



Entrepreneurship behind Bars: A reintegration and rehabilitation program for Persons Deprived of Liberty

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Abstract

Despite the nation's high prison occupancy rate, the government's dedication to the rights and welfare of Persons Deprived of Liberty is demonstrated by the creation of reintegration and rehabilitation programs meant to enhance the living conditions of prisoners.

In order to encourage rehabilitation, productivity, and institutional sustainability, this study looks into how entrepreneurial training activities might be included into correctional facilities. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the PDLs' perspectives, knowledge, and training requirements regarding entrepreneurship as a possible source of income after release from jail and become a self-reliant member of the society. A structured questionnaire focusing on the respondents' demographic profile, entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities, perspectives toward entrepreneurship, and preferred training methods will be used to collect data using a descriptive-survey approach. The foundation of the study is the idea that entrepreneurship can promote economic productivity, self-reliance, and responsibility—elements necessary for a successful reintegration back into society.

The findings will serve as the foundation for creating appropriate entrepreneurship training programs that blend academic and real-world methods, giving prisoners skills in marketing, financial management, business planning, and innovation. The project proposes a correctional setting that encourages social inclusion through livelihood empowerment by converting jails into a home of learning giving a brighter hope to every PDLs.

Keywords: *empowerment, entrepreneurship, productivity, reintegration, rehabilitation, sustainability, self-reliance.*

INTRODUCTION

In line with the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which include social protection, decent work, employment creation, workplace rights, and social dialogue as essential components, the Philippines has made significant strides in developing reintegration programs to assist former Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) as they transition back into society. The Philippine Constitution lay the foundation for the fair treatment and reintegration of Persons Deprived of Liberty. With the goal of establishing a more compassionate and encouraging atmosphere for individuals who have been denied their freedom, these initiatives show the Philippine government's commitment to attending to the needs and rights of PDLs. Additionally, the Agenda restates in many areas the necessity of creating jobs for vulnerable populations, including low-income urban dwellers, women, the urban poor, and jobless.

This study's primary goal is to evaluate the PDLs' entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and capacities in order to ascertain what kind of entrepreneurial training would be most appropriate for them along with their training preferences and perspectives.

As a social and economic activity, entrepreneurship promotes independence, creativity, and self-reliance that are crucial for people looking for a second chance. Learning how to start and manage small business can help prisoners become financially independent and less reliant on outside assistance once they are released from prison. Additionally, it tackles unemployment and the ensuing propensity for re-offense, two of the most urgent post-release issues. An innovative solution to this problem is the use of entrepreneurial training as inmates near their release dates. Proponents of these programs claim that training inmates to become successful entrepreneurs solves two problems at once: inmates that receive entrepreneurial training not only have a lower probability to recidivate, but they also work to reverse the historically low overall rates of entrepreneurship in the United States (Davis et al., 2014; U.S. Census, 2016). Correctional facilities may turn incarceration into a time of empowerment and preparation for a sustainable living by offering entrepreneurship training programs.

Some theories collectively support the idea that entrepreneurship education can serve as a powerful rehabilitative and reintegrative strategy within correctional institutions.

Gary Becker highlighted that educationally gained knowledge and skills are kinds of capital that boost economic worth and employability. PDLs benefit from entrepreneurial training as an investment in their human capital since it gives them self-reliance, financial literacy, and business skills that they can use once they are released. Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964)

Correctional interventions, according to (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000), should focus on reforming criminals via education, skill development, and personal development rather than just punishing them. According to this notion, PDLs can transform and reintegrate into society if they are provided with worthwhile learning and empowerment chances. Such an opportunity is made possible by entrepreneurial training, which promotes self-discipline, inventiveness, and responsibility—all of which are essential components of recovery. Rehabilitation Theory (Cullen & Gendreau, 2000)

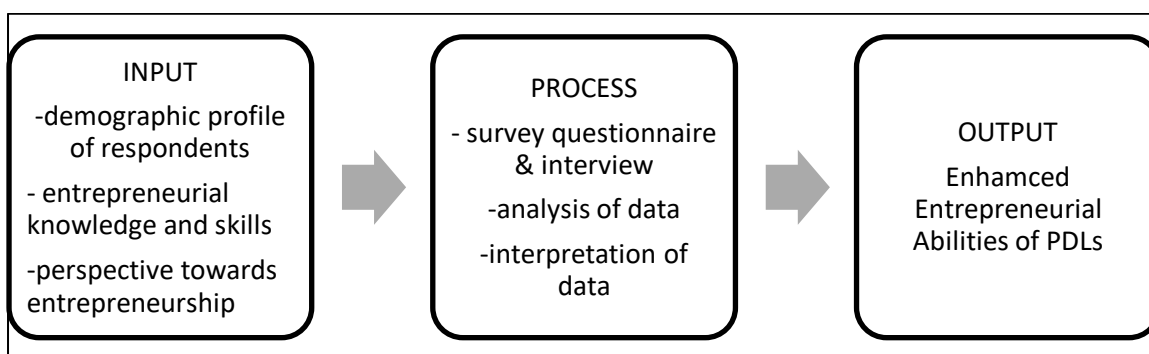
According to Albert Bandura, people pick up new attitudes, abilities, and behaviors through modeling, imitation, and observation. Inmates can learn through guided practice and positive reinforcement in an inmate-centered entrepreneurship training program that includes group activities, mentorship, and real-world business simulations. Building confidence and changing behavior are encouraged by this experiential approach, both of which are essential for a successful reintegration. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)

