

How Family and Self-View Affect Unvisited Persons Deprived of Liberty

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Abstract. Unvisited persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) face internal challenges that shape their well-being and behavior within correctional facilities, often leading to societal misinterpretations. This study investigated the self-perception and familial connections of unvisited PDLs, aiming to foster a more profound understanding of this marginalized group. Through a phenomenological approach grounded in labeling and narrative theories, the research collected insights from 20 unvisited PDLs purposefully selected across age groups at a correctional facility in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, five recurring themes emerged. Results indicate that unvisited PDLs view family as a crucial support system during incarceration; yet, the absence of family visitation has profound impacts, generating negative thoughts that weigh heavily on their emotional and psychological wellness. Coping mechanisms enable unvisited PDLs to manage these emotions and build resilience throughout incarceration. Participants also identified labels and stigmas they experience, highlighting society's pervasive misconceptions about unvisited inmates. Despite often being overlooked, unvisited PDLs express a strong desire for societal empathy and understanding. This study underscores the importance of family presence in the lives of incarcerated individuals and reveals the detrimental effects of societal stigma on their mental health and self-worth. In response, it calls for society and legal systems to enact supportive initiatives that strengthen rehabilitation and reintegration pathways for unvisited PDLs, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic community.

Keywords: Criminal psychology; Familial ties; Incarcerated; Prisoner well-being; Self-perception.

1.0 Introduction

Within the complex domain of the criminal justice system, the struggle to balance punishment and rehabilitation often overlooks the unique stories and challenges of incarcerated individuals, particularly those with limited or no visits from loved ones. For inmates without stable familial ties, adapting to the restrictive conditions of correctional facilities becomes even more intricate. The absence of crucial familial support results in heightened social isolation and a profound sense of detachment from the world beyond prison walls, amplifying the difficulties faced by persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). Currently, incarcerated individuals grapple amidst the exigencies encountered within the correctional facilities, enduring both physical and emotional challenges in the absence of visitors. The isolation prompts reflection on mental health, self-image, and the ability to maintain relationships with loved ones. This profound detachment sparks an exploration into the impact of lacking familial support on their sense of self, significantly influencing their connections with family during this challenging time. These factors often influence the behaviors of PDLs inside correctional facilities, potentially

causing violence or effects on well-being due to crisis and dilemmas. As these are reported, false abstractions or stigmas associated with being a prisoner, especially an unvisited one, may arise. These misrepresentations or misconceptions affect public perception of the inmate population, at least in foreign countries such as America and Nigeria.

Despite extensive research on state prisons in foreign countries, there remains a dearth of studies focusing on Philippine correctional facilities and the dynamics of its PDLs. Studies conducted abroad have emphasized the need for further exploration across different populations regarding the replication and expansion of visitation and misconduct measures, inmates' self-perception in relation to visitation, and the examination of familial relationships (Siennick et al., 2013). Additionally, research suggests investigating inmates' roles and identities during prisonization (Paterline & Orr, 2016), which may explain how self and familial perception change and form again inside prison. Public perception of inmates also varies depending on cultural context (Salihu, 2018), as evidenced by differences in opinions between Americans and Nigerians (Garland, 2013; Osayi, 2015). Given these gaps in the literature, there remains a need to understand how unvisited PDLs perceive themselves and their family in the absence of familial visitation and how the lack of visitation shapes their sense of identity and emotional well-being in the process. Moreover, an exploration of how incarceration influences their familial ties is necessary to comprehend the broader implications of imprisonment on relationships outside prison walls. Equally important is the examination of the social stigma surrounding unvisited PDLs, as these misconceptions contribute to their marginalization and hinder their reintegration into society.

This research aims to facilitate a deeper understanding of prison life in the Philippines by examining the behavior and identity of unvisited PDLs during incarceration. Through personal narratives and lived experiences, the study seeks to unveil the reality faced by these individuals in an attempt to diminish false abstractions, stigmas, and labels associated with being an unvisited prisoner in the Philippines. This study's contribution lies in its exploration of experiential realities encountered by unvisited PDLs, illuminating insights on their perspectives regarding their self- and familial connections within the confines of incarceration. By delving into these narratives, the research seeks to dismantle misconceptions and stereotypes associated with individuals serving time behind bars. Through qualitative inquiry, this study amplifies the voices of those often marginalized and overlooked, providing an authentic platform for their stories to be heard.

