

## Work Environment of Probationers in Ilocos Sur

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to determine the work environment of probationers in Ilocos Sur through the lens of 164 probationers. Survey questionnaires were used to discover the work environment of the probationers. The respondents are exposed to an uncomfortable work environment, confronted with a disagreeable relationship with their employers, poor rapport among their peers, and a lack of sense of belongingness, and their work is completely not suited to their abilities and does not satisfy their needs. Also, they faced challenges that would impede the very purpose of their probation. It is recommended that the parole and probation administration consider seeking related agencies' assistance to continuously, sustainably, and intensely provide psycho-social programs among the probationers and other stakeholders. Also, for the said agency to consider strengthening the rehabilitation programs to foster behavioral and attitudinal change in the probationers under their supervision.*

**Keywords:** *Work, environment, probationers, challenges*

### INTRODUCTION

Probation has long offered individuals convicted of a crime a way to avoid the harmful effects of incarceration and remain in the community, bound by the conditions formulated to help them develop the routines and skills essential to a law-abiding citizen (DOJ-PPA, 2013).

The primary goal of probation is to promote resistance, the process by which a person formally engaged in criminal offending moves to a place of long-term abstinence from the commission of a crime. Probation is more advantageous than imprisonment (Mejia, 2013).

In probation, the person is spared the degrading, embittering, and disabling experience in prison, which might only confirm them in criminal ways. On the other hand, the offender can continue to work in his place of employment. Family ties remain intact, thus preventing many broken homes. Also, probation is less expensive (Ruhland, 2018).

The Department of Justice-Parole and Probation Administration (DOJ-PPA) states that the government must realize that it will save more money if it invests in the reformation and rehabilitation of the offenders/inmates. Effective implementation of these programs will lower the rate of recidivism. An effective monitoring system must, thus, be put into place (DOJ-PPA, 2013).

These programs include an aftercare program, which reduces the recidivism rates of offenders. Effective aftercare programs focus on serious offenders and provide intensive supervision to ensure public safety and services designed to facilitate the reintegration process. Such a process may allow some offenders to be released earlier and reduce

recidivism. The program includes volunteerism, education, employability, social mobilization, livelihood, and the like (Carillo, n.d.).

Employment is one of the conditions that probationers have to follow. It provides income, social connection, and feelings of societal contribution and self-worth. However, the probationer faces some barriers to finding employment: having a criminal record, low levels of education, vocational, financial achievement, and unstable employment. Employment can help the probationers with rehabilitation, restoring a convicted offender under Probation to society through some form of vocational, educational, work involvement, or treatment, and becoming a productive member of society (Wallace, 2019).

Abadinsky (1991), as cited by Tacbas (2019), stated that securing and maintaining employment or training for employment are crucial aspects of parole and probation supervision: "Perhaps the greatest single factor influencing the quality of life of parolees in their communities is the ability to secure and maintain employment." They generally believe there is a relationship between successful employment and avoiding further legal difficulties. In one of the studies conducted in California, having variable employment may not cause the variable to go straight. Still, both variables may be dependent on the variable of motivation. In other words, whatever motivates an offender to seek and maintain gainful employment also tends to motivate that offender to avoid criminal behavior.

Also, providing economic rewards and employment also enhances the self-worth and image of the client. When the economic condition is poor, when unemployment is high, this has a direct effect on parole and probation supervision. On the other hand, one of the critical aspects of employment for ex-offenders, parolees, and probationers is the question of revealing their records. However, some probation officers allow the clients to decide for themselves. They only guide by discussing the experience of other clients relative to this issue. Many clients reported that their candor resulted in not securing employment. Others reported that some employers were interested in providing them with an opportunity. Unfortunately, many, if not most, employers will not hire an ex-offender if there is an alternative. This means that if there is another client, ex-offender will not be hired by employers. Incarceration or a felony conviction can also impart a stigma that makes employers less likely to hire ex-offenders (Schmitt et al., 2010).

An expert in ex-offender employment recommends that "the employer should be made aware of an offender's status only when the pattern of the offender's behavior may result in anti-social behavior. The vocational director of the Osborne Association, a prison reform group, states: "We do not lie about the individual's record, but because of the prejudice that employers may have, we try to postpone complete revelation until the employer has had a chance to try out the offender on the job" (Yangco, n.d.).

A probation officer said during the informal interview conducted by the researchers that the most common types of work of their client belong to the blue-collar job, and it is supported by the data the researcher in this study presents. This is because some clients cannot finish their studies and only have informal education, and typically they only have a high school diploma. Although the work environments are suited to their skills and knowledge, some of them find it hard to find a job, so the parole and probation office recommended them to put small businesses like sari-sari stores, poultry raising, balut vendors, piggery, and farming to be able to support the basic needs of their family.

