrian Christian D. Pugate

National University – Laguna, Philippines