

Gendered Dynamics in Jail Reformation: Work Insights of Women Officers in Jail Facilities

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Abstract

This study explored the work insights, coping experiences, and personal and professional aspirations of women jail officers assigned to the Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay District Jails in Bohol, Philippines. It was anchored on Self-Efficacy Theory, Competence Motivation Theory, and Protection Motivation Theory. A qualitative transcendental phenomenological design was employed involving ten women jail officers with at least three years of service, selected through purposive convenience sampling. Four informants participated in individual in-depth interviews, while six participated in a focus group discussion. Data were gathered using a validated and pre-tested open-ended interview guide, research journal, and audio or video recording devices. The responses were transcribed, translated, coded, and analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis procedure, with member checking conducted to confirm the interpretations. Eight emergent themes were identified. Under the work insights of the informants in the performance of their duties, the positive experiences were Meaningful Employment and Recognition and Supportive Work Relationships and Growth, while the negative experiences were Emotional Disconnection and Isolation and Operational Challenges and Moral Frustrations. Coping with problems encountered in the performance of their duties was reflected in Building Resilience through Camaraderie and Initiative and Institutional and Psychological Support System. Their desires to improve their personal and professional growth were reflected in Ambition for Growth and Positive Change and Vision for a Purposeful Future. The study concludes that women jail officers remain committed and resilient despite occupational, emotional, and institutional challenges. It recommends stronger psychological support, recognition programs, professional-development opportunities, open communication, gender-responsive policies, and improved organizational assistance. The study supports SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 8, and SDG 16 by promoting occupational well-being, gender equality, decent work, and inclusive correctional institutions. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening institutional capacity, employee welfare, gender-responsive governance, and humane jail management.

Keywords: Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Coping Strategies, Gender Dynamics, Professional Growth, Women Jail Officers, Workplace Experiences

1. Introduction

Women's participation in correctional institutions has expanded alongside global efforts toward gender equity, yet correctional work remains shaped by masculine organizational cultures, gendered role expectations, occupational risks, and unequal access to authority and advancement. Women jail officers contribute empathy, conflict de-escalation, non-violent communication, security, and rehabilitative support, but they may also experience marginalization, work-family conflict, emotional strain, resource limitations, and institutional barriers. These conditions are especially important in provincial and rural jail facilities, where local culture, limited resources, and restricted professional-development opportunities may intensify workplace challenges. This study therefore explores the work insights, coping experiences, and personal and professional aspirations of women jail officers assigned to selected district jails in Bohol, Philippines.

The role of women in law enforcement and correctional institutions has changed significantly as women have entered occupations historically reserved for men. Their participation has introduced perspectives and capabilities increasingly recognized as important to custodial leadership (Brown & Heidensohn, 2000). Female correctional officers have also been associated with empathy, conflict de-escalation, and non-violent communication, which are relevant to inmate management and rehabilitation (Morash & Haarr, 2012). Despite these developments, gender inequities remain embedded in correctional workplaces. Masculine institutional cultures often privilege aggression and physical strength over nurturing and rehabilitative approaches, requiring women officers to negotiate organizational expectations and gendered norms simultaneously (Britton, 2003). In the Philippines, gender and socio-political structures influence the division of correctional work. Although gender and development policies promote equity within the Bureau of Jail Management and

Penology (BJMP), implementation may remain limited, with women officers assigned to administrative duties or women's detention areas and excluded from high-risk operations and leadership opportunities (Cunanan et al., 2021). Traditional expectations concerning womanhood, motherhood, and caregiving further intersect with professional demands, emotional labor, and family responsibilities (Reyes & Mendoza, 2018). Women jail officers must therefore manage a dual identity as women and correctional professionals while seeking authority, legitimacy, and recognition in institutional environments that may not fully accommodate their experiences. The need to examine these conditions is particularly significant in Bohol. The province is predominantly rural and influenced by community-based social structures and traditional values. Its correctional facilities may operate amid resource scarcity, overcrowding, geographic constraints, and limited access to training and professional development, while external disruptions may be intensified by local conditions (Bueza, 2020). By examining women officers in the Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay District Jails, the study connects criminological theory with the everyday realities of correctional work and supports more equitable, evidence-based, and inclusive jail administration.

