

# Volunteer Probation Assistant System: The Case of Ilocos Norte

Jaypie C. Verdadero<sup>1</sup>, Jayson E. Necida<sup>2</sup>, Jocelyn F. Licadang<sup>3</sup>,  
Orlando B. Arangorin<sup>4</sup>, Earl Jann T. Laurencio<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Doctor of Philosophy Students, College of Criminal Justice Education, University of the Cordilleras, Governor Pack Road, 2600 Baguio City, Philippines

## ABSTRACT

Previous studies pointed out the decline of volunteers in probation supervision and with an alarming increase of non-participatory volunteers in the fulfillment of their tasks. Hence, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study in the province of Ilocos Norte, Philippines to determine the level of Volunteer Probation Assistants (VPAs) awareness relative to their functions, and to understand VPAs experiences in performing their sworn duties. The descriptive type of research was used in this study employing quantitative cross-sectional survey through a questionnaire survey checklist and a qualitative in-depth interview approach. Findings showed that VPAs are knowledgeable with their roles as direct supervisor and as a resource individual as they worked collaboratively work with Probation Officers (POs). Further VPAs and POs have maintained a good working relationship as partners in ensuring clients' holistic reformation and rehabilitation. Volunteers asserted that VPA program creates both opportunities and challenges. It was stated that there were challenges to one's biases, uncooperative clients, and client threats. On the other hand, helping POs in providing the needed information, improvement of social and leadership skills, and a good venue of extending public service were emphasized. Therefore, VPAs play a vital role in the successful reintegration and rehabilitation of clients, and that they are an important asset to DOJ-PPA not only as community resources but also as a force-multipliers towards monitoring of clients, which is impossible to perform with the limited number of POs.

**Keywords:** Volunteer Probation Assistants (VPAs), Probation Officers (POs), VPA Roles

## INTRODUCTION

Community support for the country's Volunteer Probation Assistant (VPA) program has been declining. Virola et al.(2010) argued that volunteering is a worldwide phenomenon, and the levels of volunteer participation in different countries indicate that culture may have an impact on volunteering. Understanding the value of volunteering is crucial for effectively leveraging volunteerism as a sustainable economic resource for development, the creation of social capital, and social stability.

In Philippines, the Therapeutic Community Ladderized Program (TCLP), Restorative Justice (RJ), and VPA are the three (3) main programs that the DOJ-PPA focuses on. (PD 968, RA 10707, and PPA Service Manual 2016). In order to mainstream volunteerism into government agencies' plans and

strategies, the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) continues to engage in lobbying activities on behalf of the volunteers. On April 25, 2022, in Diliman, Quezon City, Executive Director Donald James D. Gawe met with officials from the Parole and Probation Administration (PPA) to discuss possible partnership to achieve the agenda and framework about volunteerism. (Press Releases, PNVSCA, 2022). In accordance with Section 28 of Presidential Decree No. 968, as amended by RA 10707, PPA is responsible for carrying out the Volunteer Probation Assistant Program. The VPA program aims to create a network of qualified volunteers who can offer a range of services to the community in order to support the development and rehabilitation of PPA clients. Based from DOJ-PPA statistics, there are 8,558 VPAs dispersed throughout the country. The Philippines' VPA Program is consistently supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the United Nations Associations of the Far East Institute (UNAFEI) as partners in the client's rehabilitation toward a higher quality of life in the community. (DOJ-PPA Annual Report, 2019).

Establishing regional and national VPA groups is necessary for the proper promotion, use, and sustainability of the VPA program. A VPA organization's primary objective is to provide each individual member with a support structure that can accommodate both their needs for training and resource generation for the clients. A VPA organization that can function independently and take care of its own needs in the future is the main goal of DOJ-PPA. Most of the work required in clients' rehabilitation is done at the unit level, thus, it is crucial to establish a VPA program at this level in order to promote the spirit of community membership. (Volunteerism – Parole and Probation Administration, n.d.)

In accordance with DOJ-PPA Manual (2016), VPA and Probation Officer (PO) work collaboratively prior to the supervision stage of clients. If the petitioner does not appear before the Investigating Officer (IO) within three (3) working days, the VPA, the barangay officials, and other individuals with knowledge of the petitioner's whereabouts must be contacted in order to carry out the Post-Sentence Investigation (PSI) properly. The petitioner will then be identified and located by IO after reviewing court documents with the help of volunteers and other collateral informants. VPA plays an important role in the supervision of clients once the court has granted the plea for probation. The PO and VPA work together and discuss treatment plans and the status of client under the ward of the volunteer. Cabusbusan (2016) argued that because the VPA and the client live in the same community, the former may personally monitor the client's reformation and rehabilitation progress. The dilemma of POs assigned to supervision was largely resolved by VPAs, but this doesn't mean that VPAs have taken the position of POs. Instead, they cooperate and work together to achieve the same objectives. With this program, the government was able to save cost for the supervision of clients. VPA program is anchored on the three (3) Global Goals for Sustainable Development: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions; Sustainable Cities and Communities; and Partnership for the Goals which is also locally supported by the Volunteer Act of 2007, Section 12, par. (c) of RA 9418.

