Inclusive Tertiary Education: A Tale of Untold Stories Among People Deprived of Liberty (Pdl) Under Probation

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ABSTRACT
This study phenomenologically evaluated the lives and experiences of two (2) individuals who earned college degrees at the Glan Institute of Technology (GIT). These individuals were former inmates sentenced by court in a legal proceeding due to culpable violation of RA 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 in the Philippines, which in the latter part was given probation status by the court. The findings revealed that these individuals were given the opportunity to study and eventually complete a college degree at a local community college funded by the Local Government Unit of Glan, Sarangani Province. According to this study, the use of shabu among these individuals was likely influenced by their peers before imprisonment. This research also explored the key concepts that explain how shabu negatively impacts relationships among family members.

Keywords: Inclusive Tertiary Education, Probation, Illegal Use Of Drugs, Inmates

INTRODUCTION
The anti-narcotics campaign initiated by Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines has emerged as a comprehensive solution for individuals recovering from illicit drug use, by offering them the prospect of attaining a college degree and leading a conventional life. College education, once regarded as a privilege, has become an opportunity accessible to a broader spectrum of societies. This initiative transcends the conventional notion of providing free tuition to poor groups and encompasses the creation of an inclusive environment that fosters the success of students from diverse backgrounds in higher education. Inclusive education is a contemporary trend that has gained traction in numerous countries, and it seeks to incorporate innovative ideas while striving to advance the fields of education, science, and technology.
This approach is in line with international agreements and is an essential aspect of modern education. (Madhesh, 2023) emphasizes that inclusive education encompasses terms such as "integration," "mainstreaming," and "placement," which are often used to describe divergent concepts in the field.

According to (Muhamad & Ismail's, 2021) article "Towards Inclusive Education for Special Need Students in Higher Education from the Perspective of Faculty Members: A Systematic Literature Review," lack of access to college education remains a global issue. Despite efforts by governments to make secondary and elementary education free for the underprivileged, as required by law, tertiary education remains inaccessible to many.

In the Municipality of Glan, Province of Sarangani, Region XII, Philippines, access to higher education is primarily limited to those from affluent families who can afford college education in General Santos City, which is 54 km away.

In their paper "The Dilemma of Inclusive Education: Inclusion for Some or Inclusion for All" (Leijen et al., 2021) emphasized that inclusive education and its accompanying policy goals should be a top priority in society. These policy goals, which are inherently political, impact various interests, choices, and resource allocation. It is important to note that inclusive education, grounded in the principle of social justice, should provide equal opportunities for all learners regardless of their unique needs.

To address the disproportionate number of learners pursuing higher education, the Glan Institute of Technology (GIT) was established in 2016 under CHED Resolution 462-2017. The GIT was established to provide free tertiary education to all residents of Glan, Sarangani Province, with the aim of promoting social justice and economic efficiency by providing jobs and assisting the government to maximize the potential of its young population.

In examining the attractiveness of the GIT’s inclusive tertiary education, additional criteria are considered to encourage People Deprived of Liberty (PDL) on probation to prefer college over other options. It is important to recognize that these individuals are not yet completely free from their past vices, and the government is still closely monitoring them and their locations.

**Research Questions:**
This study examined the stories of People Deprived of Liberty under probation and currently pursuing college education. Specifically, it answers the following questions:

1. How do People Deprived of Liberty under probation describe their lives?
   1.1 Before imprisonment;
   1.2 During imprisonment; and,
   1.3 While on probation?

2. What are their perceptions of the significance of pursuing a college degree in relation to the;
   2.1 Personal values; and,
   2.2 Familial relationships.

**METHODOLOGY**
This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological method to examine the experiences of people deprived of liberty (PDL) under probation. To offer a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences, interviews were conducted for approximately two hours.
This research aimed to explore the experiences of people deprived of liberty and under probation. A descriptive method is used to provide a comprehensive overview of the techniques and procedures involved. This approach encompasses the process of recording, transcribing, analyzing, and interpreting the data.