Understanding the nuanced complexities of self-perception and familial ties among unvisited PDLs holds significant implications for academic discourse and societal perceptions. This research is crucial to humanizing incarcerated individuals, challenging prevailing stigmas, and fostering empathy and understanding within wider communities. By elucidating the multifaceted realities of life behind bars, this study contributes to broader conversations surrounding criminal justice reform, advocating for more compassionate and equitable treatment of individuals within the justice system. Furthermore, by outlining the significance of familial connections within the sphere of the lives of incarcerated individuals, this research underscores the need for support systems that extend beyond prison walls, ultimately promoting rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of labeling theory (Gruevska-Drakulevski, 2017) and narrative theory (Puckett, 2016), this study adopted a phenomenological qualitative research design. The central aim was to delve into the intricacies of incarcerated individuals' subjective experiences, particularly focusing on their self-perceptions and familial relationships, with a specific emphasis on the unique perspective of unvisited PDLs. Labeling theory provided a lens to understand the social construction of deviant identities and the subsequent stigmatization faced by individuals labeled as criminals. By incorporating this theory, the researchers aimed to illuminate how societal labels impact incarcerated individuals' self-concept, especially those left unvisited. Additionally, narrative theory offered insights into the storytelling processes and personal narratives inherent in these experiences. Through narrative analysis, the researchers sought to uncover the underlying meaning-making mechanisms and subjective interpretations of the lived experiences of unvisited PDLs. By integrating these theories, the researchers endeavored to bridge the gap between external perceptions and internal realities, ultimately striving to challenge and dismantle false abstractions associated with unvisited PDLs.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in a correctional facility in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, where the participants, unvisited PDLs, are from.

2.3 Research Participants

This research used a purposive sampling technique to cover 20 participants from various age cohorts, totaling 20 unvisited PDLs coded from P1 to P20. Among them, 17 were men and 3 were women. However, gender was not a determining factor in the selection process. Instead, the primary criterion was the duration of no visitation, specifically those who had not received visitors for 2-3 consecutive years. The consideration of sex was not considered and was beyond the scope of this study.

2.4 Research Instrument

In the face-to-face interviews, the researchers prepared the 10 validated interview questions along with seven (7) possible follow-up questions, focusing on (1) unvisited PDLs' view on self-perception and family ties and (2) false abstractions as perceived and experienced by unvisited PDLs. The BJMP reviewed the instrument and validated its content before usage. Only with the station's approval and the consent of the selected participants did the interviews proceed. The subjects and the officer in charge were also informed and consented to the documentation of face-to-face interviews through audio recordings.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure and Analysis

The face-to-face interviews were meticulously arranged to transpire in a secure and discreet area within the correctional facility, safeguarding confidentiality and promoting participants' comfort. Each interview adhered to a semi-structured format, facilitating a judicious balance between preconceived inquiries and the organic exploration of pertinent topics as they naturally unfold during the discourse. Before commencement, a concerted effort is made to establish rapport with the participants, cultivating an atmosphere conducive to candid and unrestricted discourse. Emphasis was placed on elucidating the voluntary nature of participation while reassuring participants of the confidentiality underpinning the information shared.

Throughout the face-to-face interview, participants were encouraged to articulate their experiences and perspectives regarding self-perception and familial bonds within the carceral context. Employing active listening techniques and adept non-verbal communication, the researchers endeavored to convey empathy and understanding, nurturing trust and rapport with the participants. The data collection process was meticulously documented through audio recordings, conducted with the explicit consent of participants. Subsequent transcription of these recordings ensured fidelity and precision during the subsequent stages of analysis.

Meanwhile, data analysis involved a structured approach to deriving meaningful insights from the narratives of unvisited PDLs regarding their self-perception and familial ties. Firstly, transcripts of interviews were carefully reviewed to ensure familiarity with the data. Secondly, thematic analysis, guided by Colaizzi's method (1978), was utilized to recognize recurring trends, themes, and categories within the narratives of the PDLs. This process involves systematically coding the data to capture explicit and implicit meanings, using an iterative approach to refine and validate the identified themes. Additionally, constant comparison techniques were utilized to explore relationships between themes and ensure the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Moreover, investigator triangulation was conducted to increase precision and to validate the interpretations of participants' experiences and perspectives. Finally, findings were synthesized and interpreted in the context of the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and pertinent scholarly works, highlighting key insights and implications for understanding the lived experiences of unvisited PDLs and addressing false abstractions surrounding incarceration. This methodical approach aimed to deliver a nuanced recognition of the complexities of life behind bars and the impact on individuals' sense of self and familial relationships.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations of this study were meticulously observed to uphold the rights, dignity, and well-being of all participants. Ethical approval from the CLSU Ethics Review Committee (ERC Code: 2024-179) was secured before data collection, ensuring strict adherence to research guidelines. Informed consent was a fundamental aspect of the study, with participants thoroughly briefed on its purpose, scope, and objectives. They were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary, with the freedom to withdraw at any stage