The extent and complexity of duties carried out by Japan's Volunteer Probation Officers (VPOs), also known as "Hogoshi," are astounding. The reasons why the VPO method is becoming more and more popular around the world are simple to understand. In Japan, VPOs are essential to the functioning of the probation services. VPOs are guided and supported by formal agreements with professional probation officers, which are facilitated by local and national groups. The VPO system is supported by about 22,

000 "Cooperating Employers" and other large volunteer organizations. By showing that society is concerned and that change is possible, volunteers encourage hope about a person's future. Additionally, as long-standing members of the community, VPOs provide guidance and assistance in tackling reintegration problems of clients. (CEP, 2020). However, the Japanese (VPO) system also encountered challenges, including the decline in the number of VPOs (Akashi, 2018). This argument is similar to that of Husnina et al. (2018), who claimed that volunteer involvement rates drastically dropped in 2010.

On October 11, 2005, Philippine former President Gloria M. Arroyo signed EO 468, which strengthens and revitalizes the VPA Program. With a maximum VPA-client ratio of 1:5, it permits VPAs to oversee up to 80% of the caseloads that POs handle. From the interview of Amazona (2022), the DOJ-PPA's Eastern Visayas Regional Office has urged local residents to apply as VPAs. According to Rosana Solite, Director of the DOJ-PPA Eastern Visayas Regional Office, there are only 35 Probation Officers and around 500 volunteers in the whole region. The existing staff is undermanned considering that the office has more than 4,400 clients, either probationers or parolees, scattered throughout the six (6) provinces in the region. Based from the present statistics, the Ilocos Norte Parole and Probation Office and the Laoag City Parole and Probation Office, only have forty-three (43) and twelve (12) registered and active VPAs, respectively, with PO caseloads varying from 1:170, 1:200, and more.

With this, the researcher was inspired to carry out a study in the local setting to assess and understand the VPA system in the province of Ilocos Norte, Philippines, given the situation of volunteers both locally and internationally. This study has two (2) objectives: first, it seeks to know how VPAs in the province of Ilocos Norte are aware of their roles; second, it intends to know how VPAs perform their duties, from the initial stage of investigating petitioners until the process of overseeing client-wards who are assigned to them. The outcome of this study will give a clear image of how the VPA system is operating in the province of Ilocos Norte, which will eventually help the DOJ-PPA Region 1 improve its VPA program.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to determine the implementation of Volunteer Probation Assistants Program in the province of Ilocos Norte, specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of VPAs on their roles and functions?; and
2. What are the experiences encountered by the VPAs in the performance of their functions during:
  - a. Investigation of petitioners by PPOs; and
  - b. Supervision of their client-wards?

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Social Exchange Theory.** According to this theory, people participate in voluntary endeavors with the hope of gaining rewards or benefits in return. These benefits can be tangible, like networking opportunities, or intangible, like a sense of fulfillment. (Blau, 1964).

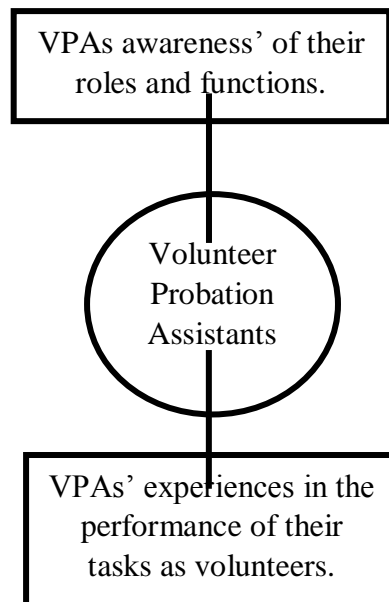
**Functional Theory of Volunteerism.** This theory suggests that people volunteer to satisfy a variety of psychological and social needs, including the need for social connection, the enhancement of one's self-esteem, and personal growth. (Clary et al.,1998).

**Social Identity Theory.** In this theory, people are more likely to volunteer when they strongly identify themselves with a certain social group or organization. They participate in voluntary work to improve their sense of social identity and group affiliation. (Henri Tajfel, 1982).

**Altruism Theory.** According to this view, people are primarily motivated to volunteer by altruistic concerns for the welfare and well-being of others. They participate in volunteer work because they genuinely want to contribute and have a positive influence. (Batson, 2014).

These theories shed important light on the dynamics and motives of volunteerism, enabling us to comprehend the drives behind people's decisions to volunteer and the positive effects it has on both individuals and society.

### Paradigm of the Study



### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Volunteering is one of the fundamental tenets of community involvement as it embodies the virtues of civic responsibility, empathy, and solidarity by encouraging unselfish, passionate people to share their time, talents, and resources for the benefit of others.

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures give emphasis on community participation and support for the successful reintegration of offenders into society. There have been several studies over the past 20 years about volunteerism both internationally and locally, and one of which is the study of Grimmetal. (2007) where they argued that volunteering has been linked to improved physical and mental health. Accordingly, volunteers have lower mortality rates, better functional abilities, and fewer cases of depression later in life than non-volunteers.