Moreover, those probationer-respondents are employed mainly as drivers, machine operators, welders, and auto mechanics of government agencies like the Department of Public Works and Highway and some private agencies cooperating with the government.

This study is significant to the following stakeholders. For the Parole and Probation Administration, the study can help them further understand their roles in helping the development of the behavior, education, and career goals of probationers so that they will become productive members of the society. Through this study, the probationers can help to categorize their goals in life and family. This also becomes a reminder for them to complete their rehabilitation and be good members of society. The community will understand their purpose in helping the Parole and Probation Administration reshape the behavior of the probationers during their rehabilitation process. Lastly, for the business and industrial sectors, they will understand the needs of the probationers to have good job opportunities to achieve their rehabilitation.

The study aimed to determine the work environment of probationers in Ilocos Sur. Specifically, it sought to unveil the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, the condition of the work environment of the probationers, and the challenges they encountered.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design.** This study is a mixed methods research design. It is a procedure for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study to systematically describe the present status of the Work Environment of Probationers in Ilocos Sur. A survey questionnaire was used as the primary data gathering instrument. To enhance the data gathered, personal interviews were also conducted (Creswel, 2012).

**Participants of the Study.** As applied in this study, the researchers engaged the 164 probationers of the First District of Ilocos Sur. Personal interviews with the respondents were also conducted to enhance the data gathered from the questionnaire.

**Data Gathering Tool.** The researchers prepared, administered, and retrieved copies of the questionnaire-checklist, which was adopted from the study of Morgado (2019) entitled "The work environment and job performance of probationers towards reformation," and personal interviews were employed to avail of the data needed.

**Data Gathering Procedure.** As applied in this study, the researchers engaged the whole probationers and parolees of the First District of Ilocos Sur. Personal interviews with the respondents were also conducted to enhance the data gathered from the questionnaire.

**Data Analysis.** Frequency count and percentage were used to treat the data.

**Ethical Considerations.** The key informants were informed of what the study was about, including the benefits and risks, and were assured of their privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. The researchers obtained informed consent from the respondents. In the collection of data, ethical issues are inevitable. Thus, several ethical principles are considered to guarantee the utmost integrity in protecting the rights of the research participants and preserving the credibility of the information gathered. For this study, the researchers considered the required ethical protocols throughout the research process. Hence, ethical considerations were observed before the conduct of the study. This study was

subjected to review by the Ethics Committee of the University of Northern Philippines. Ethical principles are observed in the study to include privacy and confidentiality, informed consent, considering the subject's possible vulnerability, recruitment, benefits, compensation, and community considerations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Socio-demographic profile of the respondents

Most probationers (90.9%) are males while a great number (9.1%) are females. Almost half of the respondents (118 or 72%) have a monthly income of P15,000 and above. A great percentage (83 or 50%) are regular or permanent. Great majority (135 or 82.3%) are engaged in blue-collar jobs as construction laborers, carpenters, furniture workers, fish dealers, tricycle drivers, mechanics, and farmers, while a great number of the probationers (29 or 17.7%) are engaged in white-collar jobs as business owners, private office workers, and barangay officials. Great majority (125 or 76.22%) are undergoing probation for 1-3 years, while a great number (34 or 20.73%) are on probation for 4-6 years, and five (3.05%) are on probation below one year.

### Condition of the work environment of the probationers

The condition of the work environment of the probationers is described through their relationship with their employer, peer relationship, and present work condition.

**Table 1**

*Probationers' relationship with employer*

Indicators	f	%
I have a very comfortable relationship with the employer.	15	9.1
I have a comfortable relationship with the employer.	22	13.4
I have an uncomfortable relationship with the employer.	18	11.0
I have a very uncomfortable relationship with the employer.	109	66.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Majority of the respondents (109 or 66.5%) revealed that they have a very uncomfortable relationship with their employers. This may be associated with the stigmatizing label of being a criminal and a dangerous person, causing employers to doubt and mistrust the probationers. Almost all probationers or anyone who has a taint of imprisonment experienced social stigma and discrimination (Moore & Tangney, 2017; Turney et al., 2013). Probationers were given the derogatory designation of being a criminal and a dangerous person, which sullied their individual integrity and feelings of inferiority and marginalized their community participation and other social activities. It has interpersonal consequences towards family, friends, and social relationships (Mezey et al., 2016; Moore, 2016). Furthermore, Moore (2016) and Galli (2018) revealed that social stigma could cause withdrawal from situations that have a negative impact on behavior and functioning and have direct implications for the probationers' rehabilitation and reformation progression. It

has adverse effects on their employment or any other activities that may relate to financial opportunity (Ofodile, 2016; Welsh et al., 2016). Uggen et al. (2014) found that prior prison sentence and criminal records stigmatized the person, which impeded gaining successful employment (Chintakrindi et al., 2015; Emmert, 2015; Miller et al., 2014).