Additionally, empowerment theory describes how people acquire competence, self-efficacy, and a feeling of purpose in order to take charge of their life. PDLs are given the tools they need to take control of their financial destiny, develop their sense of value, and make constructive contributions to their communities after they graduate thanks to entrepreneurship education. They become active change agents rather than passive beneficiaries of rehabilitation when they are empowered with knowledge and livelihood skills. Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 1995)

Further, these theories demonstrate how entrepreneurship education provided behind bars can turn incarceration into a chance for personal growth.

Recognizing the substantial effort of the government to introduced rehabilitation and reintegration program of PDLs, this paper seeks to determine the appropriate entrepreneurship training program based from prior knowledge and skills and their preferences and perspectives and it is in this context that the researchers has conducted this study to help the government attain its goal in reintegration and rehabilitation program. Results of this study will make a significant contribution to policy makers in the realization of the goals of the reintegration program for PDLs and at the same time attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



The conceptual framework showed the parallel relationship using the INPUT-PROCESS-OUTPUT model. The Input where demographic profile of the respondents, entrepreneurial knowledge and skills and perspective towards entrepreneurship were assessed, the interview and used of survey questionnaire, analysis and interpretation of data consisted the process and Enhanced entrepreneurial abilities of PDLs consisted the Output.

METHODOLOGY

This study involved the twenty-nine (29) Persons Deprived of Liberty who are currently incarcerated at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), Cabarroguis, Quirino. This utilized a descriptive research design employing the survey method to determine the entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, perspectives, and training needs of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). Data were gathered thru questionnaire and interview, analyzed, and interpreted to serve as the basis for developing a proposed entrepreneurial training program suitable for correctional institutions. Data gathered will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as: Frequency and Percentage – to describe the demographic profile of respondents. Weighted Mean – to determine the level of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Ranking – to identify priority training needs and preferred methods. Qualitative responses from open-ended questions will be analyzed through thematic analysis, identifying common themes and insights regarding entrepreneurship and rehabilitation. Ethics and protocols were observed to ensure fairness, transparency and respect for individuals involved. This is to maintain data integrity, protection of rights and well-being to promote social responsibility. Permission from the Jail Warden were granted to conduct interview and administer questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Age	f	%
20-29 years old	10	34
30-39 years old	9	31
40-49 years old	7	24
50+ years old	3	10
Sex	f	%
Male	25	86
Female	4	14
Civil Status	f	%
Single	12	41
Married	11	38
Widowed	3	10
Separated	3	10
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	f	%
No formal education	2	7
Elementary	9	31
High School	14	48
College level	4	14
Vocational/Technical	0	0
Length of Stay in the Facility	f	%
Less than 1 year	10	34
1-3 years	13	45
More than 3 years	6	21
Previous Occupation	f	%
Laborer / construction	11	38
Vendor / small business	7	24
Service industry	5	17
Others	6	21
Monthly Income before Detention	f	%
Below ₱5,000	21	72
₱5,000–₱10,000	6	21
₱10,001–₱20,000	2	7
Above ₱20,000	0	0
TOTAL	29	100

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents where participants are dominated by male, most of them belong to age category of 20-29, mostly are single and attained high school education. Most of them stayed for 3 years and became laborers before going to jail and with monthly income of 5,000 pesos only. Research over time has consistently shown that men are more likely to commit crime than women, contradictory to the statement of Roy Walmsley, 2017 who observed that while female arrests have decreased in countries like Portugal and Uruguay that have loosened their laws on drug use and trafficking, incarceration rates for women have been rising in the majority of Latin American and Southeast Asian countries throughout the twenty-first century. (Walmsley, 2017). The number of female inmates worldwide rose by 50% between 2000 and 2016, despite the fact that female incarceration is still much lower than male incarceration. The number of men incarcerated increased by 20% throughout that time (Walmsley, 2017).