In the study of Herber (2018), it was highlighted the incredible work of the over three million volunteers who consistently sacrifice their free time to either stop crime from occurring, stop it from happening again, or both. Japanese citizens have committed themselves to community service initiatives aimed at preventing crime, following the lead of local government authorities who advocate a volunteering agenda and structure. Furthermore, for those who participate, the stated goal of their volunteer work usually appears to serve as an opportunity or justification for social events and the formation of new

social connections. And it is believed that enhancing mutual surveillance and forming new social connections are essential components of volunteering for crime prevention.

Student volunteering is both widely practiced and highly regarded according to the study of Smith et.al (2010). It was further discovered that the majority of those who benefited from the students' volunteer activities were teenagers. Student volunteers were affected by a range of rewards and incentives, with variances along a continuum of volunteering among those who participate often, occasionally, and not at all.

In as early as 1968, Burnett pointed out that using citizen volunteers as probation counselors alongside or as supplement to professional probation officers is one of the most interesting developments in the field of corrections. Literally thousands of volunteers from all walks of life are being trained and pressed into service in an ever-increasing number of courts across the country. Almost 1,000 community volunteers are working at Denver County Court alone. Each is an unpaid officer of the court who has undergone a three-evening training session, been sworn in, and been given a caseload of only one youthful, misdemeanor offender with whom he has pledged to work for at least an hour each week for a year. The volunteer may be an entrepreneur, educator, attorney, doctor, carpenter, minister, mechanic or professional football player, government worker, engineer, housewife, or from any other field. The system's strength lies in the fact that each probationer can be matched to one of the volunteers, despite diversity of their backgrounds.

The distinctions between the roles of volunteers and professionals were originally presented by Scheier & Goter in the United States in 1969. Volunteers should be kind, understanding, older, wiser, accommodating friend who are worthy of emulation rather than acting as a stand-in probation officer or an authoritative figure. Every client assigned to a volunteer should also have a regular probation officer, who works with them in a complimentary manner. They noted that the probation officer had invested a lot of time in pre-sentence work and had given the judge materials to use in making the decision. It would seem appropriate for the volunteer to take up the role of supervising the client while the probation officer continues to focus on his technical job.

In the year 1970, Hess claimed that most rehabilitation efforts in the 19th century in Japan were carried out by volunteers. In the United States, probation departments use volunteers to enhance the work of its professional staff. Despite the fact that they lack the specialized knowledge of experienced staff, these volunteers have great advantages, including the ability to work without being paid, the capacity swiftly win the trust of probationers, and the ability to dedicate more time in supervising clients.

Way back in the year 1981 in the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Court Volunteer Probation Program, Lavelli emphasized the value of volunteers. Some courts use this approach to empower volunteers, expecting them to oversee and direct probationers. Other courts require a tight, friendly relationship between the volunteers and the probationer, but do not give the volunteer the responsibility of supervising the client. It was emphasized that the volunteer's job represents the philosophy and attitudes of the court personnel and that the volunteer is an example that the young offender can emulate. Additionally, volunteers serve as mentors who can foster relationships between probationers from middle-class neighborhoods and lower socioeconomic groups. Finally, it was made clear that volunteers are not substitute of probation officers.

A strong and comprehensive strategy to community supervision has been established in Japan, which has one of the lowest rates of incarceration in the world (45 per 1,000,000). The well-established Volunteer Probation Officer (VPO) system is now being imitated more frequently both in the Asean



region and outside of it. It serves as the foundation for community corrections. The VPO model is exceptional, as it makes use of a mini-army of VPOs (more than 40,000), and some probation scholars have referred to it as a "third sector template" for probation practice and the administration of community corrections services (Porporino, 2022).

In the study of Akashi (2018), in order to reduce recidivism and encourage offenders' self-rehabilitation, Japan's PPOs and VPOs collaborate to offer probationers and parolees the best monitoring and support available. PPOs serve as case managers to perform intake interviews, create and implement treatment programs, intervene when probation or parole conditions were violated, collaborate with other stakeholders, and take corrective actions when needed. On the other hand, VPOs have extensive knowledge of the locality, perform personal supervision and assistance to clients, and they maintain close contact with the clients throughout the rehabilitation process. The Offenders Rehabilitation Act of 2007 mandates that both PPOs and VPOs provide probation supervision and support. VPOs must "supplement the work not covered by Probation Officers" in accordance Article 32 thereof. However, in practice, VPOs play a crucial role in their reformation and rehabilitation because they often live in the same community as the client and frequently visit them in their homes. Supporting and monitoring probationers and parolees, being aware of clients' social situations, and promoting community-wide crime prevention efforts are among the main duties and obligations of VPOs.

Ellis et al. (2013) found that while the overall number of South Korean volunteers increased annually, the percentage of them actively taking part in probation activities changed over time, hitting a low point in 2005 of 49.6 percent and rising to a high point in 2006 of 69.7 percent. The participation rate then was 66.9% in 2008, which somewhat declined, leaving almost 6000 registered volunteers unutilized. This showed that in South Korea, non-participating volunteers make up a larger percentage of the volunteer population. Similar findings are found in Watson's study (2019), which shifts focus from what might be referred to as broad external problems to those that are internal to the VPO system. Although 90% of VPO positions are filled, however, there has been a modest but steady decline of volunteers since 2008, particularly in urban areas of Japan. Akashi (2018) also pointed out that the number of VPOs in Japan has been steadily dropping since 2009, with the exception of slight increase in 2016. The capacity rate for 2016 was 91.3%, which is just 0.1 point higher than the previous year but still below the 93% or 94% capacity rate way back 20 years.