The standard APA style was used to present the results of the phenomenological study. The findings were presented by labeling and defining the themes with extractions from the informants’ transcribed experiences. These were quoted directly to support the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
This study sought to investigate the hidden experiences of individuals deprived of their freedom under probation. To enhance the evaluation of the collected data, the researcher consulted relevant sources and incorporated citations to reinforce the validity of the findings.

Informants’ reaction / dealings on life imprisonment
Drug use is a pervasive issue in contemporary society that affects individuals from various demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Motivated by the desire to escape reality, seek momentary pleasure, or cope with intense emotions, this behavior has had a significant impact on the lives of many people. As we endeavor to comprehend the intricate nature of addiction, we must acknowledge its pervasive influence on an individual's life across multiple domains including relationships, career prospects, and health. The destructive consequences of substance abuse often result in a cyclical pattern of dependency and hopelessness, hindering individuals from realizing their true potential. It is crucial to recognize the far-reaching implications of addiction to effectively address and mitigate its adverse effects.

Drug use has physical and psychological consequences (Tyagi et al., 2014) including poor coordination, reduced reaction time, increased heartbeat, decreased resistance to illnesses, stunted growth, impaired sexual capacity, respiratory issues, muscular weakness, memory loss, and depression. These consequences depend on the type and quantity of drug used and the frequency of use. Consider the following extract.

| IN: Pila naman ka katuig nigamit ug drugs? (How many years have you used illegal drugs?) | JL: Dugay pud biya sir, mga upat katuig or lima siguro, Basta kay akong idad nagsugod ko baynti. (It has been a while sir, I think four years or five years I should say, but I really started at the age of twenty.) |
| IN: Pano man ka nakat.on ug drugs? (How did you learn to use drugs?) | JL: Nainganyo ra sa barkada sir, sa una kay marijuana raman to kay mao ramay makaya. Unya katong nakaundang kog skwela ug nakatrabaho kog construction makapalit nakog ginagamay nga gramo sa shabu. (My friend convinced me to try marijuana, since it was the only thing, we could afford at the time. When I dropped out of school and became a construction worker, I was able to purchase small grams of shabu.) |
| IN: Kinsa my source nimo ug tagpila pud? (Can you tell me who is selling it to you, and how much?) | JL: Barkada rapud sir katong nagtudlo nakog marijuana, tag dosmil raman baligya anang shabu sa una. (My friend, the one who taught me how to use marijuana. Previously, Shabu was only available for 2,000 pesos.) |
The individual's inclination towards seeking pleasure and conviction that drugs can fulfill this desire led them to believe that drug use would not have negative consequences. Overcoming drug addiction might demand that individuals separate themselves from their support systems, as they prioritize substance abuse over their personal relationships.

(Mallett et al., 2005) noted that substance abuse has the potential to weaken trust and create conflict within families, placing strain on the relationships among family members. When individuals abuse drugs, they frequently neglect their responsibilities, resulting in increased stress and resentment in family units.
lighter ilalom sa akong katre. (I typically spend much of my time in my room and rarely venture out. It was my mother who uncovered that I had been using shabu. She made this discovery when she was cleaning my room and found foil and a lighter in my bed.)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>IN:</th>
<th>Pagkabalo nilang naga shabu ka, unsa may reaction nila? (The moment they knew you were using shabu, what was their reaction)</th>
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<tr>
<td>GM:</td>
<td>Gikulata ko sa akoang papa sir unya si mama sigeg hilak. (I was beaten by my father so hard that my mother was crying.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IN:</td>
<td>Unya imuhang mga igsuon? (What about your siblings and what was their reaction?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GM:</td>
<td>Wa na silay maayong tagad nako Sir kay adik naman daw ko. (They rarely communicate with me or frequently choose not to engage in conversations with me because, in their eyes, I am already a substance abuser.)</td>
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Life imprisonment is a daunting prospect that many individuals must confront either because of their own actions or the injustices of the system. Despite the media portrayal of prisons as rehabilitative institutions, reality can be bleak and dehumanizing. The challenges of life within prison walls are numerous, with confinement and surveillance taking a significant toll on individuals’ sense of freedom and self-worth.