Table 2. Entrepreneurial Knowledge and Skills

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Business planning and idea generation	2.76	Fair
2. Basic accounting and record-keeping	2.14	Poor
3. Marketing and sales strategies	2.48	Poor
4. Managing finances and budgeting	1.83	Poor
5. Leadership and teamwork	3.14	Fair
6. Time management and productivity	3.00	Fair
7. Creativity and innovation in business	3.28	Fair
8. Customer service and communication	3.14	Fair
9. Problem-solving and decision-making	3.21	Fair
10. Risk-taking and self-confidence	2.72	Fair
GRAND MEAN	2.77	Fair

Table 2 presents the entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of the PDLs. Data reveals that creativity and innovation in business has the highest mean of 3.28 and verbally interpreted as “Fair” which means they have prior skills in business before going to jail. This indicates that skills are important component in rehabilitation. More precisely, a key component of rehabilitation is creating the skills inmates need to help them with daily tasks like recognition, interpretation, reflection, response, and planning. Jolley, M. (2018). The results of the study of (Ciptono, W. S., 2023) demonstrate that inmates' entrepreneurial intentions have not been directly impacted by the prison entrepreneurship program. Nonetheless, the prison entrepreneurship program significantly and favorably boosts inmates' self-efficacy and entrepreneurial resilience, which in turn promotes the development of entrepreneurial ambitions. For inmates who have never attended entrepreneurship training or had any prior entrepreneurial experience, entrepreneurial resilience was found to have no effect on their aspirations to pursue entrepreneurship. Ciptono, W. S., Anggadwita, G., & Indarti, N. (2023)

Table 3. Perspective Toward Entrepreneurship

Statements	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. I believe I can become a successful entrepreneur after release.	4.24	Strongly Agree
2. Entrepreneurship can help me rebuild my life.	4.38	Strongly Agree
3. I am willing to take risks to start a small business.	4.10	Agree
4. I am interested in learning how to run a business.	4.52	Strongly Agree
5. Entrepreneurship can help reduce re-offending.	4.34	Strongly Agree
6. I prefer to be self-employed than to work for others.	4.24	Strongly Agree
7. Entrepreneurship programs should be part of rehabilitation.	4.55	Strongly Agree
8. I am confident I can apply what I learn in training.	4.14	Agree
GRAND MEAN	4.31	Strongly Agree

Table 3 presents the Perspective towards entrepreneurship. Data reveals that most of the respondents have a positive attitude or perspective towards entrepreneurship which means that they have willingness to undergo training so as to prepare themselves for a reintegration back into the society. In the current era of sustainable development, which promises to leave no one behind, it is crucial to design and execute comprehensive policies based on internationally established norms and standards, giving both released individuals and prisoners the opportunity to fully participate in

society. (Gisler, C., Pruin, I., & Hostettler,). Additionally, entrepreneurial skills among ex-offenders are also influenced by self-confidence and entrepreneurial literacy. (Ibrahim, F., Zainal.,et.al, 2025). According to this article, these many applications of entrepreneurship as a tool for rehabilitation and reintegration offer fresh perspectives on the nature of entrepreneurship as well as the creation and restoration of social bonds and personhood via commercial trade. (Marshall, H. J. (2018).

Table 4. Training Needs and Preferences

Type of entrepreneurship training interests you most?	f	%
Food processing	0	0
Handicrafts and souvenir making	9	31
Clothing and tailoring	3	10
Agribusiness/livestock raising	0	0
Small retail or vending business	5	17
Others (product assessment, marketing)	12	41
Preferred mode of training	f	%
Face-to-face workshops	8	28
Hands-on/practical sessions	14	48
Lectures with visual aids	4	14
Mentorship or coaching	3	10
Preferred training duration	f	%
1 week	5	17
2–4 weeks	17	59
1–3 months	6	21
More than 3 months	1	3
What do you expect to gain?	f	%
Livelihood skills after release	13	45
Personal development	4	14
Financial literacy	9	31
Employment or business opportunities	2	7
Others (confidence, marketing)	1	3
TOTAL	29	100

Table 4 presents the Training needs and Preferences of the Respondents where most of them prefer to be trained in marketing and prefer it as hands on experience and it should be done in shorter period of time. Most of them expects that they will be provided with livelihood skills after release. Entrepreneurial development focusses on individuals who wish to start or enlarge their businesses by concentrating more on growth potential and innovation (Aminu, 2021). Mandela believe that entrepreneurship programs are effective in reducing recidivism.