A central theme in the literature is the gendered character of correctional organizations. Jails have historically functioned as male workplaces in which women are expected to demonstrate professional competence while also conforming to social expectations of femininity, increasing stress and burnout risks in rural and conservative settings (Britton, 2023). Hegemonic masculinity influences policies, routines, and workplace interactions and may obscure women's experiences and contributions (Ricciardelli & McKendy, 2020). Women consequently negotiate professional authority under gendered expectations that shape how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves (Walker et al., 2024). Women's experiences are also influenced by intersecting social identities, including age, class, and race, which may create different forms of privilege, discrimination, and support (Hermery, 2020). Masculine occupational cultures may pressure women to display toughness and suppress emotion, while those who do not conform may experience isolation, marginalization, and restricted development opportunities (Burdett et al., 2018). Female correctional leaders may encounter resistance because leadership is conventionally associated with masculine traits, requiring them to establish competence while confronting gender-based doubt (Kakuk, 2020). The literature further emphasizes identity conflict, work-life balance, and emotional labor. Women correctional officers may experience tension between professional responsibilities and expectations surrounding caregiving and family life, with consequences for job satisfaction, mental health, and work-life balance (Saucedo, 2023). They must balance toughness and approachability while being assessed both on work performance and conformity to gendered behavioral norms (Charlesworth & Muir, 2020). Resilience in this context involves adapting to discrimination, harassment, stress, and safety concerns through personal strengths and external resources such as social support, organizational policies, and well-being and professional-development training (Mann, 2022). Correctional ethics adds another dimension because women officers may carry an "invisible burden" to display exceptional moral integrity, emotional intelligence, and professionalism under difficult conditions (Miller, 2021). Their career progression may also be constrained by a glass ceiling produced by organizational bias, stereotypes, limited mentorship, and inadequate representation of women in leadership (Maglio, 2023). These conditions require women to navigate organizational expectations and structures that may undervalue their contributions (Britton, 2020). Organizational justice and institutional capacity are therefore critical. Fair policies, procedures, distribution of opportunities, and interpersonal treatment strengthen job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement, while perceived unfairness contributes to disengagement and turnover (Hsieh & Boateng, 2020). Resource shortages, understaffing, inadequate training, and insufficient gender-sensitive policies increase occupational stress, with women officers carrying additional gender-based expectations (Finn, 2020). In Philippine correctional facilities, institutional policies that lack gender sensitivity may weaken women officers' professional standing and job satisfaction (Ilagan, 2021).

Empirical studies reinforce these themes. Cunanan (2017) identified gender bias, workplace stereotypes, restricted advancement, and emotional demands among female jail officers, while also emphasizing their agency, professionalism, resilience, and need for supportive management, social networks, and gender-sensitive policies. Ricciardelli & McKendy (2020) examined how women in Canadian provincial prisons navigate male-dominated occupational cultures and develop professional identities. Hermery (2023) similarly showed that gender shapes workplace relationships, professional expectations, and career trajectories in correctional services. Compton & Brandhorst (2021) found that women officers experience tension between their personal and professional identities in masculine institutional environments. Appearance and femininity are also institutionally regulated. Walker et al. (2024) demonstrated how female prison officers in Australian men's prisons manage personal appearance in settings that both devalue and demand femininity. Ricciardelli & McKendy (2020) further found that women balance gender stereotypes and professional authority to establish credibility in correctional workplaces. Collica-Cox (2024) found that mentorship may help women pursue correctional careers and leadership, although gendered microaggressions may obstruct their development; strong supervisory mentoring is therefore important to administrative diversity. Occupational stress, burnout, and coping form another major theme. Mack (2023) linked correctional-officer burnout to the workplace environment, management policies, and compensation, emphasizing its implications for performance and retention. Champion (2022) documented psychosocial stressors and coping strategies among officers working in solitary-confinement units. Till et al. (2024) highlighted professional support, boundaries, personal development, emotional demands, and the need for trauma-informed training among prison officers. Ricciardelli

& Gazso (2013) showed that officers' interpretations of workplace threats influence their coping strategies and sense of self over time. Mental-health support and relationships within correctional environments are similarly important. Bright et al. (2023) identified barriers to mental-healthcare access, dignity, privacy, and constructive staff interactions in prisons, emphasizing the importance of stronger relationships between female offenders and correctional officers. Baldwin et al. (2021) found that involving correctional officers in action research can advance professional development and correctional practice. Sokoloff & Price (2019) reported that female officers may experience hostility, questioned competence, exclusion from assignments and feedback, inadequate support, subordination, stress, and reduced job satisfaction, indicating a need for institutional gender-equity reforms. King & Maruna (2020) emphasized that women officers use strategies to manage stress and assert authority and that supportive peer networks contribute to professional development and emotional well-being. Collectively, these studies show that women's correctional work is shaped by gendered institutional cultures, identity negotiation, occupational stress, emotional demands, organizational justice, mentorship, resilience, and support systems. They also establish the importance of examining personal narratives, coping strategies, and professional aspirations within specific correctional and cultural settings.