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<th>IN:</th>
<th>Unsa may rason nganung nadakpan ka ug napriso? (What is the reason for your imprisonment?)</th>
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<tr>
<td>GM:</td>
<td>Nadakpan mi sa buy bust operation sa PDEA sir didto sa balay sa akoang barkada. Akoang barkada kay napalitan ug asset unya ako kay panahon nag buy bust naadtan nagagamit. (During the buy-bust operation at my friend's house, we were apprehended by PDEA agents. An agent from the PDEA purchased shabu from my friend, who was selling it, and I was caught using drugs on the spot during the raid.)</td>
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<td>IN:</td>
<td>Sa panahon nga naa ka sulod sa prisuhan, unsa may pinakalisud nga kinahanglan nimo maagian? (When you were inside your prison cell. What was the toughest thing you needed to concur with?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GM:</td>
<td>Kuan Sir kanang wala nakay shabu ug di naka makagamit ug shabu. Purting lisura Sir oi kay nay mga oras nga sakit kaayo akoang ulo ug magkurog akoang kamot ug magkagot akoang ngipon. (The idea I am unable to use or consume is unacceptable. Even if I refrain from doing so, my body still craves it, resulting in severe headaches that may necessitate me to cover my head and face with a pillow or even punch it while my hands are shaking, and I am gritting my teeth.)</td>
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(Crewe et al., 2017) highlight that mental health and emotional well-being are commonly disregarded in the prison system, leading inmates to feel hopeless, desperate, and isolated. Without access to high-quality healthcare and mental health services, these issues are exacerbated, forcing inmates to cope with their struggles alone.

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<th>IN:</th>
<th>Sa panahon nga napriso kay unsa may imuhang ginabuhat aron madawat nimo imuhang kasamatanangan sitwasyon? (When imprisoned, what did you accept the reality of your situation?)</th>
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</table>
| JL:                 | Purti jung lisura Sir kay di naman ko kagamit ug shabu, nay mga panahon nga mag wild kos sulod labi nag mangita akong lawas. (It is very hard to know that I can no longer use...
shabu. There are times that I need to go berserk the moment my body starts to crave for it.

IN: Unsang ginaubhat nimo pag muabot anang sitwasyuna? (If your body starts to crave it, what do you normally do?)

JL: Lisud kaayo punyag Sir, makita kog sumbagay pirme sulod sa prisuhan sir maong pirme ko mabartulina. Ug martulina ko, usahay wa koy kaan. Maong kadugayan nakat.on rajud ko nga muadjust sir ug muatake, higtan nakog habol akong kamot ug tiil aron di ko makawild. (I am unable to regulate my physical movement. Sir; it presents a significant challenge. At times, I find myself engaging in altercations with fellow prisoners within our cells, leading to my solitary confinement and deprivation of sustenance. To manage my cravings for shabu, I typically immobilized myself by binding my hands and feet with a blanket to prevent any further outbursts.)

The process of navigating probation can be a formidable endeavor fraught with challenges and uncertainties. Strict rules and regulations imposed by the legal system can often stifle and restrict individuals, leading to feelings of helplessness and dissatisfaction.

IN: Paano ka naabot sa probation status? (How did you arrive at probation status from being imprisoned for how many years?)

JL: Kuan Sir sa pila katuig nakong napriso, syempre nagbinutan man sab ko sa sulod ug sa time ni Duterte sir nahatagan kog chance makipag sa plea bargaining sa gobyerno. Mao to nakaluy.an naprobation akoang status. (How did you arrive at probation status from being imprisoned for how many years?)

IN: Unya sa panahon nga nakapa-probation naka, unsa namay kalahian? (How was your experience different when you were on probation?)

JL: Nahatagan kog chance Sir nga makagawas sa prisuhan pero ang kapalit is required jud ko mureport sa prisuhan sa una twice a month hangtod nga nahimo nalang syang 1 a month sulod sa duha katuig Sir. (I was given a chance to be out of jail and live a normal life; however, I was required to report in jail at least twice a month until it became once a month in only two years.)

IN: Unsang mga buluhanon didto sa prisuhan? (What actions do you typically undertake when you are in prison?)