Mandela, S. N. (2015). Peled-Laskov, R., & Timor, U. study's general finding is that inmates view employment in prison-run businesses as beneficial and contributing to both lessening the harm that incarceration causes and increasing the possibility that the prisoner will be rehabilitated through work after being released. Peled-Laskov, R., & Timor, U. (2018). Additionally, we discover that entrepreneurship is a good alternative job option for people who have served time in prison, as it results in lower recidivism rates and greater incomes. Hwang, K. J., & Phillips, D. J. (2024). Moreover, Martins, J. M., (2023) in his study's findings demonstrated that entrepreneurial intention is positively impacted by peer, institutional, family, and self-efficacy support. Entrepreneurial intention is also strongly influenced by risk-taking prowess, entrepreneurial inventiveness, and mastery of entrepreneurial abilities.

Table 5. Challenges and Expectations of PDLs

Question	Common Theme / Answer	f	Respondent Statements / Notes
What challenges do you think you may face in starting a business after release?	Lack of financial capital	9	" We lack supplies," "lack of capital," "insufficient funds to get started"
How can the institution help you become an entrepreneur?	Provide ongoing entrepreneurship & financial literacy training	7	"more training in financial literacy cum entrepreneurship", "I hope there is more training to come"
What kind of support (materials, capital, mentoring) would you need most?	Capital / seed money	8	" Capital is the most important thing," "capital to purchase equipment"
What motivates you to join entrepreneurship training?	Desire to gain financial literacy and budgeting skills	5	" We want to learn how to properly budget money," "financial literacy for business"
TOTAL		29	

Table 5 presents the challenges and expectations of PDLs after the training program. Most of the respondents expressed their desire to own and manage a small business to start a new life, rebuild their self-esteem, become a self-reliant and dependable constituents of the society. Table showed that the main problem is on lack of financial capital as one of the respondents stated that.... "“We lack supplies,” ...”lack of capital,” “insufficient funds to get started”... this only means that they have the eagerness to start a business but there is no capital to finance the business. Just like other businessman who also experience financial problem to run the business. Others stated that " more training in financial literacy cum entrepreneurship", "I hope there is more training to come". This is in congruence with what the researchers are proposing to have a series of training on entrepreneurship to hone them on the different aspects of entrepreneurship. " Capital is the most important thing," "capital to purchase equipment"this is what most of them answered when asked what kind of support they want. They really want to start a business only then if provided with capital. Another respondent stated that " We would like to learn how to properly budget money", "financial literacy in running a business". Providing them with training will surely give them self-determination to start even a simple but decent source of income. Moreover, given the challenges people encounter in obtaining gainful employment after being released from jail, entrepreneurship is becoming more and more recognized as a creative answer for these individuals. Robinson, F., & Fernhaber, S. A. (2024). Opportunities for more consistent engagement and a higher likelihood of effective reintegration results would arise from increased participation from civil society and local government. Sumpter, C.et al., (2021)

With continued collaboration between BJMP, DOLE, and other government agencies, the initiative aims to strengthen the rehabilitation and reintegration process for former PDLs, enabling them to contribute positively to their communities and break the cycle of incarceration.

<https://journal.com.ph/former-pdl-receive-livelihood-assistance-through-scdj-aftercare-program/>.

CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that although the majority of PDLs have little formal entrepreneurial experience, they show a strong interest in and favorable attitude toward entrepreneurship as a means of subsistence and reintegration. Most of the respondents said they were excited to take part in real-world, hands-on training courses in retail operations, food processing, small business management, and handcraft manufacturing. Additionally, the respondents saw entrepreneurship as a way to become self-sufficient, regain one's dignity, and avoid recidivism after being released from prison. Thus, this study is very important as a starting point in providing entrepreneurship training necessary to meet the goal of reintegration and rehabilitation program for the PDLs. Create and carry out an organized entrepreneurial training program that is suited to PDLs' interests, learning style, and available resources. Lessons on product development, marketing, financial literacy, business planning, and innovation should all be part of the training program.

In addition to being a reintegration and rehabilitation program, entrepreneurial training for inmates is a life-changing experience that promotes self-worth, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Correctional facilities can develop law-abiding, responsible, and productive citizens who are prepared to make significant contributions to society by providing education and livelihood skills to inmates.

RECOMMENDATION

A structured entrepreneurship training program catered to the interests and educational requirements of PDLs should be implemented by correctional facilities in light of the findings. In order to prepare participants for self-employment following release, the program should offer practical skills in business planning, financial literacy, marketing, product development, and livelihood opportunities. In order to offer technical support, mentorship, and post-release assistance, partnerships with government agencies, academic institutions, and private organizations are also encouraged. Future research may look at the long-term effects of entrepreneurship training on successful reintegration, employment, and recidivism among former PDLs. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be carried out to improve program effectiveness.

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