The same is true in the study of Tumitit (2019), that accordingly, the turnover rate for overseeing VPAs is relatively high today. There are some inactive volunteers who may eventually stop, especially if they feel they have completed their responsibilities. She emphasized that the motivational tools created by DOJ-PPA in Region 2, Philippines, to maintain the interest of the VPAs included awards for outstanding VPA, VPA Chapter or Cluster, awards for VPA and client with most successful livelihood/non-livelihood project and similar citations, seminars/trainings/convention, and awards for outstanding VPA, VPA Chapter or Cluster. Along with these, they were motivated by rewards, praise, recognition, incentives, and team building. Additionally, VPAs are motivated by insurance, careers, enhancing self-esteem, and values. Finally, she underlined that satisfied volunteers are more likely to continue their service.

In the Philippines, Tumitit (2020) conducted research on the VPAs' awareness of their roles and responsibilities. It discovered that VPAs were aware of both their responsibilities and their tasks. She highlighted that VPAs and PPOs have good communication, a positive working environment, and that they have maintained and strengthened their connection through collaboration with the aim of

successfully overseeing the client. VPAs and PPOs, however, ran into issues with their budgets, the lack of VPAs in the barangays, and the distances they had to travel in order to reach their clients' places of work or residence.

With the various researches presented pointing out the decline on the number of volunteers in probation supervision and an increase of non-participatory volunteers towards fulfilling their tasks, herein researcher was motivated to conduct a study to determine the level of awareness of VPAs in Ilocos Norte, Philippines as regards to their functions and to understand their experiences in performing their sworn duties.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The descriptive type of research was used in this study employing the quantitative approach, specifically cross-sectional survey using questionnaire-survey checklist in order to assess the level of VPAs' awareness of their roles and functions. Qualitative approach was also utilized through an in-depth interview to selected VPAs who had been serving the agency for more than ten (10) years, so as to gather more detailed information on their experiences as volunteers in line with the process of investigation of petitioners and in overseeing their client wards. The data gathered from the questionnaire-survey checklist and interview transcripts will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

### Population and Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the province of Ilocos Norte. All the registered VPAs reflected in the VPA lists of Ilocos Norte Parole and Probation Office and Laoag City Parole and Probation Office with at least two (2) years in service as volunteers and underwent the VPA Basic Training conducted by DOJ-PPA Region 1 were the respondents of the study as illustrated from the table below.

**Table 1. Respondents of the Study**

Office	Number of VPAs
Ilocos Norte Parole and Probation Office	40
Laoag City Parole and Probation Office	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>

### Data Gathering Tool

In order for the researcher to analyze and assess the responses of VPAs relative to their roles and functions, a questionnaire-survey checklist was used patterned on the Program Policy Guideline of DOJ-PPA. The questionnaire composed of three (3) parts: Part I covers the roles of VPAs as Direct Supervisor; Part II talks about the roles of VPAs as resource individuals; and Part III deals with the functions and responsibilities of VPAs. On the other hand, in order to obtain a robust and holistic data on the experiences encountered by VPAs in the performance of their tasks, an in-depth interview was employed guided with structured interview guide questions developed by the researcher.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher first sought help and assistance from the research adviser in checking the questionnaire made by the former, and subsequently, the researcher asked permission from the research adviser for the conduct of pre-test of the questionnaire to determine its reliability. After the questionnaire was validated and approved, a letter request was sent to the Regional Director of Department of Justice-Parole and Probation Administration (DOJ-PPA), Region 1 and from the respective heads/OICs of the Laoag City Parole and Probation Office and Ilocos Norte Parole and Probation Office to administer the questionnaire to VPAs of the said offices. In addition, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview to seven (7) selected VPAs to gather their experiences as volunteers in the course of investigation and supervision of clients.

**Treatment of the Data**

The 4-point (1-4) Likert Response Scale with the qualitative description and interpretation below was used to interpret the weighted mean data relative to VPAs awareness of their roles and functions. Thematic analysis was also utilized to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006) on the experiences encountered by VPAs in performing their tasks as volunteers.

Scale	Mean Range	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
4	3.26-4.00	Very Much Aware	Respondent is completely aware of and understands the roles, duties and functions of the VPA.
3	2.51-3.25	Aware	Respondent is aware of the roles, duties and functions of the VPA but does not understand fully.
2	1.76-2.50	Moderately Aware	Respondent has a basic understanding of the VPA's roles, duties and functions.
1	1.00-1.75	Not Aware	Respondent is unaware of and doesn't fully comprehend the roles, duties and functions of VPA.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

As posited in table 2, respondents are aware of their role as resource individual with an overall mean of 2.96. It can be gleaned from the table that VPAs are working closely with the probation officer-on-case or CPPO got the highest mean of 3.06. This implies that VPAs are knowledgeable that they don't have the sole responsibility of supervising their client-wards, instead, they work collaboratively with the probation officer-on-case because VPAs are not replacement for probation officers, but they are partners in monitoring, supervising, and rehabilitating clients. (Scheir&Goter, 1969, Lavelli 1981, Cabusbusan, 2016, DOJ-PPA Manual 2016, & Akashi, 2018).

On the other hand, supervise a maximum of five (5) clients at any given time has the lowest mean with 2.72. In practice, it is rare that a certain VPA will reach the maximum client-wards supervision because the basis of giving client-wards to them is the proximity of client's residence with that of the VPA. In almost all instances, their client wards are living with them in their respective barangays or at the



adjacent barangay only. (Cabusbusan, 2016 & Akashi, 2018). The importance of which is for the VPA to have a close surveillance monitoring with the client-ward and to address the issue on the financial aspect for transportation going to and from the place of the client-ward emphasized in the study of Tumitit (2020), considering that VPA is purely a volunteerism effort.

**Table 2. VPA as Direct Supervisor**

<b>Part I: ROLES of Volunteer Probation Assistant as DIRECT SUPERVISOR.</b>			
		$\bar{x}$	DR
a.	Supervise a maximum of five (5) clients at any given time.	2.72	Aware
b.	Work closely with officer-on-case and Chief Probation and Parole Officer (CPPO) or Officer-in-Charge (OIC) and discuss treatment plan and status of clients.	3.06	Aware
c.	Submit monthly accomplishment report to officer-on-case or CPPO/OIC and other reports required.	3.02	Aware
d.	Perform such other tasks as may be assigned by the officer-on-case or CPPO/OIC.	3.04	Aware
<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>2.96</b>	<b>Aware</b>

As gleaned from table 3, respondents are aware of their roles as resource individual with an overall mean of 2.78. Based from the table, acting as resource speaker on Volunteerism, Restorative Justice (RJ) & Therapeutic Community (TC) got the highest mean of 2.94. This implies that VPAs are aware that anytime if they are available, especially if the venue for the office-initiated activity is approximately near to their place, their services as resource speakers is always expected. This is the reason why the three-pronged programs – TC, RJ, and Volunteerism of the DOJ-PPA are incorporated in the VPA Basic Training so as to give them the appropriate knowledge in performing their tasks should it be needed. Considering that majority of the respondents are community officials, they have already the knowledge and ample experiences in conducting RJ processes which is a big help to probation officers if a client-ward has committed an offense or a violation of probation or parole conditions. As Burnett (1968) said, that the strength of volunteerism is the diversity of volunteers coming from all walks of life that can be matched to a certain client in a given situation.

Meanwhile, program coordinator of client activities got the lowest mean of 2.62 as shown from the table. This implies that though they are aware of this role, they do not usually act as program coordinator because probation officers are most often in the position of doing this, and VPAs help and assist them in the process of coordination. As pinpointed by Scheir&Goter (1969) and Akashi (2018), PPOs are generally case managers who does technical works while VPAs perform close supervision over the clients in the community.

**Table 3. VPA as Resource Individual**

<b>Part II: ROLES of Volunteer Probation Assistant as RESOURCE INDIVIDUAL.</b>			
		$\bar{x}$	DR
a.	Resource Speaker on Volunteerism, Restorative Justice, Therapeutic Community and other topics.	2.94	Aware
b.	Counselor to other clients or people who need help.	2.82	Aware

c.	Donor, sponsor or referring person.	2.78	Aware
d.	Program coordinator of client activities.	2.62	Aware
e.	Mediator, Restorative Justice Implementor, Therapeutic Community Facilitator.	2.76	Aware
<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>2.78</b>	<b>Aware</b>

Table 4 presents the functions and responsibilities of VPAs. As posited from the table, respondents are aware of their functions and responsibilities as VPAs with an overall mean of 2.9. Work in close consultation and cooperation with SO, keeping all information about the supervisee in strict confidentiality, and maintain an honest recording and monthly reporting of activities had the highest mean of 3.1. This implies that VPA and SO has maintained a good working relationship and smooth communication and coordination working together as partners, which is similar with the study of Tunitit (2020). From the media interview of OIC Deputy Administrator Allan B. Alcala, CESO V on the recently concluded 7<sup>th</sup> VPA Regional Convention held last April 20-21, 2023, he highlighted the vital role of VPAs as partners in the community towards monitoring and supervising of clients and as the lead resources of the agency on matters of livelihood programs, skills trainings, employment, and more others. He added that VPAs as force multipliers of Probation Officers help addressed the problem of the agency on lack of manpower. (Aksyon Radio Laoag DZJC, 747 khz, Facebook, 2023)

The close working relationship and partnership of the VPA and PO is emphasized during the recruitment stage of prospect volunteers which is also highlighted during the VPA Basic Training. This is to ensure that VPAs will inculcate to their minds that they are working collaboratively with the Probation Officer and not working independently because both of them have the same goal, which is to help clients reform and rehabilitate themselves. (DOJ-PPA Service Manual, 2016). As the VPA and PO continuously work together, growth of rapport and trust with each other also developed. (Lavelli, 1981 & Akashi, 2018). The development of good relationship between PO and volunteers is an indication of an enhancement of social identity and belongingness to a group as explained by Henri Tajfel (1982) in his Social Identity Theory.

On the other hand, act as placement facilitator and attend TC and RJ sessions as may be required had the lowest mean of 2.6. The table conveys that though VPAs are aware of these functions and responsibilities, they do not often perform these functions because practically, they are only requested to perform such if the venue for the RJ/TC session is proximately situated at VPAs address.

It is clear to VPAs and POs that the former’s primary function is to supervise their client-wards in the community and the latter is thankful if the VPA could perform other functions considering that almost all of them are also public servants such as mayors, sangguninag bayan members, barangay officials, and some are religious leaders. It is a fact that successful supervision of clients wouldn’t be possible without VPAs in view of the existing numbers of POs in the province of Ilocos Norte as compared to the number of clients that they are handling. The same situation applies to all regions in the country. The DOJ-PPA Regional Office V for example has 4, 400 clients with only 35 POs in the entire region, but with 500 VPAs as force-multipliers, they were able to successfully supervise their clients. (Amazona, 2022).

**Table 4. VPA’s Functions and Responsibilities**

Part III: <b>FUNCTIONS and RESPONSIBILITIES</b> of Volunteer Probation Assistant.			
		$\bar{x}$	DR
a.	Work in close consultation and cooperation with the Supervising Officer (SO).	3.1	Aware
b.	Keep all information about the supervisee in strict confidentiality.	3.1	Aware
c.	Maintain an honest recording and monthly reporting of activities to the Supervising Officer.	3.1	Aware
d.	Offer guidance and counseling to clients.	2.8	Aware
e.	Act as placement facilitator.	2.6	Aware
f.	Implement treatment objectives as provided in the program of supervision.	2.8	Aware
g.	Refer to appropriate agency those clients with various spiritual, mental, social, emotional, physical or health needs.	2.8	Aware
h.	Act as resource individual.	3	Aware
i.	Endeavor to heal relationships among the victim, client and community.	3	Aware
j.	Attend TC and RJ sessions/activities as may be required.	2.6	Aware
k.	Assist in other rehabilitation activities for clients, as necessary.	2.8	Aware
<b>Overall Mean</b>		<b>2.9</b>	<b>Aware</b>

**VPAs experiences during the investigation stage.**

Through in-depth interviews, observations, and thematic analysis, the following results emerged from respondents’ voices and experiences during Probation Officer’s conduct of investigation.

- **Provide the needed information to Probation Officer.** Based from DOJ-PPA Manual (2016), barangay officials, VPAs, and other people with knowledge of the petitioner’s whereabouts must be contacted. Thus, VPAs who are also barangay officials have the personal knowledge as to the personal background, attitude, personality, antecedents, family status, educational background, social identity, and other personal circumstances of the petitioner, including among other’s derogatory records from the barangay if there be any. VPAs serves as key or collateral informants for the Investigating Officer (IO) to determine petitioner’s suitability for probation, community acceptability and support, as well as family acceptability and support. Therefore, almost all the information needed about the petitioner are provided by VPAs who are also community officials.

“It is my advantage being a Barangay Kagawad that I already knew the petitioner subject under investigation and that I was able to provide the needed information, especially the background of the applicant in the community.” (P1, L.3-5).

- **Challenge to personal biases.** It is common to all community officials/VPAs that most petitioners are closely related to them because they are living in the same community. Some of them are close friends, close relatives, and sometimes colleagues. When prompted with this scenario, they make sure that they set aside their personal and social relationships with that of the petitioner because they are aware of their roles, duties, and functions as volunteers which they sworn to perform.

“My experience as VPA is the compromise of my standing as VPA and as a close relative or colleague to the petitioner. Challenge of my biases on how I will stand as VPA or

I will just let go. During the investigation process, I must stand with my sworn duties as VPA even it will affect my relationship to that of the petitioner. For example, one of the petitioners of the office is our constituent, and I was able to share to the IO the true background of our colleague. Thankfully, during the process of investigation, he was able to realize his misbehaviors and little by little he changes his negative attitudes. Thus, as VPA, there is no need to compromise the relationship to a petitioner, instead, we must stand firm to our sworn duties and responsibilities as VPAs.” (P3, L.13-20). “It is difficult. In my experience, one of the petitioners is my relative, however, we have sworn to perform our duties and functions irrespective of who is the applicant for probation. Hence, we must do our roles and functions and disregard whatever relationship we have with that of the petitioner.” (P5, L.24-27). “For me, since we have sworn to perform our tasks as VPAs, we must perform it regardless if the client is a close friend, close relative, or a colleague, it is a must to do what is right as VPAs.” (P7, L 32-33)

With these responses, the functional theory of volunteerism by Clary et al.(1998) was manifested through VPAs’ fulfillment of their sworn duties. It indicates therefore, that they intend to disregard their biases and relationships so as to fulfill also their psychological need, which is the enhancement of their self-esteem and personal growth as public servants and at the same time as volunteers. Their genuine desire to help others and make a positive impact in the community in which they live portrayed the altruism theory of Batson (2014), and hence, showed the purity and passion of a true volunteer.

### **VPAs experiences during supervision.**

The following findings were drawn from respondents' experiences and views while supervising their assigned client-wards.

- **New clients are not fully cooperative.** It is understood that there is a difficulty of acceptance as to status of criminal conviction because of community stereotypes over a fellow convict. Clients with high economic status and those that are holding high positions in the government cannot easily accept that they are probationers and they must comply with the terms and conditions of probation. Some of these probation conditions are enforced at the barangay level where VPAs and community officials are tapped to implement and monitor it like community clean-up drives, tree-planting efforts, and joining to barangay activities. Some clients still see themselves as superior over VPAs or community officials because of their economic or government positions. They have reservation to participate to community work services with a fear that people in the community may find out that they are under probation. In some instances, they are expecting that VPAs or community officials will adjust for them. In reality, it takes some time for the client to fully accept it and embrace its present status as probationer. But with the collaborative efforts of VPAs and POs in giving individual counseling to them, they were able to overcome their fear and face the consequences of their wrongful actions.

“The most common experience I had, especially to new clients is that, they are not fully cooperative with the directives of the barangay officials relative to community service. Fortunately, if these behaviors of clients were reported to the probation officer-on-case, we are happy that there is an abrupt change from them, and consequently, they now comply with our instructions. But still, there are still those who will not cooperate with the barangay, and it seems they are acting like happy go lucky because they are in

the community under probation and they assume that they are already free from any obligation in the community.” (P1, L 35-41)

“In my 11 years as Barangay Secretary and more than 10 years as VPA, I have a lot of experiences. There are those clients who have good economic status, thus look at me as inferior over them, especially that I am only a Barangay Secretary. If there are instructions from the barangay calling them to participate to barangay activities, they were hesitant to comply because they are afraid that community members will find out that they are under probation. Thus, they are just taking for granted the directives of the barangay.” (P2, L44-49)

- **VPA received threats.** Though this case is rare, it is still happening and somewhat alarming especially on the part of VPAs or community officials considering that clients are convicted fellow. This happened when a client is holding a powerful position in the government where he or she can influence the authorities to make decisions that will affect VPAs or community official’s position. This generally happens when client has violated any of the conditions of probation and that the client wouldn’t want that the probation officer-on-case will know about it. Again, the usual remedy for this is the constant communication between the VPA and PO towards supervising the client. PO will make the legal actions upon knowledge of such instance.

“I have received threats coming from the client while I am performing my tasks as VPA and a Punong Barangay. Though those threats made me the leader I am supposed to be. It strengthened and tested my leadership skills on how to stand as a leader even the client-ward is a close relative or a constituent in performance of my roles and functions as VPAs.” (P3, L 60-64)

- **Improvement of social and leadership skills.** With the challenges that comes along the way towards monitoring and supervising clients, initiatives at the VPAs end are made. Some VPAs were able to utilize their council members to keep an eye on the client-ward to avoid reoffending and to ensure compliance with the probation conditions. With the constant individual counseling provided to clients by VPAs, they were able to improve their social skills.

“As Punong Barangay and as a VPA, I enforced to my constituents to keep eye on the client-ward because I have told them that they are of big help in having close monitoring or surveillance with the client-ward as they become the eye to the client. I know, that through this, the close monitoring is a good practice to avoid reoffending. There was a time that a client-ward complains to some of the barangay officials with this monitoring, but I thoroughly explain to client-ward that it is needed to ensure his holistic reformation and rehabilitation.” (P3, L55-60). “On the other way around, through this, my socials skills were also improved because as I have said constant communication and counselling is given to my client-ward.” (P7, L79-80)

- **Good venue of extending public service.** Serving as public servants is fulfilling, and accordingly, there is a better fulfillment in life should you extend helping people who are really in dire need. With the authority vested by the DOJ-PPA to them as VPAs, client regarded them as lawful authorities similar to PO, and thus, it has big impact on the behavioral change of the client-ward.

“Another experience of mine is that, when my client-wards knew that I am a VPA, they became compliant to instructions and they behave positively in the



community. Unlike before that they just drink liquor if they wanted to. Hence, we can see that there is transformation within them especially for those new.” (P2, L49-52).

“On the other side, it is beneficial in the sense that we can extend more service to public, especially those in dire need of help to help them change positively.” (P4, L66-67)

With this kind of fulfillment experienced by VPAs towards helping others, this intangible benefit they received is also their expectation why they are volunteering in the first place. As Social Exchange Theory posits that people engage to volunteer activities with expectation of receiving something in return, may it be tangible or intangible. (Blau, 1964).

#### Appendix “A”



**April 4, 2023**

**HON. ALLAN B. ALCALA, CESO V**

Regional Director

DOJ-PPA, Regional Office I

City of San Fernando, La Union

Sir:

The undersigned are Doctor of Philosophy students in Criminal Justice with specialization in Criminology of the University of the Cordilleras, Baguio City. At present they are conducting a study entitled: **“THE VOLUNTEER PROBATION ASSISTANT SYSTEM: THE CASE OF ILOCOS NORTE”** as part of their requirements in their PhD subject – Graduate Research.

With this, the undersigned would like to seek approval to allow them in administering the prepared research questionnaire as part of their data gathering tool which will be administered to the Volunteer Probation Assistants (VPAs) of Laoag City Parole and Probation Office and Ilocos Norte Parole and Probation Office. The researchers are hoping to contribute in improving the existing VPA system in the said province.

Rest assured that all data gathered in this study will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

The undersigned would indeed appreciate the kind attention and favorable approval of the above request very much.

Respectfully yours,

Sgd. Jaypie C. Verdadero

Sgd. Jayson E. Necida

Sgd. Jocelyn F. Licadang  
Sgd. Orlando B. Arangorin  
Sgd. Earl Jann T. Laurencio

Approved:

Sgd. HON. ALLAN B. ALCALA, CESO V  
Regional Director, DOJ-PPA Region I

### Appendix “B”



### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY

The research study is entitled: “**THE VOLUNTEER PROBATION ASSISTANT SYSTEM: THE CASE OF ILOCOS NORTE**”. This study aims to determine the implementation of Volunteer Probation Assistants Program in the province of Ilocos Norte.

I am aware that giving my input is essential for attaining the study's objectives, that I will be asked to answer the questionnaire honestly, and that my time will be taken into consideration.

There is absolutely no danger in this study, except from minimal inconvenience. I am aware that throughout the data collection process, no payment will be made.

However, my participation in this study is subject to the following conditions:

1. That necessary precautions will be taken to ensure my safety as a participant, and that it is made clear that my responses will only be utilized for this study's purposes;
2. That my identity will be kept in private and that my responses may be kept by the researcher and may be used as resource for research purposes only; and
3. That the totality of responses from the participants will be considered and not only my responses.

I have been oriented that any question concerning the study can be communicated and clarified to the researcher.

I understand all the information that is written in this consent form.

Name of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix “C”



QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondent Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Years in the service as VPA: \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTION:** There are three (3) sections to this questionnaire. For each part, select the option that best defines your response by putting check (✓) mark the corresponding box based on the scale below.

Scale	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
4	Very Much Aware (VMA)	Respondent is completely aware of and understands the roles and functions of VPA.
3	Aware (A)	Respondent is aware of the roles and functions of VPA but does not understand fully.
2	Moderately Aware (MA)	Respondent has a basic understanding of VPA's roles and functions.
1	Not Aware (NA)	Respondent is unaware of and doesn't fully comprehend the roles and functions of VPA.

**Part I: ROLES of Volunteer Probation Assistant as DIRECT SUPERVISOR.**

		1 (VMA)	2 (A)	3 (MA)	4 (NA)
a.	Supervise a maximum of five (5) clients at any given time.				
b.	Work closely with officer-on-case and Chief Probation and Parole Officer (CPPO) or Officer-in-Charge (OIC) and discuss treatment plan and status of clients.				
c.	Submit monthly accomplishment report to officer-on-case or CPPO/OIC and other reports required.				
d.	Perform such other tasks as may be assigned by the officer-on-case or CPPO/OIC.				

**Part II: ROLES of Volunteer Probation Assistant as RESOURCE INDIVIDUAL.**

a.	Resource Speaker on Volunteerism, Restorative Justice, Therapeutic Community and other topics.				
b.	Counselor to other clients or people who need help.				
c.	Donor, sponsor or referring person.				

d.	Program coordinator of client activities.				
e.	Mediator, Restorative Justice Implementor, Therapeutic Community Facilitator.				
<b>Part III: FUNCTIONS and RESPONSIBILITIES of Volunteer Probation Assistant.</b>					
a.	Work in close consultation and cooperation with the Supervising Officer.				
b.	Keep all information about the supervisee in strict confidentiality.				
c.	Maintain an honest recording and monthly reporting of activities to the Supervising Officer.				
d.	Offer guidance and counseling to clients.				
e.	Act as placement facilitator.				
f.	Implement treatment objectives as provided in the program of supervision.				
g.	Refer to appropriate agency those clients with various spiritual, mental, social, emotional, physical or health needs.				
h.	Act as resource individual.				
i.	Endeavor to heal relationships among the victim, client and community.				
j.	Attend TC and RJ sessions/activities as may be required.				
k.	Assist in other rehabilitation activities for clients, as necessary.				

\*\*\*Thank You\*\*\*

---Researcher

### Appendix “D”



### INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

Below is the interview guide questions on the research study entitled: “**THE VOLUNTEER PROBATION ASSISTANT SYSTEM: THE CASE OF ILOCOS NORTE**”, particularly:

**Question #1:**

What are your **experiences** in performing your roles and functions as VPA during the conduct of *investigation* to petitioners by the Probation and Parole Officer?

(Ania dagitipadasmoitipanangipatumgalmokadagitiakem ken trabahom kas VPA bayattipannakaisayangkattimbestigasionkadagitiapplicantebabaenti Probation and Parole Officer?)

**Question #2:**

What are your **experiences** in performing your roles and functions as VPA in *supervising* your client-wards?

(Ania dagitipadasmoitipanangipatungpalmokadagitiakem ken trabahom kas VPA itipanangimatón/panagbantaykadagiti client-wards-mo?)

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