Globally, studies from Canada, the United States, Australia, and England show that female correctional officers commonly navigate masculine workplace cultures, identity conflicts, gender stereotypes, occupational threats, stress, burnout, and limited advancement. These patterns demonstrate that gender influences institutional roles, workplace relationships, authority, and professional development across correctional systems. Nationally, the BJMP was established under Republic Act No. 6975 to administer district, city, and municipal jails in the Philippines (Republic Act No. 6975, 1990). Its organizational structure and professionalization were further strengthened through Republic Act No. 9263, which emphasized training, career advancement, and leadership hierarchy (Republic Act No. 9263, 2004). These structures shape the responsibilities, working conditions, and career pathways of women jail officers from the national level to provincial and local facilities. Women officers are also protected by legal frameworks promoting equality and workplace safety. The Magna Carta of Women requires non-discrimination, maternity benefits, and equal opportunities for women in public service (Republic Act No. 9710, 2009). The Anti-Sexual Harassment Act provides safeguards against workplace abuse in male-dominated environments (Republic Act No. 7877, 1995). The State's recognition of women's role in nation-building and its commitment to uphold their rights are affirmed by the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Philippine Constitution, 1987). Together with BJMP policies, these legal instruments influence women officers' work experiences, coping mechanisms, and career goals. Locally, the study focuses on district jails in Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay, Bohol. This context differs from metropolitan correctional environments because rural geography, traditional community norms, institutional resource constraints, personnel limitations, and access to training may shape how gender policies are implemented and experienced. The setting therefore provides an opportunity to examine how global gendered patterns and national legal protections are translated into everyday correctional practice at the provincial level.

This study is anchored mainly on Self-Efficacy Theory of Albert Bandura (1997), supported by Competence Motivation Theory of Susan Harter (1978), and Protection Motivation Theory of Ronald W. Rogers (1975). Self-Efficacy Theory explains how beliefs about personal capability influence thought, emotion, effort, persistence, and action. In unpredictable and stressful correctional environments, confidence in one's ability can help women officers address difficult tasks, exercise authority, manage gender bias, and remain engaged with work demands (Bandura, 1997). Mastery gained through handling inmates, managing conflicts, and performing institutional procedures may strengthen confidence and resilience, enabling officers to interpret workplace difficulties as manageable problems (Bandura, 1997). Strong self-efficacy may also help them process criticism and conflict constructively, maintain professional boundaries, regulate emotion, and resist negative stereotypes (Bandura, 1986). It further clarifies why women officers may pursue leadership, further education, or institutional reform despite obstacles (Bandura, 1997). Competence Motivation Theory proposes that individuals are motivated by the need to feel capable and effective. Perceived competence develops through task mastery, feedback, and social reinforcement and influences persistence in challenging activities (Harter, 1981). For women jail officers, successfully managing inmate behavior, institutional security, and justice-related responsibilities may reinforce capability and professional commitment (Harter, 1985). Positive feedback from colleagues, supervisors, and inmates may strengthen professional value, while gender bias, inadequate recognition, and systemic barriers may weaken motivation (Harter, 1985). Protection Motivation Theory explains protective action through threat appraisal and coping appraisal. Individuals assess the severity and probability of danger and evaluate whether available responses are effective and manageable (Rogers, 1983). Women jail officers regularly encounter inmate conflict, emotional exhaustion, security risks, and institutional pressure; their discipline, adherence to protocols, and emotional regulation reflect continuing assessments of risk and control (Floyd et al., 2000). When officers recognize threats and remain confident in their coping ability, they are more likely to sustain adaptive responses, whereas weak coping appraisal may contribute to avoidance, burnout, or disengagement (Milne et al., 2000). The theory therefore helps interpret how perceived risk, preparedness, and coping confidence influence resilience and continued performance in Bohol jail facilities (Rogers, 1983). Together, the theories frame women officers' experiences through three connected processes: confidence in performing demanding work, motivation derived from competence and recognition, and protective responses to occupational threats. These perspectives support the analysis of their work insights, coping mechanisms, and aspirations for personal and professional growth.