without repercussions, and ample time was provided for them to review the consent process before making an informed decision. Given the sensitive nature of the research, confidentiality and anonymity were paramount, with participants' identities protected through coded identifiers and the exclusion of personally identifiable information. Interviews were conducted in private settings to foster openness, and all collected data—both audio recordings and transcriptions—were securely stored with restricted access to the research team. To further ensure data security, these records were permanently deleted upon completion of the analysis, preventing unauthorized disclosure. Recognizing the potential emotional distress associated with discussing incarceration and familial relationships, researchers employed a respectful and empathetic approach, carefully framing questions to avoid discomfort and remaining attentive to participants' well-being. If signs of distress emerged, interviews were paused or discontinued as necessary, with a referral system in place to provide psychological support in coordination with designated facility personnel. Fair representation was also a key ethical priority, with deliberate efforts to include participants from diverse backgrounds and age groups to ensure that multiple perspectives were captured. Throughout the study, strict compliance with institutional policies was maintained, following all Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) regulations and coordinating closely with correctional facility officials. This ensured that the research process was conducted with integrity, did not interfere with institutional operations, and respected the participants and facility protocols.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The study focused on 20 Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who have been unvisited for 2-3 years or more, revealing that 16 out of 20 respondents acknowledged being significantly affected by the lack of visitation. These individuals reported feelings of abandonment, isolation, and diminished self-worth, which negatively influenced how they viewed themselves. Additionally, the same 16 respondents expressed that no visitation impacted their perception of their families, often feeling disconnected or rejected. However, 4 PDLs demonstrated resilience, stating that being unvisited did not alter their self-perception or view of their families. These individuals attributed their perspective to understanding external factors like financial constraints or logistical barriers that might prevent their families from visiting. Overall, the findings highlight the profound emotional and psychological toll that a lack of visitation can have on most PDLs, emphasizing the importance of initiatives to maintain familial connections and support systems to mitigate the adverse effects of isolation.

Table 1. *Summary of Participant PDL Status*

PDL #	Unvisited (2-3+ years)	Affected by No Visitation	Impact on Self- perception	Impact on View of Family
1-16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
17-18	Yes	Yes	No	No
19-20	Yes	No	No	No