On the other hand, a great number of the probationers (22 or 13.4%) disclosed that they "have a comfortable relationship with their employers." The benefits of having legitimate jobs and a steady income prevented them from engaging in illicit activities to support their family needs. Hence, Farrall and Calverley (2005) stated that employment also provided them with a sense of self-worth and happiness that someone still trusted their skills and gave them a chance to reform (Domingo & Labid, 2016; Hepburn & Griffin, 2004; Sensui, 2016). The confidence and trust they feel towards their co-workers and other members of the community are essential elements of the rehabilitation process (Boehm, 2013; Decker, Ortiz, Spohn & Hedberg, 2015). This happiness, when attained, provides a feeling of self-worth that motivates them to continue to desist from crimes and supports the idea that a person needs a sense of fulfillment in their life (Farrall & Calverley, 2005; Olson, 2012).

Furthermore, a great number of the probationers (18 or 11%) exposed that they "have an uncomfortable relationship with their employers." As cited by Cuevas (2020) in his study "The Paradox of Being a Probationer: Tales of Joy and Sorrow," after the probationers were out from jail, the taint of imprisonment will always leave a mark on the eyes of people. It is the social consequence of their criminal records. According to Domingo and Labid (2016) and Emmert (2015), social stigma is a condition whereby the people in the community label an individual with inferior ways based on particular social status. They emotionally expressed that being a probationer placed them in a difficult situation. The community, including their relatives, friends, neighbors, or even their acquaintances who knew the situation, labeled them directly without viewing all circumstances of how and why they committed it (Turney et al., 2013; Lamet et al., 2013; Olson, 2012).

Lastly, 15 probationers divulged that they "have a very comfortable relationship with their employers." This finding was supported by the study of Cuevas (2020), where "the probationers shared their positive experiences that, despite their wrongdoings and crime committed, there are still people willing to accept and understand them. These people were their neighbors, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, and superiors, who knew and believed that they were good people.

**Table 2***Peer's relationship*

Indicators	f	%
I have a very good rapport among people at place of work.	14	8.5
I have a good rapport among people at place of work.	18	11.0
I have a not so good rapport among people at place of work.	32	19.5
I have a very poor rapport among people at place of work.	100	61.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The condition of the work environment of the probationers in terms of peer relationships is presented in Table 2.

More than half of the respondents (100 or 61%) disclosed that they "have a very poor good rapport among people at place of work." Also, a great number of the probationers (32 or 19.5%) unveiled that they "have a not so good rapport among people at the place of work." These significant findings are in contrast with the study of Cuevas (2020), where one of the participants revealed, "I am glad that my co-workers did not treat me differently, especially my manager/supervisor he knew that I am a good and a hardworking person that's why he will not disregard me. I am thankful because I was still accepted by my uncle. I work for him as a meat butcher here in the public market. He allowed me to work even though sometimes, I needed to skip to report for my probation." The acceptance and understanding with other people resulting from the social bond between the probationers and their community, which included their neighbors, peers, employers, and co-workers, are among the most important elements in the process of rehabilitation and reformation. Sump (2016) proved that the social bond of the probationers is another type of attachment to people other than their immediate family. This social bond is a process of interpersonal connection and relationship with other people, which is considered by the probationers as additional support units in their lives. Hence, the role of the community plays an important aspect in the successful completion of the probation program.

On the other hand, a great number of the probationers (18 or 11%) unveiled that they "have a good rapport among people at the place of work." The acceptance and understanding of the community, together with the support of the family, decreased the process of reoffending and increased the desistance to crime (Weisburd et al., 2017; Klingele, 2013).

The present work condition of the probationers is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Present work condition*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
The work is very suited to my ability and highly satisfies my needs.	13	7.9
The work is suited to my ability and satisfies my needs.	19	11.6
The work is not so much suited to my ability and somehow does not satisfy my needs.	38	23.2
The work is completely not suited to my ability and does not satisfy my needs.	94	57.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>

More than half of the respondents (94 or 57.3%) unveiled that their "work is completely not suited to their ability and does not satisfy their needs." As Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory suggests, humans are motivated to satisfy their basic needs. This implies that despite the adopted harmonized and integrated treatment program of the Parole and Probation Administration along vocational/livelihood and skills training for the probationers to affect their rehabilitation, the availability of employment that fits their

acquired knowledge and skills to satisfy the needs of the probationers remains to be a challenge.

On the other hand, a few of them unfolded that “the work is suited to their ability and satisfies their needs.” As cited by Cottle (2017) in his study, "The Impact of Employment on Probationer Recidivism," social control theory suggests that a strong attachment to an institution (i.e., work or employment) will result in informal social control that can reduce an individual's criminal propensity. This theory assumes that those who spend their time at work have a reduced amount of time that they could be committing crimes. The influence of employment or work will also alter how an individual spends their time outside of work. This suggests that the pro-social benefits of work will increase the number of pro-social and law-abiding decisions outside of one's employment, in turn decreasing one's likelihood of reoffending.

### Challenges encountered by the probationers

The probationers are confronted with several challenges as they continue with their rehabilitation in the community.

**Table 4**

*Challenges encountered*

Challenges Encountered	F	%
Financial difficulties	91	55.48
Fear of security	83	50.60
Sickness	81	49.30
Conflict in work schedule	78	47.50
Stigma of incarceration	41	25.00
No trust, ashamed of other people	22	13.40

**Financial difficulties.** Majority of the probationers faced financial difficulties while undergoing probation. Some of them had struggled to look for jobs due to income and job losses brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Having stable employment that provides financial support to their families will strengthen the conviction of the probationers to overcome the challenges they encounter and to continue the process of rehabilitation and reformation (Sensui, 2016; Domingo & Labid, 2016; Miller et al., 2014; Hepburn & Griffin, 2004).

**Fear of security.** Majority of the probationers experienced fear of security. This coincides with the findings of Cuevas (2020), where there are emotions felt by every probationer in their quest for a better life. As they have experienced temporary freedom, it always has consequential feelings that they might be imprisoned again. They were afraid of uncertain things or circumstances that might happen to them, such as committing another crime or violating the probation condition set by the court, which leads them to the revocation of their probation grant and return to prison. A participant even mentioned: "I also had a phobia, although I am already on probation; there might be a possibility that anytime I will be arrested again." Another shared: "I am worried that I might commit a crime

again while on probation, so I am anxious about my situation." One participant said, "As of now, the only thing that made me worry most is that there is a possibility that I might commit another offense again during the period of my probation. For example, I may be involved in a traffic accident, and I may hit a person on the road, this instance makes me worry so much."

**Sickness.** A great number of the probationers got sick during the course of their probation, and some are anxious about getting infected with COVID-19, which will lead to their isolation and interrupt their employment and attendance to probation activities.

**Conflict in Work Schedule.** A great number of the probationers had conflicts in their work schedules. The schedule of probation activities is in conflict with the time of their work which needed them to skip work and prioritize participating in the probation activities.

**Stigma of incarceration.** A great number of the probationers also suffered from the stigma of their incarceration. Almost all probationers or anyone who has a taint of imprisonment experienced social stigma and discrimination (Moore & Tangney, 2017; Turney et al., 2013). Probationers received the stigmatizing label as being criminal and dangerous persons, which sullied their individual's integrity, and feelings of inferiority and marginalized their community participation and other social activities. It has interpersonal consequences towards family, friends, and social relationships (Mezey et al., 2016; Moore, 2016). Furthermore, Moore (2016) and Galli (2018) revealed that social stigma could cause withdrawal from situations that have a negative impact on behavior and functioning and have direct implications for the probationers' rehabilitation and reformation progression.

**No trust, ashamed of other people.** On the other hand, a few of the probationers had trust issues and felt ashamed of other people. Those people who are labeled negatively diminish their opportunities and affect their confidence in interaction and relationships with others. Accordingly, the probationers who accepted these labels are prone to engage in deviant behaviors and blunder the purposes of their probation (Emmert, 2015; Siegel, 2018).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The respondents, as probationers, are exposed to uncomfortable work environments confronted with disagreeable relationships with their employers, poor rapport among their peers, and lack of sense of belongingness, and their work is completely not suited to their abilities which does not satisfy their needs. Also, they faced challenges that would impede the very purpose of their probation.

It is recommended that the parole and probation administration may consider seeking the assistance of related agencies to continuously, sustainably, and intensely provide psycho-social programs among the probationers and other stakeholders. Also, the said agency may consider strengthening the rehabilitation programs to foster behavioral and attitudinal change in the probationers under their supervision.



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