Although gender and law enforcement have received increasing scholarly attention, limited localized qualitative research has examined women correctional officers in provincial and rural Philippine settings. Existing studies frequently emphasize metropolitan environments or broad institutional policies, leaving unclear how gender-equity frameworks are implemented, negotiated, or neglected in routine correctional practice (Yuen, 2014). International evidence identifies recurring issues involving masculine culture, identity conflict, discrimination, stress, mentorship, resilience, and leadership barriers, but these findings cannot fully represent the socio-cultural and institutional conditions of Bohol. The study addresses this gap by centering the lived and work-related perspectives of women jail officers from three selected district jails in the Province of Bohol. It examines: (1) their work insights in performing their duties; (2) how they cope with problems encountered in their duties; and (3) their desires for personal and professional growth. The inquiry is intended to clarify how women interpret meaningful and difficult workplace experiences, mobilize personal and institutional support, and envision their future within the correctional profession. The rationale also extends to criminology education and correctional reform. Understanding women officers' actual experiences can help bridge classroom theory and field practice, improve the preparation of future criminologists, and provide evidence for gender-responsive policies, safety procedures, training, mental-health support, career development, and inclusive leadership within jail institutions.

The study aligns most directly with SDG 5 – Gender Equality because it examines gender bias, unequal role assignments, leadership barriers, workplace recognition, and women's full participation in correctional institutions. It also supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth through its focus on fair working conditions, professional development, occupational well-being, job satisfaction, and equitable career advancement. The study is relevant to SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being because women jail officers work in stressful and high-risk environments where emotional strain, burnout, safety concerns, and access to psychological support affect their well-being. Its emphasis on education, training, mentoring, and skill development also relates to SDG 4 – Quality Education, particularly the continuing professional preparation of correctional personnel and the training of future criminologists. The research further contributes to SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions by examining the personnel responsible for secure, ethical, and rehabilitative jail management and by identifying conditions that may strengthen fairness, accountability, inclusiveness, and institutional effectiveness. Its relevance to collaboration among the BJMP, DILG, local government units, courts, families, communities, and educational institutions also connects with SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals.

The study contributes to public-health sustainability by drawing attention to occupational stress, emotional well-being, psychological support, and workplace safety among women jail officers. Strengthening these areas may support a healthier correctional workforce and more stable institutional operations. Its socio-economic and gender sustainability value lies in promoting decent work, fair recognition, career mobility, and equal opportunities for women in a traditionally male-dominated profession. By identifying barriers involving stereotypes, work-family conflict, organizational injustice, and restricted leadership access, the study provides a basis for practices that can sustain women's participation and advancement in correctional service. The research also supports policy, governance, and institutional sustainability. The findings may assist the BJMP in developing responsive personnel programs, training, safety procedures, and mental-health initiatives; guide the DILG in organizing relevant workshops and capacity-building activities; help local government units understand the needs of women district jail officers; and provide courts and other criminal-justice stakeholders with a clearer view of the realities affecting correctional personnel. Educational sustainability is addressed by using field-based evidence to improve criminology instruction and prepare future professionals to understand gender, ethics, resilience, and institutional practice. Community sustainability is supported by increasing public and family awareness of the responsibilities, risks, and contributions of women jail officers. For future researchers, the study provides a localized foundation for further inquiry into gender-responsive jail management, correctional well-being, professional development, and institutional reform.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the work insights of women jail officers from three selected district jails in the Province of Bohol. Phenomenology enables researchers to investigate individuals' experiences and sensory impressions and understand how knowledge is constructed from their perceptions and experiences (Embree & Lester, 1997). The approach focused on the conscious experiences of the informants and the meanings they assigned to their work. The researcher sought to identify the essence of these experiences by suspending judgment and setting aside preconceived ideas during the interviews and interpretation of responses. The study specifically adopted transcendental phenomenology, which emphasizes the reduction and bracketing of biases to understand the fundamental structures of human consciousness. However, attempts to access experience independently of specific objects or situations may raise questions about the feasibility and limitations of this approach (Heotis, 2020). According to Welman & Kruger (1999), phenomenologists seek to understand psychological and social processes from the perspectives of the individuals