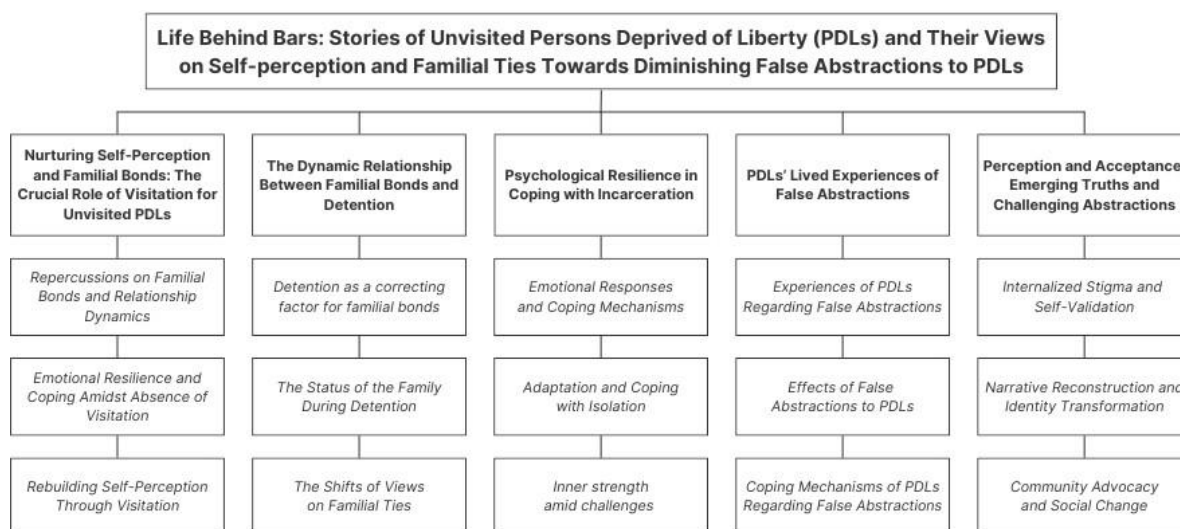


Figure 1. *Themes with Respective Subthemes*

3.1 Nurturing Self-Perception and Familial Bonds: The Crucial Role of Visitation for Unvisited PDLs

Incarceration imposes not only physical confinement but also emotional and psychological challenges that can significantly impact their self-perception and familial ties. This is where visitation stands as a pivotal factor shaping and determining the self-perception and familial bonds of unvisited PDLs, implicitly affecting their emotional well-being and prospects for rehabilitation. Prison visitation is a significant area of focus in criminal justice studies (Cochran & Mears, 2013). These visits offer inmates invaluable opportunities to break the barriers of isolation from their families, friends, and the broader external community. However, not all individuals receive the support of visits from loved ones during their time of incarceration, and most tend to understand the external factors of these constraints (Burns et al., 2024). If tallied, 16 of this study's participants expressed feelings of social estrangement, worthlessness, and sadness due to a lack of family visits.

Despite understanding their families' constraints, these individuals often grapple with heightened negative self-perceptions, exacerbated by the absence of familial validation during visits. An unvisited PDL stated:

"...I realized how important they are, they are my strength, but they do not visit me, but it is also my choice, I do not want to add to their worries and expenses anymore. Even though it is my choice, I am still really sad...[P7]"

Another unvisited PDL stated:

"... there has been a distance within our family since I got locked up, but I hold onto the Lord so sadness will not consume me. Even though they do not visit me, I understand because I failed them, so I understand why they do not want to visit. It is sad, sometimes I wonder if I still matter and if I am still part of our family...[P8]"

The first subject acknowledges the significance of familial support and its emotional strength, yet grapples with the decision to refrain from burdening their loved ones further with worries and expenses. Despite recognizing their agency in this choice, they still experience profound sadness, indicating the emotional toll of familial separation and the longing for connection despite self-imposed distance. Similarly, the second subject articulates feelings of isolation and estrangement from their family following incarceration, compounded by a profound sense of guilt for having failed them. Despite finding solace in their emotional resilience and coping through their faith and understanding their family's reluctance to visit, they wrestle with feelings of insignificance and disconnection, questioning their continued relevance within the familial unit, adding to the repercussions on familial bonds and relationship dynamics, and incarceration brings.

Furthermore, the subjects imply a profound internal conflict and emotional turmoil stemming from their experiences as unvisited persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). Their statements express a poignant mixture of sorrow, understanding, and self-blame, revealing the complex interplay of emotions accompanying their circumstances. Moreover, this supports that the value of visits during incarceration reaches beyond feelings of closeness to family on the outside and PDLs' well-being, behavior, and subsequent recidivism (Burns et al., 2024). Maintaining connections with family significantly impacts various aspects of incarcerated individuals' lives — well-being, self-perception, and belongingness (Villarama et al., 2022; Gonzalez, 2021). These connections can aid in adjusting to prison life, maintaining familial ties, reducing negative self-perceptions, and easing the transition into society upon release. For many PDLs, visitation serves as a pillar for reshaping self-perception by offering validation, support, and a sense of belonging. Visits were crucial in rebuilding fractured trust (Schuhmann et al., 2018). It suggests that prison visitation has a positive effect on the mental health and overall well-being of PDLs — self-worth, self-perception, and belongingness (Villarama et al., 2022; Monahan et al., 2011). Moreover, being unvisited directly impacts these factors. The suffering stemmed from experiences such as feelings of depression, decreased social confidence, and, in 10 studies, sensations of isolation and loneliness arises (De Guzman et al., 2020; Convery et al., 2014) despite the subjects' wide understanding of the constraints their family faces, as they would still implicitly suffer from its 'added pain' significantly affecting their view of their worth and belongingness (Mann, 2016).

3.2 The Dynamic Relationship Between Familial Bonds and Detention

The Filipino family has always been known for its family-centeredness (Villarama et al., 2024; Morillo et al., 2013). Even in the hands of detention, this study's investigations have proven that the deep ties fostered by the family can never be disrupted. In fact, in this study, detention even emerges as a turning point for the

interviewed persons deprived of liberty regarding their relationship with their family.

For PDLs who, before incarceration, had weak familial bonds, detention functioned as a correcting factor, ultimately allowing introspection and life reflections. Read this statement from an unvisited PDL:

"... a lot has changed since I was imprisoned here. I learned to apologize to my family. We had a connection again. They support me here even though I have made many mistakes. I have been running away from home for almost 17 years. We reconnected when I learned to forgive myself and the wrongs I had done to my family. They forgave me. Now, the change I saw in myself, I taught them here in this prison. How many times have I been imprisoned? 7 times. This is where I learned to ask for forgiveness, to thank God for the daily blessings He had given, and above all because I am still alive despite all the things I have done...[P4]"

This participant had unsettled issues with his family that were handled only after repeated imprisonment. In his words, detention allowed him to rebuild and redeem himself for his betterment and a chance of reuniting with his family. Despite their mistake, the family's support urges them to change (Matias et al., 2024; Wiecezorek, 2017). Thus, the relationship between familial bonds and detention is important in inducing the driving force for change in a PDL.

Moreover, the strength and status of a PDL's connection with their family may also determine the success of change. From the interviews, it can be deduced that cooperation between PDLs and their family results in a positive change for PDLs. Without concerted effort, the opposite event will arise. An unvisited PDL said:

"...I feel like I am somewhat angry at them. I pleaded with them not to visit me because I did not want to see them. I am angry at them because of the words they said to me. They do not want to visit me either, so I have accepted it...[P10]"

This PDL's response shows glitching connections which cripples the power of detention. Thus, it shows the importance of mutual understanding between PDLs and their family to develop change. The family is important in supporting the rehabilitation of their incarcerated members (Wiecezorek, 2017).

Meanwhile, in the absence of the family, PDLs tend to lean towards the family closest to them – the family they have inside prison – to provide everything that their biological family should have given. An unvisited PDL said:

"...we are family here, so that they can ease the sadness. When someone makes a mistake, we discuss how we can help them. For example, if someone shares something with me, since we have someone in charge here, we would say to that someone - 'Chairman, he needs help' - and they will look for a solution...[P5]"

This response shows the importance of a source of support, which, in the absence of the family, is filled by the concerned members of their prison community. Almost all participants expressed gratitude for their co-PDLs' help during challenging times inside. This is backed up by the numerous studies of Narag & Jones reporting that PDLs see pangkats or prison brigades as their source of support. This is evident by the names given to PDLs in charge, such as "tatay" or "kuya", somewhat hinting at a sense of familial presence. In this study, the interviewed PDLs called their leaders "Chairman" or "Sitter". This specific phenomenon describes the shifts in the view of familial connections. Aside from the change they engage in for their biological families, some also start to build a new family from the people they rely most on within their community.

3.3 Psychological Resilience in Coping with Incarceration

Imprisonment comes with a complex array of emotional, psychological, and social obstacles for people living life in prison. Within the walls of a prison, individuals struggle with deep emotional distress, loneliness, and the lack of familiar sources of support.

Unvisited PDLs may initially experience a range of negative emotions, such as sadness, loneliness, and self-doubt, as they grapple with the absence of familial support through visitation. This lack could make them feel even more abandoned and worthless, affecting how they see themselves. However, in response to these emotional challenges, they demonstrate resilience by actively engaging in coping mechanisms. An unvisited

PDL stated:

"... there has been a distance within our family since I got locked up, but I hold onto the Lord so sadness will not consume me. Even though they do not visit me, I understand because I failed them, so I understand why they do not want to visit...[P8]"

This respondent's response expresses deep sadness but relies on faith as a way of coping to navigate emotional distress and maintain resilience. To back this up, research indicates that religious coping strategies, such as prayer and spiritual belief, effectively reduce the impact of distressing emotions on well-being (Torres et al., 2024; Ai et al., 2022; Villarama et al., 2022; Dolcos et al., 2021). Additionally, respondents come to terms with the absence of visitation and the isolation it brings. They find alternative sources of support within the prison community, engage in activities to occupy their time, and ultimately accept their situation with resignation, emphasizing the importance of social interactions with peers for mental well-being (Villarama et al., 2023; Holligan, 2016). Despite facing significant emotional and social challenges, unvisited PDLs demonstrate remarkable resilience in navigating their incarceration journey. Moreover, they also experience positive transformations within the prison, leading to self-reflection and personal growth (Villarama et al., 2025; Noel & Green, 2021). They actively engage in coping strategies, such as seeking peer support, finding solace in faith, accepting their circumstances, and recognizing their inner strength and capacity to adapt in adversity.

3.4 PDLs' Lived Experiences of False Abstractions

Enter the realm of unvisited PDLs, where the ominous shadows of false abstractions shape their existence behind bars. These people struggle with the combined weight of emotional solitude and social shame while incarcerated, and misunderstandings and preconceived notions of society frequently obscure their stories. This theme explores the significant impact of incorrect impressions on their feeling of identity and belonging as it digs deeper into their lived experiences. However, even in the thick of everything, there is a ray of optimism and self-discovery as they make their way through the difficulties of prison life.

The lived experiences of PDLs, with the degrading labels pressing on them, are challenging. Abstractions claimed they are notorious sinners who are ineligible for change, hopeless, or an unworthy spouse or irresponsible family member. Worse, these abstractions justify why they deserve to be in their situation. Worst, these abstractions are sometimes from their social network or even bloodline. See interview excerpts coming from unvisited PDLs:

"...they always have something to say like 'He is an ex-convict, stay away from him!'...[P4]"

"...they do not know that only because we are imprisoned here, we are the only sinners in the world...[P4]"

"...there are the typical comments that we are bad, that we do not deserve to be visited, that we will not change, so no one visits us, and we are terrible, so it is only right that we are not visited...[P9]"

"...some relatives themselves say that we do not deserve to receive visitors because we are just a burden to the family. Maybe because of our cases, they have said hurtful things to us, like, 'they are not loved by their family anymore, they have become a burden to their family, so they were forgotten, they have only brought troubles to their spouse'...[P8]"

These abstractions, not perceived but experienced, signify the prevalence of intense stigmatization of incarcerated individuals in the community. With the absence of meaningful interactions and support from the outside world, PDLs experience a cycle of psychological and physical pain, reinforcing the preconceived nature of the prison system as punitive (Boag & Wilson, 2014). With the addition of these burdens, the difficulties of the prison experience heighten, making profound effects on PDL well-being and sense of identity (Kaplan & Winther, 2013). Especially with the absence of the family, PDLs may feel a heightened sense of loneliness, pain, and estrangement (Villarama et al., 2024; Mickelthwaite, 2022). In this study, there are several emotions portrayed by interviewed PDLs, such as sadness and pain, irritation and stress, and intense emotional instability. With these, some PDLs claim to have experienced multiple episodes of depression, suicidal thoughts, and existential crises. Meanwhile, others have claimed to be already numbed due to long years spent in prison, showcasing a sort of ignorance. Many PDLs, when asked if negative comments affect them, said phrases like:

"...not anymore, we are already strong...[P3]"

To stop this, coping strategies have been revealed to be important in keeping PDLs' wellness and sense of self. Some who feel estranged, such as those who showcase ignorance, may perform paradoxical coping strategies where agency is sought within the confines of incarceration (Tate & Wahidin, 2013). However, some confront the issues brought by social stigma by bravely dealing with it with their families. See this experience by an unvisited PDL:

"...those - 'When your husband finally is free, he will find someone else, he will leave you' - of course, my wife said 'I know you'. 'Yes, you do,' I tell her - 'You made sacrifices to visit me here twice a week, and then I am going to do something stupid when I am out? All I am thinking about is, when I get to be free again, to make things up to you...[P5]"

This response may work for those who can maintain ties with their family. Those in the opposite situation mention reliance on God through prayers and participation in Bible studies, self-distraction through volunteering in community work, participating in programs, and entertaining themselves through various recreational activities.

3.5 Perception and Acceptance: Emerging Truths and Challenging Abstractions

The carceral environment serves as a crucible where individuals confront the daunting challenge of reconciling external perceptions with internal truths. In prison, people must deal with the tough job of making outside views match up with what they know about themselves. This theme explores how those in prison handle this challenge, looking at how they navigate between what is true and what's not. An unvisited PDL stated:

"...but outside, we can't explain ourselves, but I hope they know that there are reasons, not just because we are bad that they do not visit us, I hope they broaden their perspective that there are other reasons, valid reasons why our family cannot visit us, and it is not because they do not love or value us anymore nor we are the vilest people...[P11]"

The subject implies a profound frustration and longing for understanding from those outside the prison walls. They desire society to recognize that their lack of visitors does not solely stem from perceived wrongdoings or moral deficiencies. It may be due to various reasons, including financial constraints, unresolved family issues, or geographical distance, which do not indicate a lack of love or value from their families. An unvisited state:

"...if they have the means, they will visit me...[P2]"

As hinted, they hope for a broader perspective that acknowledges the multitude of valid reasons why their family may be unable to visit. Through these words, the subject seeks to challenge the prevailing stigma and abstractions surrounding their incarceration, advocating for empathy and a more nuanced understanding of their circumstances. Almost all interviewed incarcerated individuals yearn for the same. Although, they vary in terms of their attitude towards it – within this research, only seven (7) feel the need to address and change the preconceived notions of society regarding them, nine (9) believe that public perception is indefinite, and four (4) accepts false abstractions, letting it in on one ear and out the other.

Moreover, sure researchers also want to widen the lens through which they are seen. They should reshape public perceptions of who PDLs truly are, disregarding their cases and circumstances of being unvisited (Crewe & Bennett, 2012). They have all been affected and stigmatized way too long, and they yearn for the ears of those who have false perceptions of why they are unvisited.

4.0 Conclusion

In this study, the researchers explored the self-perception and familial ties of select unvisited PDLs within the Philippine correctional system, aiming to understand the impact of familial visitation on their familial

connection, well-being, and sense of identity. Through qualitative inquiry, adopting a phenomenological design grounded in labeling and narrative theory, the research sought to shed light on the lived experiences and challenges inside the correctional facility. The study's findings underscored the profound significance of familial visitation for unvisited PDLs. The absence of such visitation was linked to intense feelings of social estrangement, worthlessness, and sadness, highlighting a significant void in their lives, particularly in self-perception due to the lack of familial connection. Additionally, these individuals expressed a strong desire to alter societal perceptions that often lead to their misunderstanding and judgment. Such sentiments reveal the harsh realities of social isolation and the pervasive stigma that negatively impact the psychological well-being and self-perception of incarcerated individuals. Thus, the study highlights the critical need to address these emotional and social deficits through targeted interventions that enhance the overall well-being of PDLs.

To address these challenges, correctional institutions must integrate specialized support programs considering local cultural and societal dynamics. Counseling services, peer support groups, and vocational training should be implemented to alleviate social isolation and psychological distress. Strengthening partnerships between correctional facilities, community organizations, and mental health professionals is essential to ensuring the sustainability of these programs. Additionally, facilitating structured communication between PDLs and their families, through virtual visitation programs or supervised correspondence, can help mitigate the detrimental effects of separation and reinforce familial ties.

At the policy level, humane incarceration practices must be prioritized by allocating resources to sustain and expand rehabilitative programs. Legislative measures should institutionalize these interventions, ensuring they become a permanent aspect of prison reform. Moreover, broader societal initiatives, such as public awareness campaigns and educational programs, are necessary to challenge the stigma associated with incarceration. The justice system can promote reintegration and reduce recidivism by shifting perceptions and fostering a rehabilitative rather than punitive approach.

Given the study's findings, future research should explore the effectiveness of alternative social support mechanisms, such as mentorship programs within correctional facilities, and the role of faith-based and cultural interventions in addressing the psychological and emotional needs of PDLs. Additionally, a longitudinal study tracking changes in self-perception and familial dynamics over time would offer deeper insights into the long-term impact of interventions. Further studies may also examine the perspectives of family members and correctional officers better to understand the barriers to familial visitation and social reintegration. Research could also assess the strength of virtual visits compared to physical visits and investigate the experiences of PDLs who no longer have living family members, exploring whether their perceptions of reintegration differ from those who maintain familial connections.

Through these efforts, the advocacy for a positive institutional and societal perception towards PDLs will be pursued with high hopes of dismantling misconceptions, promoting better rehabilitation and reintegration, and fostering a more humane and equitable approach to criminal justice in the Philippines. Addressing these systemic gaps underscores the urgency of policy reforms that uphold human dignity, provide second chances, and support social reintegration.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Aquino – Conceptualization, Writing, Reviewing and Editing, Visualization, Validation, Data curation. Benedicto – Conceptualization, Writing, Reviewing and Editing, Visualization, Validation, Data curation. Figuracion – Conceptualization, Writing, Reviewing, and Editing, Investigation. Viernes – Conceptualization, Investigation. Villarama – Supervision, Validation, Writing, Reviewing, and Editing.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

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