JL: Kuan sir, mutabang sa office or kung nay ihangyo nga ipatrabaho, naa sab syay required number of hours sir. Ug naa mi drug test pirme, kasagran kay surprise and drug test. Para mabaw.an kung nibalik ba mi ug gamit. (I usually help with office work, Sir, or whenever I was asked to accomplish something. We were required to report the number of hours and conduct regular drug tests. Often, these drug tests were surprised to determine whether we went back on using the drugs or not.)

Navigating life on probation poses numerous challenges, as (Ion Durnescu, 2016) emphasizes. It is equally crucial to acknowledge and honor the accomplishments of individuals who manage to overcome these difficult times in their lives. By emphasizing their achievements and demonstrating their resilience, we can empower probationers to continue their path towards rehabilitation and to rejoin their communities.
Probation presents various obstacles that can make it challenging for individuals to adapt to new circumstances. Probable individuals may face additional limitations that restrict their employment prospects. Several employers are reluctant to hire individuals for probation, as they perceive them as potentially posing a threat to the workplace or as untrustworthy.

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<td>IN: Kamusta ang kinabuhi sa panahon nga naka probation status naka? (How was your life during the probation?)</td>
<td>GM: Lisud gihapon sir oi, di man ko basta basta ka lakaw ug layong dapit kay ginamonitor man mi ug need mureport sa prisuhan pirme. (It is quite difficult, sir. I am unable to visit faraway locations that I desire, because I am frequently monitored by the police and must also report to jail.)</td>
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<td>IN: Kung normal nga adlaw nag unsa raka? (On normal days, such as weekdays, what do you usually do?)</td>
<td>GM: Niskwela man ko balik Sir unya iwas barkada najud aron di mabalik suds a prisuhan pero kana lang Sir dapat wala juy makabalo sa akoang status kay di man pwede, privacy. Secreto lang jud Sir. (I returned to school, Sir, but I am not in contact with my former friends. It's not that I'm avoiding them; rather, I am trying to avoid repeating past mistakes. This is quite difficult because I need to maintain my privacy, and I am currently under probation.)</td>
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<td>IN: Aside from schooling, during probation unsa pamay ubang butang nga ginabuhat nimo? (What other activities do you typically engage in apart from education while on probation?)</td>
<td>JL: Manarbaho Sir pero kana lang kinahanglang imuhang trabaho pa extra extra lang, di man ko makakuha anang mga police clearance ug nbi sir kay syempre di paman ko laya sa akong kasos. (I used to have work, but the type of work I can do is limited to those that do not require submitting documents such as police or NBI clearance, because I am not legally cleared in my court case and cannot obtain these documents.)</td>
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<td>IN: Unsa manang paextra extra lang nga trabaho? (Could you please describe the nature of your occupation?)</td>
<td>JL: Kanang mga trabaho gud sir pareho anang panday o sa construction. Bisag unsa lang sir aron makatabang sa pamilya. Usahay managat ko or mutabang nilang angkol sa palengke magkarlagad. (I engage in various tasks such as carpentry and other forms of work to support my family. Occasionally, I assist my uncle by fishing and working as a laborer in the market.)</td>
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Life on probation poses unique challenges such as strict rules and societal stigma. Through determination, support, and positive attitudes, individuals can overcome these obstacles and achieve personal growth.

**Informants’ personal reflection towards education**

Education is widely regarded as a vital component of a brighter future, providing individuals with the means to unlock their potential and reach their aspirations. For people on probation, education can play a pivotal role in helping them successfully reintegrate into society and refrain from engaging in criminal behavior.
IN: Unsar rason nganung nibalik ka ug skwela? (What made you decide to return to school?)

GM: Nagskwela naman ko sa una Sir kaso mao lagi sa nadali sa barkada maong na addict. (Prior to attending college, I was engaged in studies. Regrettably, I developed an addiction to shabu, influenced by my peers, which became a significant issue.)

IN: Unsa may nakita nimo nga importansya nga makahuman kaug skwela? (Can you elaborate on the significance of education and the reasons why it’s essential to complete it?)