involved. This approach was therefore appropriate because the study examined the lived and work-related experiences of women jail officers through face-to-face interviews and a focus group discussion.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at the Carmen District Jail, Talibon District Jail, and Ubay District Jail in the Province of Bohol, Central Visayas, Region VII, Philippines. These facilities were located in the municipalities of Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay, respectively. Carmen is a second-class municipality in Bohol's third district. It consists of 29 barangays, covers approximately 29,804 hectares, and recorded a population of 49,191 in the 2020 census. Agriculture is the primary livelihood of most residents, while trade and business activities are concentrated near the poblacion. The Carmen District Jail is located in Poblacion Sur beside the municipal hall and was reported to have 21 personnel, including three women jail officers (PhilAtlas, 1990). Talibon is located in the northeastern part of Bohol and belongs to the province's second district. It comprises 25 barangays, including 17 mainland and eight island barangays, and has a land area of approximately 140.46 square kilometers. Its population was 71,272 based on the 2020 census. Farming and fishing are the municipality's principal livelihoods, supplemented by retail and wholesale activities. The Talibon District Jail is located in Barangay San Jose and was reported to have 18 personnel, including four women jail officers (PhilAtlas, 1990). Ubay is a first-class municipality in northeastern Bohol and is also part of the province's second district. It covers approximately 335 square kilometers, including 61 kilometers of coastline, and consists of 44 barangays. Its population was 81,799 based on the 2020 census, making it the largest and most populous municipality in Bohol. Agriculture is the primary livelihood in inland areas, while fishing is common in coastal communities. The municipality has also experienced growth in retail, wholesale, and commercial activities. The Ubay District Jail was relocated from the municipal hall to Camambugan in 2017 because of overcrowding and was reported to have 18 personnel, including three women jail officers (PhilAtlas, 1990).

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents, referred to in the study as informants, were ten women jail officers assigned to the three selected district jails. Two informants were from Carmen District Jail, two were from Ubay District Jail, and six were from Talibon District Jail. Four informants from Carmen and Ubay District Jails participated in individual in-depth interviews. The remaining six informants from Talibon District Jail participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Their participation enabled the researcher to examine their work insights, coping strategies, and aspirations for personal and professional growth.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive convenience sampling to identify informants who possessed the characteristics required by the research. To qualify, an individual had to be a woman jail officer assigned to one of the selected district jails and have at least three years of service. The sampling procedure was intended to ensure that the participants had sufficient professional experience to describe their duties, workplace challenges, coping mechanisms, and career aspirations. Informants were selected based on their qualifications, availability, and willingness to participate in either an individual interview or the Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

2.5 Research Instrument

The researcher developed an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions. The instrument contained three parts. The first part examined the informants' work insights in performing their duties. The second explored how they coped with problems encountered in their work. The third examined their aspirations for personal and professional growth. The interview guide was reviewed and validated by the panel members and was confirmed and pre-tested before its administration. A research journal was used to document relevant observations and information during data collection. Voice and video recording devices were also used, with participant consent, to preserve the informants' responses and support accurate transcription and analysis.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher submitted a transmittal letter to the Regional Office of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology to request permission to involve the Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay District Jails. The regional office forwarded the request to the BJMP National Headquarters. Upon approval, the authorization was returned through email, after which the researcher coordinated with the wardens of the three district jails to arrange the interviews. The individual interviews were conducted according to schedules agreed upon during the researcher's initial visits. The focus group discussion was conducted in an open house situated several meters from the Talibon District Jail. The venues and schedules were selected to accommodate the informants' work responsibilities, geographic locations, availability, and comfort. Before each session, the researcher explained the study's purpose, nature, procedures, and confidentiality safeguards. Each informant received and signed an individual informed consent form before participating. The researcher communicated in a language understood by the informants and informed them that participation was voluntary. During the interviews and focus group discussion, the researcher used the interview guide, research journal, and audio or video recording devices. Follow-up questions were asked to encourage participants to clarify and elaborate on their experiences. Many responses were expressed in the local dialect to allow the informants to communicate their experiences freely and accurately. The recorded

responses were transcribed in detail and translated into English. The researcher repeatedly reviewed the transcripts before coding and analysis. Codes were assigned to the informants to protect their identities, and all identifying information, including personal names and specific workplace references, was removed from the transcripts.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological analysis procedure, following the seven steps outlined by Shosha (2012). The researcher began by reading and rereading the interview and focus group transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. This process involved transcript horizontalization, through which statements directly related to the research questions were identified and highlighted. Significant statements and phrases describing the informants' work experiences, coping strategies, and aspirations were extracted from the transcripts. These statements were encoded according to their corresponding page and line numbers. The researcher then interpreted the significant statements and formulated their core meanings. Meanings with similar content were grouped into cluster themes, from which broader emergent themes were developed. Comprehensive descriptions were prepared for each emergent theme and integrated to establish a holistic account of the women jail officers' work insights and lived experiences. The researcher reviewed the relationships among significant statements, formulated meanings, cluster themes, and emergent themes to ensure consistency in the interpretation. Member checking was subsequently conducted by contacting the informants through telephone conversations. The findings were discussed with them to confirm that the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences and that they were satisfied with the results of the interviews.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The researcher maintained professionalism and established rapport with the BJMP offices, jail administrators, and informants by presenting the required documents and clearly explaining the study. Interview schedules were arranged around the participants' work commitments and availability. The researcher used language accessible to the informants and protected the confidentiality of all responses. Participation was voluntary, and the informants were informed of their right to withdraw or discontinue their participation at any time without penalty. Information collected during the study was used solely for research purposes. Informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and respect for participant autonomy were observed throughout the research process. The study applied the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy. Beneficence was addressed by ensuring that the research could contribute to the welfare of women jail officers, the BJMP, the DILG, local government units, courts, families, communities, and other correctional stakeholders. The findings were intended to support policies and programs related to personnel safety, mental health, professional development, resource allocation, and gender-responsive jail administration. Non-maleficence was maintained by minimizing possible psychological, social, and professional harm. Interviews and focus group discussions were scheduled at convenient times to avoid disrupting the participants' official responsibilities or personal lives. Findings were presented constructively, focusing on institutional concerns and possible improvements rather than assigning blame to individual officers. Justice was promoted by representing the perspectives and experiences of women jail officers and supporting the fair distribution of the study's potential benefits. The findings were intended to be communicated to relevant local government units, correctional facilities, and community organizations to assist policy and practice development. Autonomy was protected by providing clear information about the research and allowing each informant to decide freely whether to participate or withdraw.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Work Insights of the Informants in the Performance of their Duties

The participants described two categories of work insights in performing their duties. Positive Experiences comprised Meaningful Employment and Recognition and Supportive Work Relationships and Growth, while Negative Experiences comprised Emotional Disconnection and Isolation and Operational Challenges and Moral Frustrations.

3.1.1 Positive Experiences

3.1.1.1 Meaningful Employment and Recognition

The participants experienced fulfillment from maintaining institutional order, supporting the rehabilitation of Persons Deprived of Liberty, and contributing to community safety. They reported that seeing improvements among PDLs strengthened their sense of purpose. Webinars and workplace training increased their confidence in managing stress and handling PDLs during high-pressure situations. Salary, hazard pay, job stability, recognition from superiors and colleagues, and respect from the community also contributed to job satisfaction. Remaining employed during challenging periods gave the participants a sense of security and gratitude. These findings indicate that meaningful responsibilities and acknowledgment reinforce the participants' commitment to correctional work. Competence Motivation Theory explains that individuals are intrinsically motivated when they feel effective and experience accomplishment, while external recognition strengthens the value they assign to their work (Harter, 1978). Recognition also builds confidence in handling occupational demands and sustaining performance, as explained by Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1977). Britton (2003) similarly emphasized that women in male-dominated correctional institutions develop stronger professional identity and

job satisfaction when their contributions to rehabilitation and institutional safety are recognized. Triplett & Mullings (1996) further identified meaningful responsibilities, direct interaction with inmates, professional autonomy, and recognition from colleagues, supervisors, and communities as important contributors to job satisfaction among women in corrections.

3.1.1.2 Supportive Work Relationships and Growth

The participants reported that teamwork, communication, cooperation, and mutual trust helped them manage occupational stress. Stress-management seminars and online training strengthened their ability to handle pressure and work effectively with colleagues. Shared workplace challenges also brought officers closer together, with some describing their team as a family that provided emotional support. Strong commitment among team members, improved communication, and collective participation increased motivation and facilitated both personal and professional growth. The findings demonstrate that supportive relationships provide emotional security and create opportunities for learning and professional development. Bandura (1977) explains that encouragement, feedback, and mentorship strengthen self-efficacy and enable individuals to approach difficult tasks with greater confidence. Competence Motivation Theory also suggests that supportive environments allow employees to develop skills, learn from others, and satisfy their need for competence and social connection (White, 1959). Farkas (1999) found that peer support and mentorship strengthened the skills, confidence, and organizational commitment of female correctional officers. Similarly, Lambert et al. (2007) found that supportive relationships with colleagues and supervisors reduced job stress, increased job satisfaction, improved performance, and contributed to employee retention.

3.1.2 Negative Experiences

3.1.2.1 Emotional Disconnection and Isolation

The participants experienced emotional distress resulting from the demanding and restrictive nature of correctional work. Some reported sadness from serving PDLs while being separated from their own families. Heavy workloads and personnel shortages reduced the time available for family relationships, even though family members were important sources of comfort and strength. Unresolved emotional difficulties also affected their concentration, energy, and work performance. These conditions created fatigue, emotional distance, and feelings of isolation despite the presence of colleagues. The findings suggest that emotional detachment may develop when officers encounter persistent stress without adequate opportunities to express their feelings or seek support. Reduced confidence and perceived lack of support may lead individuals to withdraw from workplace and social relationships, further weakening motivation (Bandura, 1977). Protection Motivation Theory explains that emotional distancing may also function as a defensive response to continuing psychological threats, violence, tension, and occupational trauma (Rogers, 1975). Nario-Lopez (2021) found that jail officers sometimes suppress or numb their emotions to maintain authority and comply with institutional expectations in highly bureaucratic and masculinized environments. Asiseo (2022) similarly identified emotional isolation and inadequate emotional support among BJMP jail officers, emphasizing the need for mental-health and wellness interventions.

3.1.2.2 Operational Challenges and Moral Frustrations

The participants encountered resource shortages, limited personnel, unclear procedures, technological problems, and restricted access to essential services. One concern involved the inconsistent supply of maintenance medicines for PDLs, which made officers feel helpless when they could not provide appropriate care. Slow internet connectivity interfered with the submission and retrieval of important information, while demanding outside-force assignments affected performance and job satisfaction. These conditions prevented the officers from performing their responsibilities as effectively and humanely as they desired. Operational limitations weakened the participants' sense of control and created conflict between procedural restrictions and their moral obligation to address the needs of PDLs. When limited resources, system failures, insufficient time, and excessive workloads prevent individuals from accomplishing their duties, they may experience powerlessness, reduced self-efficacy, and declining performance (Bandura, 1977). Protection Motivation Theory further explains that unsafe conditions, inadequate institutional support, and moral conflict can produce stress, emotional alienation, helplessness, and reduced motivation (Rogers, 1975). Alipoyo (2022) identified resource scarcity, understaffing, and overcrowding as systemic limitations that restrict correctional officers' capacity to deliver jail services and implement reformation programs. Ponce et al. (2023) likewise found that limited funding and personnel intensified difficulties related to security, contraband control, and inmate behavior, contributing to moral frustration among jail officers expected to perform their duties fairly and humanely.

3.2 Coping with the Problems Encountered by the Informants in the Performance of their Duties

The participants coped with workplace problems through two emergent themes: Building Resilience through Camaraderie and Initiative and Institutional and Psychological Support System. These themes reflected both personal and collective efforts and organizational interventions intended to protect their emotional and psychological well-being.

3.2.1 Building Resilience through Camaraderie and Initiative

The participants developed resilience by maintaining supportive relationships with colleagues and initiating practical responses to workplace problems. They organized Zumba, sports, games, and recreational activities to reduce stress and physical exhaustion. Webinars helped them understand stress-management strategies. When internet connectivity disrupted

operations, the officers looked for antenna boosters, coordinated with information-technology personnel, and developed backup schedules. These initiatives showed their willingness to identify alternatives rather than remain passive when facing occupational challenges. The findings indicate that resilience developed through a combination of self-confidence, proactive problem-solving, and social support. Personal initiative in decision-making, skill development, and problem-solving reflects strong confidence in one's capacity to manage difficult situations (Bandura, 1977). Camaraderie also provides emotional encouragement and social persuasion that strengthen confidence and facilitate recovery from adverse experiences. Harter (1978) explains that individuals are motivated to improve when they experience competence and receive encouragement from their environment. Dura & Parabacuel (2022) found that social support, emotional intelligence, and political skills contributed significantly to the resilience of jail officers in Region XI. Asiseo (2022) also found that jail officers developed resilience by accepting their responsibilities, learning from challenges, and sustaining their commitment to public safety.

3.2.2 Institutional and Psychological Support System

The participants received institutional assistance through webinars, E-dalaw services, telepsychology sessions, early-morning exercises, recreational activities, and expert-facilitated mental-health sessions. These interventions helped officers manage stress, communicate their feelings, maintain emotional stability, and remain positive in high-pressure situations. E-dalaw also enabled PDLs to communicate with their families, helping officers manage the emotional and operational consequences of restricted physical contact. Formal training, counseling, supervisor guidance, and psychological services strengthen officers' beliefs that they can overcome occupational demands by providing knowledge, reinforcement, and practical coping resources (Bandura, 1977). Rogers (1975) explains that support systems help individuals respond adaptively to physical and psychological threats such as burnout, conflict, and emotional exhaustion. Kinman et al. (2016) found that inadequate employer assistance following critical incidents was a major predictor of mental-health concerns among prison officers. Organizational assistance can provide resources, ensure fair and dignified treatment, create a positive work environment, and reduce stress and burnout (Taylor et al., 2025). Psychological services, counseling, and peer-support programs also facilitate proactive coping, resilience, and self-care among correctional personnel (Finn, 2000).

3.3 Desires of the Informants to Improve their Personal and Professional Growth

The participants' desires to improve their personal and professional growth were represented by two emergent themes: Ambition for Growth and Positive Change and Vision for a Purposeful Future. These aspirations included emotional maturity, confidence, education, specialized training, promotion, humane treatment of PDLs, and meaningful service within the BJMP.

3.3.1 Ambition for Growth and Positive Change

The participants wanted to become more patient, considerate, emotionally controlled, confident, and effective in communicating with colleagues and PDLs. Some also viewed spiritual development as a means of gaining a clearer perspective and understanding the circumstances of others. Their aspirations extended beyond individual improvement to creating a more humane jail system, improving the work environment, and becoming role models who demonstrate integrity, compassion, and meaningful service. According to Bandura (1977), confidence in one's ability to perform actions necessary to attain goals influences learning, adaptability, leadership, and persistence. The participants' willingness to improve themselves and contribute to institutional reform reflects their belief that they can influence their environment. Harter (1978) similarly explains that the desire for competence and mastery motivates individuals to acquire skills, perform effectively, and pursue meaningful change. Moore (2011) found that women in male-dominated law-enforcement and correctional environments demonstrate strong commitments to professional development and career advancement. They may also act as agents of change by advocating more humane inmate care and improved workplace conditions (Moore, 2011). Women's increased participation in correctional leadership may encourage more collaborative organizational practices, stronger community engagement, and institutional transformation (Rochford, 2018).

3.3.2 Vision for a Purposeful Future

The participants envisioned a future characterized by continuous education, specialized training, promotion, leadership, and improved rehabilitation services. They wanted to become more efficient and effective officers, strengthen their ability to handle pressure, and remain updated through training. Some desired further schooling to improve the quality of their service, qualify for promotion, increase their rank, understand leadership responsibilities, and remain informed about new BJMP policies. They also wanted to serve as role models for women and contribute more effectively to the rehabilitation and reformation of PDLs. Bandura (1977) explains that confidence in personal capability shapes aspirations and encourages individuals to pursue education, training, career advancement, and leadership. Competence Motivation Theory further indicates that individuals seek opportunities to develop skills, achieve mastery, and perform roles that provide meaning and fulfillment (Harter, 1978). The participants' visions therefore reflected both personal ambition and a broader commitment to institutional improvement. A strong sense of purpose in work sustains engagement and encourages continued investment in long-term professional objectives (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Their future-oriented goals

demonstrate how education, skill development, leadership preparation, and increased responsibility can support both individual advancement and higher standards within the correctional profession.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that women jail officers in the Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay District Jails experience correctional work through both fulfillment and difficulty. Under their work insights in the performance of their duties, Positive Experiences were reflected in Meaningful Employment and Recognition and Supportive Work Relationships and Growth, while Negative Experiences were reflected in Emotional Disconnection and Isolation and Operational Challenges and Moral Frustrations. They coped with the problems encountered in the performance of their duties through Building Resilience through Camaraderie and Initiative and Institutional and Psychological Support System. Despite occupational stress, resource limitations, and emotional demands, the participants remained committed to their responsibilities and expressed Ambition for Growth and Positive Change and Vision for a Purposeful Future through continuous education, professional development, career advancement, leadership, and improved service to Persons Deprived of Liberty.

The Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay District Jails should provide tailored training on compassionate care, maintain open communication, strengthen supportive workplace relationships, expand mental-health and psychological services, and establish formal recognition programs to improve officer well-being and motivation. The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology should reinforce organizational initiatives, formulate data-driven policies based on the identified needs of women officers, and create opportunities for facilities to exchange effective practices. The Department of the Interior and Local Government and concerned local government units should support targeted training, workshops, education, and informed assistance addressing occupational stress, crisis management, gender-specific concerns, professional development, and changing institutional demands. Future studies should further examine workplace discrimination, gendered expectations, safety, career barriers, family support, work-life balance, mental-health interventions, mentorship, organizational support, crisis response, and the experiences of women officers across different correctional facilities, regions, or countries.

The study was limited to ten women jail officers with at least three years of service from the Carmen, Talibon, and Ubay District Jails in Bohol. Four informants participated in individual in-depth interviews, while six participated in a focus group discussion, and all were selected through purposive convenience sampling. The findings were therefore confined to the participants' reported experiences within these three district-jail settings and the qualitative phenomenological procedures employed in the study.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study followed applicable institutional ethical standards and secured authorization from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the participating district jails. Participation was voluntary, and all informants provided informed consent and were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through coded transcripts, removal of identifying information, and secure handling of recordings and research data. The researcher declares no conflict of interest, acknowledges the contributions of the participants, research adviser, panel members, and concerned institutions, and assumes full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, authorship, and copyright ownership of the study.

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