GM: Syempre Sir niagi naman tag kapriso, gina look down sab ta sa atong ubang parente kay lagi adik nata wa natay kapaingnan. Taw sab biya ko Sir pasalamat kong naka probation status ko kay mahatagan kog chance nga ibarog nako akoang kaugalingon. (Sir, I spent several years in prison as an inmate. I view education as the primary means to improve my circumstances, particularly because some of my family members have a low regard for me. Despite this, I am a person with aspirations and dreams. I am grateful for my probation status, as it has provided me the opportunity to assert my dignity and rebuild my life.)

Rehabilitation of probationers depends heavily on education, as emphasized by (Pitts, 2007). Education has been proven to lower the likelihood of recidivism and to create opportunities for personal growth. By providing access to educational resources, probation individuals can earn diplomas, ultimately allowing them to reintegrate into society as productive and law-abiding citizens.

IN: Unsar may gibati nimo nga nahatagan kag chance nga makaskwela usab? (What is your reaction to the opportunity of returning to school.)

JL: Dako kaayo akoang kalipay sir kay ang skwela sa GIT libre ra ug tungod sa GIT naka earn kog degree. (I was thrilled to have the opportunity to attend college at GIT for free and even more elated when I was able to complete my degree.)

IN: Sa panahon nga nagskwela ka sa GIT unsa may mga challenges nga imuhang naagian nga paminaw nimo pinakalisud jud? (Could you elaborate on the difficulties you faced while attending GIT and identify the most challenging aspect of your experience there?)

JL: Kanang time Sir nga mureport ko sa presohan kay kinahanglan nako mamakak sa akoang maestra kay di ko gusto sir nga mulain iyahang panan.aw nako ug mahadlok sab ko nga mabaw.an niyang dati kong drug addict. (Whenever I must report to jail as per schedule, Sir, I find myself compelled to deceive my subject teachers. My fear is rooted in the concern that their attitude towards me will alter if they discover that I was previously incarcerated and struggled with drug addiction.)

When individuals on probation embark on their educational pursuits, they are presented with new and exciting opportunities for personal growth and knowledge acquisition. As they gain new skills and information, they experience a sense of satisfaction and competence, which, in turn, enhances their self-esteem and confidence.

IN: Unsar may ganahan nimo sa atong skwelahan? (What do you like about our school?)

GM: Libre siya Sir para sa mga taong pobre pareho nako. (It is free for someone like me, who is poor.)
Education serves as a vital instrument for individuals attempting to reintegrate into society after they are imprisoned for a crime. It offers fresh prospects and brighter futures, which can assist in discovering a more favorable course ahead.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Inclusive higher education can profoundly influence the lives of individuals on probation by offering them the requisite resources and opportunities to break free from the cycle of imprisonment and attain personal and professional accomplishments. The Glan Institute of Technology (GIT) offers educational programs that provide accessible and supportive opportunities for probated individuals to acquire valuable skills, enhance their self-esteem, and broaden their career prospects.

As an institution committed to aiding and serving disadvantaged individuals, GIT plays a critical role in reducing recidivism by fostering a sense of belonging and community purpose that motivates and directs probationers towards their objectives.

Successful reintegration of probationers into society is essential for both individual achievement and community well-being. It is crucial to recognize that everyone should be given the opportunity for a second
chance, and investing in the re-entry process can bring about constructive change and a safer and more inclusive society for all.

Access to education can provide new avenues for growth, foster personal development, and ultimately pave the way for a brighter future for those seeking a second opportunity. Encouraging inclusivity in higher education can help create a more equitable and just society for all individuals regardless of their past mistakes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Promoting initiatives and measures that support individuals in their pursuit of education and equip them with the necessary resources and assistance for success are of utmost importance. Integrating individuals under probation into tertiary education not only benefits the individuals themselves but also society. By offering these individuals the opportunity to enhance their education and skills, we not only facilitate their reintegration into society, but also help reduce the likelihood of reoffence. These efforts are crucial for addressing the challenges faced by individuals under probation and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

Advocating and supporting initiatives that strive to eliminate obstacles and foster a more inclusive and equitable educational environment are of paramount importance. Providing equal opportunities for everyone to succeed will contribute to the development of a fairer and more just society.

REFERENCES:


