

The Light Within: Success Narratives of Persons Deprived of Liberty in Alternative Learning System

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how the Alternative Learning System (ALS) within correctional facilities facilitated the personal transformation of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), with particular focus on their personal and educational experiences, self-worth, sense of purpose, and future aspirations. It emphasized the internal and external factors that contributed to learners' academic and personal achievements while in custody and how ALS completers perceived their learning journey as a path to redemption and positive change. The study also considered how this success stories influenced institutional practices and public perceptions of education in facilities settings. Using a qualitative-descriptive narrative inquiry, the data were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in experiences, motivations, challenges, and outcomes, with strict adherence to ethical standards of informed consent and confidentiality.

Findings revealed that ALS learners significantly improved their literacy skills, completed junior high school, and gained practical competencies that supported personal development. Participation in ALS fostered increased self-worth, pride, and renewed purpose among the learners. Their success resulted from a combination of internal factors, such as determination, resilience, and family support, and external factors, including supportive teachers, a conducive learning environment, and access to livelihood opportunities. Overall, ALS emerged as a transformative educational journey that enabled learners to rebuild relationships, develop positive self-identity, and prepare for reintegration into society.

The study concluded that ALS plays a vital role in restoring dignity and expanding reintegration opportunities for PDLs by promoting psychological recovery, moral growth, and identity transformation. It fosters self-worth and purpose by enabling learners to rebuild their identities and set goals for life after release, with positive outcomes supported by educators, peers, and structured learning environments. Documented successes of ALS also informed supportive institutional policies and encouraged more compassionate societal attitudes toward PDL learners.

The recommendations included expanding ALS programs, strengthening teacher training, integrating life skills and values education, documenting and publicizing success stories, and conducting broader longitudinal studies to assess reintegration and recidivism outcomes.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Research Background

Education has always been recognized as one of the most powerful tools for human transformation. Even within the walls of correctional facilities, it has the capacity to awaken hope, rebuild identity, and restore dignity among those who have been deprived of liberty. For many Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), learning through the Alternative Learning System (ALS) becomes a path toward healing, renewal, and personal redemption. It allows them to rediscover their sense of worth, purpose, and belonging, despite the limitations of their environment. In this light, education does not stop at imprisonment, rather, it becomes a vital bridge that reconnects the incarcerated to society and gives them the opportunity to start anew. The “light within” that this study refers to symbolizes the hope and transformation that education brings to every PDL learner who chooses to change and move forward through ALS.

In the Philippines, education is considered a right and a means for personal and social change. The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV, Sec. 2, declares that the state shall establish, maintain, and support a wide-ranging, satisfactory, and unified education system. It also promotes non-formal and informal learning systems, self-learning, independent, and out-of-school study programs that respond to communities' needs.

Similarly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines Non-formal Education as an addition, alternative, and support to formal education. It allows individuals to have the chance to continue learning throughout their lives, especially those who cannot access formal education. Non-formal education provides programs promoting youth and adults' literacy, practical life skills, career skills, and social or cultural learning opportunities (UNESCO, 2024).

In line with this, Republic Act No. 9155, known as the Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001, stipulates the establishment of an Alternative Learning System (ALS). According to RA 9155, the Alternative Learning System is defined as Non-formal Education that is organized, systematic educational activity outside the formal school system to offer selected types of learning to a sector of the population. In addition, the Alternative Learning System provides a parallel pathway for out-of-school children, youth, and adults to gain and complete the basic education that meets their specific situations and needs.

Further strengthening this, Republic Act No. 11510, also called the Alternative Learning System Act, was signed into law by the President of the Republic of the Philippines, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, on December 23, 2020. It officially made the Alternative Learning System part of the basic education system. This law aims to make education accessible for all and provide the much-needed support to expand and strengthen the implementation of the ALS Program throughout the country, including people in exceptional circumstances, such as Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL), to continue access to education (Supreme Court E-Library, 2021).

Annually, the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program under the Department of Education reaches more than 640,000 out-of-school learners nationwide. This non-formal program provides a flexible education system for both elementary and secondary levels. While ALS primarily targets out-of-school youth, adult learners, and marginalized communities, its capacity to outspread educational opportunities into correctional facilities has highlighted its transformative potential for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL).

A significant step was taken on October 9, 2024, when the Department of Education (DepEd) and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to formally

implement the Alternative Learning System (ALS) inside the correctional institutions. The agreement formalizes collaboration between DepEd and the BJMP to support education as part of the rehabilitation and reintegration of the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL). In line with this, the “Tagapangala Ko, Guro Ko” ALS Program was also launched to support the rights of PDL in education and to reinforce that no one is left behind (Alcober, 2024).

DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015, or the Policy Guidelines on the Alternative Learning System (ALS), provides the framework for delivering quality education to out-of-school children, youth, and adults who cannot access formal schooling. The Order emphasizes inclusivity and accessibility, mandating that ALS programs address the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups, including Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs).

Recent data revealed a rise in PDL participation in the Alternative Learning System Program. From 2021 to 2024, around 20,000 persons deprived of liberty have enrolled in the Alternative Learning System annually. In school year 2023-2024 alone, 5,596 Persons Deprived of Liberty enrolled in elementary level, 9,286 in junior high school, and 5,983 in senior high school (Morato, 2024). In terms of achievements, 60 PDLs received ALS diplomas (INQUIRER.net, 2023); 30 PDLs in Bacolod completed elementary and high school equivalencies (Pedrosa, 2024); and 77 PDLs in Legazpi City completed basic education from 2019 to 2024. These numbers prove ALS’s role in restoring hope, dignity, and opportunities for social reintegration.

Therefore, given these developments, the researcher concentrates on the success narratives of PDLs in the Alternative Learning System Program. It aims to investigate how education through the ALS Program within correctional facilities shapes their personal growth, emotional well-being, and social connections, and how it prepares them for life after released in the facility. Through qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and thematic analysis, the study aims to shed light on changes in themselves shaped by opportunity, resilience, and hope. Doing so will contribute to broader dialogues on justice, education, and human dignity in marginalized settings.

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted at the Legazpi City Jail, a government-operated facility that houses Persons deprived of Liberty (PDL) undergoing custodial care and rehabilitation. The institution was purposely selected for its active implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program that provides accessible and flexible basic education to PDL learners.

As a correctional institution committed to reformative programs, Legazpi City Jail offers a meaningful setting for examining the success narratives of PDL learners. Despite the limitations inherent in the facility, the presence of the ALS program creates an educational space that fosters personal growth, resilience, and renewed purpose. In alignment with this study, the setting provides a relevant context for exploring how educational opportunities within confinement contribute to empowerment, self-improvement, and preparation for reintegration into society.

Statement of the Problem

Primarily, this dissertation aims to explore the success narratives of PDLs engaged in ALS programs to illuminate the light within, particularly seeking answers to the following questions:

1. What personal and educational experiences define the success stories of ALS learners within correctional institutions?
2. How do Persons Deprived of Liberty describe the role of ALS in fostering self-worth, purpose, and future aspirations?

3. What internal and external factors contribute to ALS learners' academic and personal achievements behind bars?
4. In what ways do PDL ALS completers perceive their learning journey as a form of personal redemption and transformation?
5. How do the success narratives of ALS learners influence institutional practices and societal perceptions about education behind bars?

Research Objectives

This research undertaking has the following objectives:

1. Determine the personal and educational experiences as success stories of ALS learners within a correctional institution.
2. Describe the role of ALS in fostering self-worth, purpose, and future aspirations for PDLs.
3. Explore the internal and external factors that contribute to the academic and personal achievements of ALS learners behind bars.
4. Examine how PDL ALS completers perceive their learning journey as a form of personal redemption and transformation.
5. Determine the success narratives of ALS learners that influence institutional practices and societal perceptions about education behind bars.

Research Assumption

The following are the assumptions of this research:

1. The success of ALS learners in correctional institutions is primarily influenced by their motivation for personal transformation and the supportive educational environment provided by the ALS program.
2. Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) describe the role of ALS behind bars as instrumental in restoring self-worth, instilling a sense of purpose, and reigniting hope for future aspirations because it transforms their identity.
3. Strong personal motivation and willingness to change, as well as support from the Alternative Learning System and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), contribute to the academic and personal achievements of PDL.
4. The learning journey becomes the path for the PDL ALS completers to heal, reflect, and grow into better and responsible individuals.
5. Their success stories encourage institutions to recognize, improve, and support education programs inside the correctional facilities.

Scope and Delimitation

This study investigated the narrative success of Persons Deprived of Liberty in the Alternative Learning System Program within the Legazpi City Jail. The research focused on five key areas: (1) personal and educational experiences of ALS learners within correctional institutions, (2) role of ALS in fostering self-worth, purpose, and future aspirations, (3) internal and external factors contribute to ALS learners' academic and personal achievements behind bars, (4) ways of PDL in perceiving learning journey as a form of personal redemption and transformation, and (5) how success narratives of ALS learners influence institutional practices and societal perceptions about education within the correctional facilities.

The study intentionally excluded PDL from other correctional facilities and any non PDL ALS learners. Only 20 selected Persons Deprived of Liberty, 15 are males and 5 are females who completed the Junior High School level between 2019 and 2024 within the Legazpi City Jail. It focused on PDLs' personal experiences and success stories for participating in the Alternative Learning System Program.

The study primarily utilized qualitative research methods to gather in-depth insights and success experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) in terms of education. The data were collected through focus group discussions and interviews. The FGD were done within the correctional facility of Legazpi City Jail. The ethical principles of informed consent and confidentiality were strictly followed to ensure the protection of participants' identities and personal data throughout the research process.

These boundaries were set to maintain focus and for the study to remain manageable and ensure its alignment to understand how the Alternative Learning System Program within a correctional setting shapes the PDL for a personal transformation and achieves success.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study employed the Input-Process-Output-Outcome (IPOO) model. The research input consisted of the narrative success among Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) under the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Program. The study explored the following themes: personal and educational experiences, the roles of ALS program PDLs in self-worth, purpose, and future aspirations, factors affecting academic and personal achievements, practices for self-redemption and transformation, and feedback practices concerning learner progress. The process involved conducting focus group discussions, an interview, and theoretical analysis. The output of this study is a testimonial book that may serve as a meaningful document of the lived experiences of PDLs. The outcome is the institutionalization of the ALS program in PDL facilities for reformation and eventual societal reintegration.

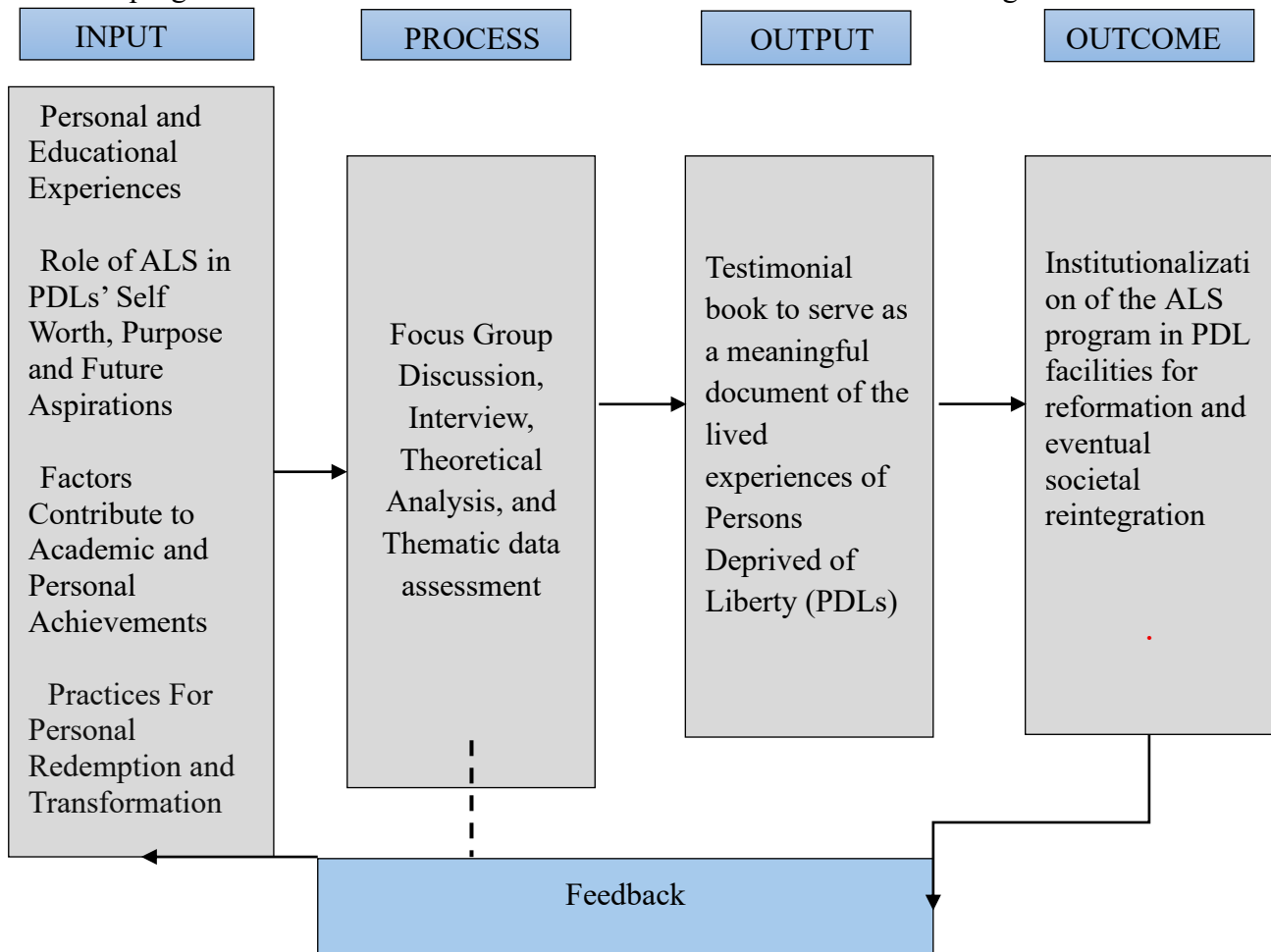


Figure 1

Conceptual Paradigm

Significance of the Study

This study will examine its implications, potential advantages, and overall impact. It is also hoped that the results might be valuable to the following:

Department of Education. The findings of this study will enable the agency to recognize the value of and enhance support for implementing Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs and projects, including those in correctional facilities, to promote social reintegration and reduce recidivism.

Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). The findings of this study will support the bureau in its goal of promoting reform and strengthening educational programs within the correctional setting.

Local Government Units. The findings of this study provide basic information to the local government units that they may incorporate into the development plans and implement programs concerning the results.

Persons Deprived of Liberty. The study will give hope to PDL that success is still possible through education. It proves they can still improve themselves, gain knowledge, and build a better future even behind bars. Their stories inspire others to believe in second chances and the power of learning.

Community. It will remind the community that Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) are still capable of transformation and growth through education. It will promote understanding, encourage acceptance, and support for their reintegration into society. This helps promote a more compassionate, inclusive, and safer community for everyone.

ALS Teachers. The study's results acknowledged the teachers' efforts, dedication, motivation, and expertise in bringing hope and transformation to the PDL. This can inspire and motivate them to continue their mission, while also helping improve their teaching strategies in correctional settings.

Researchers. The study will serve as a foundation for future studies on education as part of the rehabilitation process inside the correctional facilities. It creates opportunities to investigate effective teaching methods, curriculum adjustments, and the long-term benefits of ALS programs for PDL. The results could inspire further studies that help to improve educational policies and practices for marginalized groups.

Definition of Terms

This part of the study briefly describes each term for precise and easy understanding. The following words are conceptually and operationally defined.

Alternative Learning System (ALS). A parallel learning system to formal school offered by the Department of Education in the Philippines that provides a chance for out-of-school youth and adults to continue and finish their basic education outside the formal school setting. In this study, ALS includes guided sessions delivered inside the correctional facilities to help PDL complete the basic education.

Alternative Learning System (ALS) Teachers. Conceptually, ALS teachers, also known as mobile teachers or instructional managers, are education professionals assigned by the Department of Education to deliver non-formal education under the Alternative Learning System. They facilitate learning, assess competencies, and guide learners toward educational equivalency and personal growth. In this study, ALS teachers refer to the educators who conduct instructional sessions, mentoring, and assessments for PDL learners inside the Legazpi City Jail, serving as catalysts for learning, transformation, and rehabilitation.

Community. Conceptually, the community refers to a group of people living in the same area or sharing common interests, values, and social ties that influence collective well-being and development. In this

study, it refers to the local stakeholders outside the correctional facility, including families, local government units, and residents of Legazpi City, whose understanding, acceptance, and support.

Correctional Institution. A facility established by the state to house individuals who are deprived of liberty because of committing criminal offenses. In this study, it is defined as the facility where Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) are confined, and the Alternative Learning System (ALS) is implemented through programs and activities facilitated by DepEd in partnership with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP).

Education Behind Bars. Refers to the organized provision of learning opportunities within correctional institutions, aimed at promoting literacy, personal development, and rehabilitation of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). In this study, it refers to the implementation of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) conducted inside correctional facilities.

Life Skills. These are a set of essential abilities and competencies that enable individuals to effectively manage daily challenges, make informed decisions, build positive relationships, and adapt to various life situations. These include communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, self-management, and social skills. In this study, it refers to the practical competencies developed among Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) through the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and related activities—such as teamwork, decision-making, financial literacy, health awareness, and conflict resolution—that support their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Long-term Readiness. The ability of an individual to sustain preparedness for future challenges and opportunities by developing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and resilience that support personal growth, social participation, and economic productivity over time. In this study, it measured by the extent to which Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who participate in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) acquire education, and life competencies that prepare them for reintegration, employability, and independent living after release

Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL). Individuals who are currently detained inside correctional facilities are serving their sentence or waiting for the court's decision. In this study, PDL are defined as persons inside the facilities under the custody of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) who exercise their rights in education through the Alternative Learning System Program.

Recidivism. Refers to the tendency of a formerly PDL individual to relapse into criminal behavior, resulting in re-arrest, reconviction, or return facility. It is often used as a measure of the effectiveness of correctional and rehabilitation programs. In this study, it is defined as the incidence of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who, after release, commit another offense that leads to their re-arrest or re-incarceration within a specific monitoring period.

Societal Reintegration. Refers to the process by which Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) are restored as active and productive members of the community after release. In this study, it is defined as the participation of PDLs in learning sessions and by the Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers and prospects after release.

Success Narratives. Stories that define how an individual achieves success and overcomes challenges to achieve a positive result. In this study, these are personal experiences shared by ALS learners, particularly those in correctional facilities, that state their positive change and progress in life through participation in the ALS Program.

The Light Within. Used in this study as a symbol that represents hope, change, and inner strength that Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) gain and improve through education while inside a correctional facility.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter presents literature and studies related to the researcher's chosen topic. More avenues of research will inform this study, and the ideas and information gathered from the relevant literature and studies reviewed have provided the researcher with a wide range of ideas and perspectives that reflect important roles in conducting this research. In addition, it presents the theoretical framework, relevant concepts, and previous research findings.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on interrelated theories that collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of how education fosters transformation, motivation, and self-empowerment among Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) enrolled in the Alternative Learning System (ALS): Transformative Learning Theory, Humanistic Education Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Self-Determination Theory.

Transformative learning explains that adult learning is not merely about acquiring knowledge but about experiencing profound personal change. According to Mezirow (1991), learners re-evaluated their assumptions, values, and beliefs through critical reflection, often triggered by a disorienting experience, in this case, PDLs. As learners engage with new information and share reflections with others, they begin to reshape their worldviews and identities. In the context of the present study, this theory helps explain how ALS learners, through guided reflection and educational participation, redefine themselves not merely as offenders but as students and individuals with renewed purpose. It supports the research's aim to highlight the role of education in Persons Deprived of Liberty redemption and reintegration.

In addition, the humanistic education perspective, primarily advocated by Carl Rogers (1969), emphasized the importance of personal growth, intrinsic motivation, and self-actualization in learning. It suggests that learning is most effective in environments that promote empathy, trust, and respect. Humanistic education values the learner's capacity for self-direction and the importance of acknowledging the whole person, including their emotions, experiences, and aspirations. In facility-based ALS settings, this theory is highly relevant as it underlines the significance of treating learners with dignity and compassion, which fosters a sense of self-worth and emotional healing. The present study benefits from this perspective by framing ALS as a humanizing experience for PDL, contributing to their sense of identity and belonging.

Moreover, the concept of social learning, as developed by Albert Bandura (1977), argued that individuals acquire behaviors, attitudes, and values through observing others. It highlights the role of role models, imitation, and social reinforcement in shaping behavior. Within the ALS context in correctional facilities, peer-led mentoring, group learning, and shared success stories become powerful tools for encouraging persistence and positive change. As Persons Deprived of Liberty witness others achieving educational goals, they are more likely to believe in their potential and adopt constructive behaviors. This theory supports the study by emphasizing the social dynamics that contribute to learning and transformation within jails, reinforcing the value of collaborative and relational learning environments.

Furthermore, self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan (1985) focused on human motivation and the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It posits that when individuals feel they have control over their learning, experience a sense of mastery, and are connected to others, they are more

motivated and committed. This is particularly relevant in correctional ALS programs where learners often face limitations and emotional challenges. The theory explains why some PDL persist in learning despite hardship: they experience personal growth, feel capable of achieving goals, and draw support from peers and facilitators. It enhances the present study by offering insight into the internal motivations and support systems that sustain ALS learners’ commitment and transformation.

The researcher’s theory stated that Persons Deprived of Liberty reconstruct their identities, aspirations, and transform through academic and personal experiences in ALS. PDLs engage in learning not only to acquire academic knowledge and skills but also to reshape the way they see themselves and their future. ALS serves as both an educational pathway and a transformational platform, enabling PDLs to reconstruct who they are and what they can become. Their stories of transformation become powerful evidence of education’s role in rehabilitation and societal reintegration.

Generally, these theories provide a strong conceptual foundation for the study. They offer multiple lenses to understand how Persons Deprived of Liberty experience success, personal change, and self-renewal through ALS. Each theory reinforces the research's focus on identity reconstruction, emotional healing, motivation, and the social impact of education in the facility.

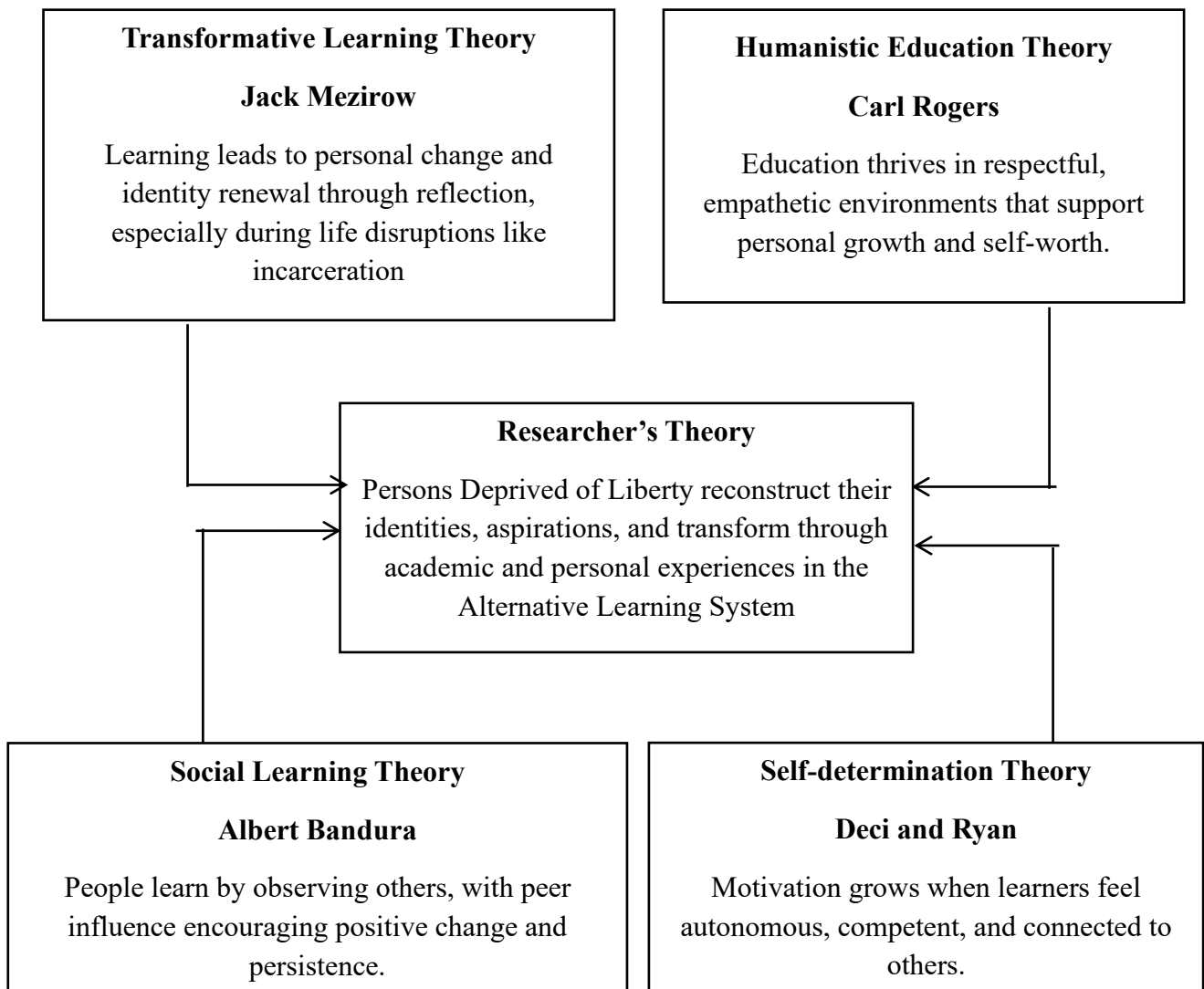


Figure 2

Theoretical Paradigm

Relevant Concepts

A careful analysis of principles and ideas from published literature is presented as the focus of the present study. More information from books and articles provides in-depth knowledge and is important in discussing the facts and meanings to which the study relates. In addition, the following presents a selection of previous local and foreign literature that had a significant effect on the success of the current study.

In recent years, global scholarship has continued to emphasize the transformative role of education among incarcerated populations. According to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2020), prison education is increasingly viewed as a human right and a strategic approach to rehabilitation. This perspective encouraged countries to adopt inclusive and innovative education systems within correctional settings. Furthermore, the World Bank (2021) emphasized that digital inclusion in education enhances equity, participation, and future employability among marginalized learners, including prisoners. These developments call for the Philippine ALS program to accelerate the integration of technology and learner-centered approaches into correctional education.

Expanding on learner identity, according to the European Prison Education Association (2020), educational programs in prisons foster self-confidence, agency, and a renewed sense of identity among incarcerated individuals. These findings parallel the experiences of ALS learners in Philippine jails, who often regard education as a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. This emotional aspect is further enriched by the work of O'Grady and McCarthy (2022), who emphasized that educational engagement fosters perceptions of fairness and procedural justice in correctional institutions.

Further examining participatory approaches, the Council of Europe (2020) emphasized the importance of inclusive classroom strategies and democratic participation in prison education, suggesting that collaborative learning improves communication skills, builds mutual respect, and fosters reintegration. These findings reflect the Philippine ALS's emphasis on group-based instruction, especially in correctional settings where community-based learning is crucial. Likewise, the International Commission on the Futures of Education (UNESCO, 2021) advocated for good monitoring and evaluation frameworks in non-formal education, underscoring the value of documentation in tracking progress, an area still developing in Philippine ALS programs.

In terms of mental and emotional health, Goleman (2020), in his exploration of emotional intelligence, emphasized that developing emotional awareness and self-regulation can transform individual behavior, even in high-stress environments such as prisons. This aligns with Belshaw and Quinlan's (2023) findings, which showed that trauma-informed educational practices promote academic success and classroom engagement. These insights reinforce recent ALS initiatives to incorporate psychosocial support and values education, particularly for women and youth PDLs.

Moreover, Freire (2020), in his foundational work on critical pedagogy, emphasized that giving learners control over their educational journey fosters deeper engagement and personal transformation. This concept aligns with the ALS's individualized and flexible approach, which allows PDLs to actively shape their learning paths. Similarly, Ainsworth and Hansen (2022) highlighted the therapeutic benefits of arts-integrated prison education. Their work aligns with ALS modules that promote values formation and self-expression, helping PDLs process trauma and envision brighter futures.

Drawing on foundational perspectives, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that social learning and peer interaction significantly influence cognitive development, a principle that applies well within correctional education. This underscores the importance of ALS's peer-based literacy sessions in fostering mutual

learning. In parallel, the International Telecommunication Union (2021) discussed how the digital divide affects marginalized groups in prison systems, highlighting the urgency for ALS to build inclusive and adaptable post-pandemic digital learning models.

Supporting inclusive approaches, Hooks (2020) emphasized that education can serve as a liberatory practice, allowing marginalized individuals to resist societal stigmas and reclaim their identities. This aligns with the goals of ALS, which provides incarcerated learners the space to rebuild self-worth through education. Additionally, the International Literacy Association (2021) highlighted that equitable access to technology and digital learning tools is essential to close achievement gaps, an insight that supports ongoing efforts to digitize ALS delivery in Philippine correctional settings.

In terms of employability, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2021) emphasized that basic and vocational education for prisoners plays a key role in reducing social exclusion and enhancing reintegration prospects. This focus on functional and life skills mirrors the ALS program's efforts to equip PDLs with livelihood competencies for post-release success. Additionally, Brookfield (2020) emphasized the role of critical reflection and culturally responsive teaching in adult learning, reinforcing ALS's commitment to compassionately addressing the diverse learning needs of incarcerated individuals.

Human-rights-based approaches are also gaining traction, as illustrated by Lin and Esquivel (2020), whose work in Asia parallels ALS's focus on dignity and inclusion. Similarly, Rose (2021), in her analysis of narrative practices in adult education, emphasized that reflective journaling fosters self-awareness, emotional healing, and behavioral change, critical outcomes for learners in constrained environments. This insight is directly aligned with ALS's emphasis on journaling and personal development as a form of transformation among PDLs.

Regarding mentorship and inclusivity, Knowles (2020) emphasized the significance of peer-based adult learning, asserting that mentorship fosters learner confidence and long-term commitment to personal growth. Additionally, Palmer (2021), in his writings on ethical teaching, underscored the importance of trust and authenticity in creating learner-centered environments, principles echoed in the ALS approach within correctional settings.

Additionally, innovative frameworks in prison education have emphasized holistic approaches to learning. Kabat-Zinn (2020), showed in his work on mindfulness and well-being, illustrated how mindful awareness can foster emotional regulation and personal stability in stressful environments like prisons. In parallel, CASEL (2021) promoted the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) in non-traditional classrooms to build resilience and relational skills. These concepts resonate with the values-based structure of ALS modules. Furthermore, Tomlinson (2020) highlighted that personalized instruction fosters deeper engagement and learner autonomy, principles that reflect the modular and flexible approach employed in ALS for PDLs.

In the Philippine context, recent literature provides a comprehensive and layered understanding of how the Alternative Learning System (ALS) operates within correctional institutions to promote holistic rehabilitation. For instance, Cabansag (2021) explored how ALS acts as a vehicle for reintegration by nurturing a sense of self-worth and offering a platform for personal transformation among persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). This emphasis on personal growth is echoed by Tadena (2020), that the program improves not only academic competencies but also fosters positive behavioral changes, including enhanced discipline and a renewed sense of purpose.

Moreover, this rehabilitative effect becomes even more significant when viewed in the context of external disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The report by DepEd-NCR (2021) demonstrated the

resilience of mobile teachers and ALS learners during this time, highlighting the adaptability of the system under crisis. This finding aligns with the work of Gutierrez (2022), who emphasized ALS's flexible modality in reaching out to marginalized and restricted populations such as PDLs, especially in urban and provincial jails.

Furthermore, at the core of ALS's effectiveness is its focus on functional literacy. Villanueva (2020) emphasized that teaching reading, writing, and numeracy is essential in rehabilitating incarcerated individuals, particularly those with no prior formal education. Building on this, Delos Reyes (2023) deepened the insight by highlighting how reflective writing helps learners reclaim their identities and narrate stories of personal redemption. This is further reinforced by Morales (2021), who discussed the role of values education in fostering moral renewal and spiritual resilience.

In terms of pedagogy, several authors have emphasized the empowering dynamics of peer support and mentorship. Alcantara and Llamas (2021) presented compelling evidence that peer mentoring within ALS not only improves literacy outcomes but also instills leadership, confidence, and mutual accountability among PDLs. This communal learning dynamic is paralleled by Bautista (2022), who emphasized the crucial role of ALS volunteer teachers in maintaining learner motivation despite challenging conditions like jail overcrowding and limited resources.

Addressing the digital divide, Santos (2020) discussed how even minimal digital tools proved instrumental in sustaining ALS delivery during lockdowns. This was supported by Mendoza (2022), who illustrated the feasibility of mobile-based learning in jail settings and its positive effect on learner engagement and consistency, thereby expanding the reach of ALS.

Equally important is the use of culturally grounded pedagogy. Javier (2023) highlighted that contextualized learning materials help PDL learners better relate to lessons and stay motivated. Complementing this, David (2021) expanded the discourse by linking values formation to identity rebuilding, showing how ALS contributes to reshaping inmates' mindsets and behavioral patterns in deeply transformative ways.

From a gender-responsive perspective, Pineda (2022) emphasized the therapeutic function of ALS in women's correctional facilities, underscoring education as a means of emotional healing. This idea resonates with the work of Lim and Roque (2021), who found that juvenile PDLs undergoing ALS not only gained literacy but also rebuilt aspirations, demonstrating the program's ability to heal and empower even among younger populations.

Adding to the discourse on life after incarceration, Cruz (2023) underscored the need for post-release support systems to sustain ALS learners' reintegration. In parallel, Abad (2020) critiqued the disconnect between ALS certifications and real-world employment opportunities, advocating for more aligned policies and livelihood planning for graduates to ensure long-term success.

Public perception is another theme highlighted in the literature. Rivera and Santos (2021) argued that ALS contributes to reshaping societal views of incarcerated individuals, promoting a more compassionate and humanizing narrative. Supporting this, Flores (2022) documented how community attitudes in provincial jails shifted positively through visible educational participation, highlighting ALS's role in social transformation.

In terms of communication empowerment, De Castro (2020) emphasized how literacy acquisition helps adult PDLs articulate their narratives, thus reclaiming their identities. Building on this, Tolentino (2023) explored narrative therapy in ALS modules, showing how storytelling fosters emotional healing and self-affirmation, thereby reinforcing the importance of reflective education practices in correctional settings.

Further, Marquez and Dominguez (2023) underscored the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration, noting how cooperation among DepEd, LGUs, NGOs, and jail administrators results in more holistic and sustainable rehabilitation efforts. These partnerships not only enhance delivery but also create a more inclusive ecosystem for ALS learners.

Previous Research Findings

After looking at the published literature and its relationship with the current study, the researcher also investigated studies that examine the relative aspects contained in the current study. The following is a collection and discussion of previous foreign and local studies that have significant contributions and are relevant to the present study.

Success Stories and Educational Journeys of ALS Learners in Correctional Institutions

Bozick and Davis (2021) conducted a large-scale meta-analysis evaluating correctional education outcomes across various U.S. states. The study involved thousands of incarcerated individuals and measured changes in employment and recidivism after program participation. Results showed a 43% lower recidivism rate and 13% greater employment rate for participants compared to non-participants. These findings affirm that education serves not only as cognitive development but also as a strategic tool for personal and social transformation. This directly supports the present study's goal of documenting how ALS acts as a rehabilitative and empowering tool that reduces reoffending and nurtures purposeful identity change among PDLs.

Similarly, Green and Livingston (2020) employed a mixed-methods study involving 178 incarcerated individuals from five U.S. state prisons to examine the outcomes of vocational education. The research used surveys and interviews to determine how vocational training influenced community reintegration. Results highlighted improved self-efficacy, stable employment, and reduced chances of reoffending. This aligns with the current study's examination of how ALS prepares PDLs not only for academic success but also for reintegration into society through skills-building and vocational literacy. The emphasis on post-release employability parallels ALS's role as a bridge to economic participation and community engagement.

Further, Chen and Molloy (2021) conducted a quantitative analysis with 310 incarcerated adults to examine the impact of literacy gains on inmate discipline. Using statistical regression techniques, the study found a strong negative correlation between literacy improvement and misconduct. Inmates who made educational progress showed fewer behavioral violations. This directly supports the current study's premise that foundational literacy through ALS serves as both a behavioral intervention and a means for rebuilding individual agency. By reducing disciplinary incidents, literacy growth reflects the rehabilitative potential of ALS in correctional environments.

Also, Behan (2020) interviewed 20 incarcerated individuals in European facilities to explore education as psychological liberation. The study concluded that learning enabled participants to construct new life narratives filled with hope. Like ALS in the Philippines, prison education globally serves as a gateway for self-redemption and life redirection. The study's findings support the present research by underscoring how incarcerated individuals construct redemptive personal narratives through educational participation. Its emphasis on education as a source of hope and identity transformation aligns closely with the central goal of this dissertation, to document how ALS enables PDLs to redefine their self-concept and future aspirations.

Mendoza (2023) followed 40 former PDLs who completed ALS and were released. Using a longitudinal design with structured interviews and follow-up surveys, the study found that 75% of participants secured

employment or returned to school. This demonstrates ALS's role in reintegration, a key aspect of the present study. The emphasis on post-release trajectories enriches the current study's examination of long-term success. It validates the idea that ALS provides continuity from incarceration to community life.

Villanueva (2020) conducted a retrospective study on 30 ALS completers and their post-release trajectories. The research used documentary review and interviews to assess behavioral and social changes. Results showed increased civic engagement and community participation. These outcomes affirm the broader societal relevance of ALS education. The study's insights on civic reintegration support the present study's fifth objective. It reveals how success stories influence perceptions about rehabilitation. Studies that focused on the lived experiences and personal transformations of PDLs through ALS underscore the importance of narrative, identity reconstruction, and emotional healing. Santos (2021) conducted a phenomenological study involving 15 incarcerated ALS learners from a regional correctional facility. The study aimed to understand the lived experiences of PDLs enrolled in the ALS program. Using in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, the study found that participants experienced significant emotional transformation, regaining self-worth and a sense of dignity. This aligns with the present study's goal of examining how ALS fosters self-identity and empowerment among incarcerated learners. The emphasis on lived experiences directly parallels the current research's narrative approach. Furthermore, the findings offer foundational insights into how PDLs internalize educational opportunities.

Similarly, De Guzman (2022) carried out a qualitative case study with five ALS completers in a Metro Manila city jail. The objective was to investigate how ALS participation influenced their transformation. Through narrative interviews and content analysis, the study revealed that learners saw ALS as a redemptive journey that nurtured self-forgiveness, restored broken family relationships, and opened future aspirations. These findings directly relate to the present study's emphasis on self-worth and personal redemption. The case study's narrative depth complements the current research's focus on success stories. It affirms the idea that education becomes a turning point in the lives of PDLs.

In another complementary study, Cruz and Manlapig (2022) performed a mixed-methods study assessing the effect of ALS programs on behavioral change among 100 PDLs. Quantitative surveys and interviews showed significant reductions in aggression and rule violations among learners. This highlights education's rehabilitative role, which supports the present study's aim to uncover internal changes among ALS learners. Their findings echo the transformational experiences observed in success narratives.

Along this line, Carreon (2023) conducted a qualitative study using interviews with 10 PDLs to explore spiritual themes in ALS learning. Participants emphasized the importance of faith-based content in helping them process guilt and find purpose. This supports the present study's interest in the emotional and spiritual aspects of educational transformation. The incorporation of spiritual recovery aligns with themes of redemption in the current research. It contributes depth to the understanding of ALS as more than academic instruction.

ALS and the Development of Self-Worth, Purpose, and Aspirations Among PDLs

Thomas and Franklin (2020) conducted a qualitative case study in the UK to explore the ethical dimensions of correctional education through interviews with 25 educators and 30 students. The researchers aimed to understand how pedagogical ethics influenced teaching dynamics. Their findings emphasized that empathy, fairness, and relational trust encouraged learner participation and emotional safety. This is highly relevant to the present research, which investigates the role of ALS in restoring dignity and ethical self-worth among incarcerated learners. The study reinforces how compassion and ethical teaching practice contribute to personal transformation and support the success narratives of ALS participants.

Likewise, Runell (2021) explored academic identity shifts in incarcerated students in a U.S. higher education prison program using longitudinal qualitative interviews with 40 participants. The study focused on how academic roles alter self-perceptions and plans. Findings revealed that education redefined participants' identities, transforming them from offenders to learners. This insight is essential to the present study's interest in how ALS learners undergo cognitive and emotional shifts in identity. The transformative arc, from inmate to learner, clearly reflects the kind of meaningful change in identity and direction that this study also aims to explore in ALS learners.

Also, Harper and Denson (2022) examined trauma-informed education in U.S. correctional settings using qualitative interviews with 35 incarcerated learners and 10 facilitators. The study aimed to determine how trauma-sensitive teaching practices impacted learning outcomes and emotional safety. Findings revealed that empathetic instruction, consistency, and emotional validation created secure environments for learning and identity repair. This affirms the present study's focus on how ALS contributes to restoring self-worth and psychological healing among incarcerated learners.

Research also highlights the psychological and emotional impact of prison education, emphasizing values formation, self-worth, and mental well-being. Gaes and Atkin-Plunk (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study in the U.S. with 120 incarcerated participants to assess how correctional education influenced mental health outcomes. Combining pre- and post-program psychological assessments with qualitative interviews, the study revealed a marked reduction in depressive symptoms and increased emotional stability among participants. This study supports the present research by highlighting the emotional and psychological transformation that can accompany learning, validating ALS's role in supporting the mental health and dignity of PDLs.

Along this line, Young and Watanabe (2023) implemented a mixed-methods study in three U.S. state prisons with 60 incarcerated adults to examine how mindfulness-enhanced education influences emotional development. The study used pre- and post-surveys along with interviews to evaluate behavioral shifts. Findings indicated reduced impulsivity and increased self-awareness. This is strongly aligned with the current research, which seeks to explore the internal transformation of PDLs participating in ALS. The mindfulness approach detailed in the study complements the ALS framework by emphasizing emotional regulation, which is essential in the personal success narratives being documented in this dissertation. The emotional regulation and mindfulness described in this study provide a valuable parallel to how ALS encourages reflection and mental well-being as part of personal rehabilitation, complementing the affective dimensions of learning explored in the current research.

Larsen and Cook (2022) conducted a case study on the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies in prison classrooms in North America. The study involved 50 incarcerated learners and documented changes in emotional regulation, communication, and peer relationships. Results emphasized that SEL frameworks fostered empathy, discipline, and reflective thinking. These outcomes align closely with the goals of ALS in nurturing values formation and affective development, core elements of the success narratives under investigation in this dissertation.

Further, Nelson et al. (2021) also explored the role of expressive arts, particularly narrative writing, as tools for emotional release and identity redefinition in incarcerated adult learners. Using qualitative methods with 22 participants in a U.S. state facility, the study found that expressive writing enhanced self-awareness, helped reconcile past trauma, and instilled hope. The integration of creative outlets mirrors how ALS incorporates reflective writing in correctional settings, contributing to the emotional and psychological transformation that this research seeks to document.

Likewise, Tamayo (2023) utilized phenomenological inquiry to study the perspectives of ten PDL ALS learners on their self-worth. Findings highlighted that learners experienced increased dignity, purpose, and emotional healing as they progressed in their modules. The current research explores similar emotional and psychological growth themes. This study strengthens the framework on self-worth and transformation within incarceration.

Moreover, Encarnacion (2022) evaluated ALS mobile teachers in jail settings through qualitative interviews. The study found that teachers' empathy, creativity, and resilience were central to learner retention and motivation. This directly supports the present study's investigation of institutional support. The teacher-learner relationship is shown to be transformative, mirroring key aspects of the ALS system. It underscores the human element behind academic success.

In a longitudinal perspective, Jimenez and Santos (2023) utilized a longitudinal case study involving six learners who were followed from incarceration through release. The study found that ALS served as a bridge to employment and further education. This aligns with the present study's intent to capture success stories that extend beyond confinement. It affirms the long-term role of ALS in shaping futures.

Further enriching the theoretical dimension, Diaz (2023) implemented a grounded theory study among 20 ALS learners to develop a model of resilience and coping. The model identified personal reflection, peer support, and teacher guidance as essential factors in sustaining engagement. These internal dynamics directly relate to the present research's exploration of learner-driven transformation. The developed model may serve as a lens to interpret the success narratives being collected.

Additionally, Villamor and Rivera (2021) studied the impact of ALS on decision-making and critical thinking through an experimental pre-post design. Forty PDL learners were given problem-based learning modules, and results showed notable improvements in reasoning and reflection. These cognitive developments complement the emotional and aspirational themes in the current research. It further validates ALS's holistic contribution to incarcerated learners' growth.

Also, Santiago and Cruz (2021) applied grounded theory to understand the role of hope in learner persistence. Interviews with 12 PDL learners revealed that education served as a coping mechanism and source of hope. These emotional benefits tie closely to the present study's exploration of purpose and resilience through education. The development of a grounded theory enriches the theoretical framing of the current study. It positions hope as both a motivator and a product of ALS learning.

Internal and External Factors Influencing ALS Learners' Academic and Personal Success

Cox and Craig (2021) explored learner autonomy in correctional settings through a case study involving 24 incarcerated adults in a North American facility. The research aimed to determine how self-directed learning strategies influenced learner motivation and independence. Results indicated that greater autonomy empowered learners to take charge of their rehabilitation process, boosting self-efficacy and academic engagement. This complements the present study's focus on internal drivers of ALS learner success and supports the value of personalized learning paths within correctional education.

Moreover, studies emphasizing peer support and reintegration underscore the collective and social dimensions of learning behind bars. Burton et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study in the United States to explore peer-led educational models in correctional institutions. Through interviews with 32 incarcerated peer instructors and learners, the research revealed that peer-led instruction enhanced confidence, collaboration, and accountability among inmates. The findings showed that these social interactions fostered a supportive community that contributed to increased motivation and learning persistence. This aligns with the ALS program's integration of peer tutoring and collaborative group

dynamics, supporting the present study's aim to explore how such interpersonal mechanisms shape the success narratives of PDL learners.

Murray and Devlin (2023) carried out a mixed-methods study focusing on peer mentorship programs within prison education systems in Australia. The study involved 50 incarcerated mentors and mentees, using surveys and in-depth interviews to assess academic persistence and identity transformation. Results revealed that peer mentorship fostered a sense of responsibility and leadership among mentors, while mentees developed increased confidence and purpose. These outcomes directly support the present study's interest in how peer dynamics within ALS classrooms facilitate both educational progress and personal transformation for PDLs.

In terms of external and environmental influences, several studies evaluated the institutional and pedagogical components of ALS. Francisco (2020) used surveys with 50 PDLs to assess perceived classroom climate in ALS settings. Positive learner-teacher interactions were strongly correlated with motivation and attendance. The study highlighted the importance of affective classroom dynamics in supporting ALS success. This directly relates to the present study's focus on internal and external success factors. It affirms that emotional safety and connection fuel learner achievement.

Agustin (2021), through phenomenology, examined the challenges faced by ALS teachers in overcrowded jails. Findings showed that modular teaching and individualized attention were critical coping strategies. This informs the present study's understanding of external constraints on learning delivery. The study's insights on instructional resilience help contextualize learner success stories. It reveals the dual struggle and collaboration between teachers and PDL learners.

In addition, studies on comparative or thematic analysis of learner differences offer further depth. Galvez (2021) applied grounded theory methodology to explore motivational shifts among 12 incarcerated ALS learners. Using in-depth interviews and constant comparative analysis, the study developed a model showing that motivation evolved from compliance to aspiration. Learners developed stronger self-belief and became future-oriented, aligning with the present study's third objective on internal and external success factors. The study's focus on motivation complements the present inquiry into internal enablers of success. It also provides a theoretical model useful for interpreting learner transformation.

ALS as a Pathway to Redemption and Personal Transformation

Studies that focused on the lived experiences and personal transformations of incarcerated learners underscore the importance of narrative, identity reconstruction, and emotional healing. Nelson, Price, and Adams (2021) conducted a qualitative inquiry involving 25 adult inmates participating in a writing-intensive literacy program in the U.S. Using narrative analysis, the study aimed to understand how storytelling allowed learners to reframe their identities and process trauma. Results demonstrated that reflective writing facilitated personal growth and improved emotional awareness. This study is directly relevant to the present research, which also employs narrative inquiry to capture the success stories of ALS learners behind bars. By highlighting how storytelling fosters identity reconstruction and emotional healing, the findings offer both methodological alignment and conceptual validation for the narrative approach in this dissertation, key elements that this study also seeks to highlight in the narratives of ALS learners behind bars.

Santos and Witte (2023) conducted a qualitative study in Canada using interviews with 28 incarcerated learners to explore educational resilience and resistance. The research revealed that education became a mechanism through which learners resisted institutional stigmas and reconstructed meaningful identities. This mirrors the transformative pathways documented in ALS programs, where PDLs overcome social

labels through educational success. This study contributes meaningfully to the current research's examination of how ALS fosters empowerment and identity rebuilding among incarcerated learners. It also reinforces the value of education as a form of resistance and self-definition, key elements explored through the lived experiences of ALS participants in this dissertation.

Roxas (2023) used a narrative case study to document the reflective journey of an ALS learner in a Philippine jail setting. Though a local study, it aligns with global frameworks that recognize reflective journaling as an avenue for self-exploration. The findings revealed that the participant regained self-awareness and agency through writing. This directly supports the present study's aim of capturing the personal journeys of ALS learners, especially in how they reclaim self-worth and agency through education. The case study's use of reflective journaling offers a grounded lens through which the current research can analyze similar transformative narratives. Furthermore, it emphasized the transformative power of ALS in promoting personal insight, emotional resilience, and a redemptive mindset, all of which are central to the success narratives examined in this dissertation.

Further, Reyes (2020), stated that through narrative inquiry involving ten ALS learners from provincial jails, explored how incarcerated individuals redefined themselves through learning. The research employed storytelling and life history interviews. Results showed that learners transitioned from self-identifying as criminals to adopting positive identities such as students, mentors, and role models. This process of identity reconstruction is a core interest of the present study. Reyes' work strengthens the idea that education enables the redefinition of identity. It validates the use of narrative inquiry in capturing this transformation.

Roxas (2023) further supported the value of personal reflection by conducting a narrative case study on the role of reflective writing in ALS. Ten learner essays and interviews were analyzed, showing that writing helped process trauma and reconstruct identity. These findings reinforced the narrative approach in the present study. The focus on reflective journaling supports the idea of self-expression as healing. It parallels the current research's methodological interest in gathering personal stories.

Meanwhile, studies that explored emotional, spiritual, and psychological development shed light on inner transformation among ALS learners. Guzman and Sy (2022) explored the gender-specific experiences of 10 incarcerated women enrolled in ALS. Using phenomenological interviews, the study found that ALS facilitated emotional healing, reestablishment of maternal identity, and hope for family reintegration. These findings align with the present study's exploration of education as a holistic form of rehabilitation. The gender lens of the study complements the present research's intent to highlight diverse success narratives. It supports the examination of how ALS nurtures identity reconstruction, especially among women PDLs.

Focusing on learner narratives, Tolentino (2022) applied narrative analysis to autobiographical essays written by incarcerated ALS learners. Themes of forgiveness, identity reconstruction, and family hope emerged as dominant reflections. The use of written narratives parallels the current study's methodology. It also highlights how learners internalize and document their transformation.

Impact of ALS Success Narratives on Institutional Practices and Societal Perceptions

Steurer and Smith (2022) evaluated reintegration outcomes in a longitudinal study across three correctional facilities in the U.S., involving 200 formerly incarcerated individuals who had participated in education programs. The research examined their reintegration into community, family, and employment contexts post-release. Findings indicated that those who engaged in correctional education were more likely to maintain employment, reconnect with families, and avoid reoffending. These findings reinforce

the current study's focus on how ALS prepares PDLs for life beyond incarceration and fosters a renewed sense of direction and social connection.

Additionally, Turner and James (2021) investigated how educational programs in U.K. prisons adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on student persistence. Using surveys and interviews with 80 incarcerated learners and educators, the study documented the emergence of self-organized peer learning groups due to limited access to instructors. The findings highlighted the resilience and agency of learners who maintained progress through mutual support. This resonates with the ALS experience in Philippine jails during crises, validating the role of learner-led cooperation in sustaining educational engagement, an important aspect of the success stories being explored in this dissertation.

Emerging literature highlights how digital platforms and technological tools have reshaped correctional education, especially under restrictive conditions. Knight and Vanek (2022) explored the implications of digital equity in correctional education through a case study of three North American prisons. Using interviews and content analysis with 45 incarcerated learners and facilitators, the study examined barriers and opportunities presented by digital learning environments. Findings showed that access to digital tools enhanced learner autonomy and broadened educational access despite institutional limitations. This study supports the present research's recognition of ALS innovation in Philippine jails, especially during disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, where flexible delivery methods enabled continued learning for PDLs.

OECD (2021) published a policy brief titled "Prison Education and Training in a Digital Age," which synthesized data from multiple OECD countries regarding digital innovations in prison education. Drawing from statistical analysis and comparative case studies, the report emphasized the need for equitable digital infrastructure and teacher training. It concluded that digital readiness in prisons improved continuity of learning and post-release employability. These insights are valuable for the present study as they parallel the ALS system's push for modular and tech-assisted learning in correctional settings, supporting sustained engagement of PDL learners despite technological constraints.

Watts and Ramirez (2021) conducted a qualitative study in a U.S. correctional facility to assess the benefits of personalized learning systems in carceral contexts. Interviews and reflective journaling from 30 incarcerated learners were analyzed to explore the impact of adaptive technologies and learning management systems. Results revealed higher learner motivation, increased confidence, and a deeper sense of agency. This directly relates to the ALS philosophy of learner-centered instruction and supports the dissertation's aim of understanding how tailored educational paths contribute to PDL transformation. Santos and Franklin (2022) investigated ethical concerns in digital learning delivery in a high-security prison in the U.K. Using a qualitative ethics-based framework, they conducted interviews with 20 digital instructors and policymakers to explore privacy, consent, and digital surveillance issues. Findings showed that while digital platforms increased educational access, they also raised concerns around digital justice and learner vulnerability. The study's implications reinforce the importance of ethical sensitivity in ALS digital initiatives, which is essential when capturing and honoring the success narratives of PDLs.

Turner and James (2021) also documented the emergence of blended learning strategies that integrated offline modules with radio, television, and limited internet-based resources. Their findings emphasized flexibility and responsiveness to the diverse learning needs of incarcerated students. This resonates with the ALS strategy of differentiated delivery and strengthens the present study's documentation of how these flexible modalities support resilience, access, and learner transformation.

Munoz and Bailey (2023) explored culturally responsive pedagogy in correctional classrooms in the United States through a qualitative case study involving 25 incarcerated students and their instructors. The study assessed how culturally inclusive instruction influenced identity affirmation and emotional engagement. Findings revealed that culturally anchored lessons empowered learners and increased self-worth. This supports the current research's aim to capture how ALS fosters cultural and personal identity recovery among PDLs.

Bautista and Javier (2023) used a mixed-methods approach involving surveys and interviews with 120 ALS learners and facilitators from three regional jails. The study aimed to determine institutional influences on learner outcomes. Results emphasized the importance of a compassionate and flexible educational environment in improving retention and engagement. These findings support the current study's exploration of external enablers of success. The focus on institutional variables helps contextualize the environment in which success stories unfold. It also highlights the role of supportive relationships, consistent with the present study's objectives.

To add to pedagogical innovations, Salvador and Luna (2021) implemented an experimental study comparing traditional ALS modules with a multimedia-integrated version in a jail setting. Pre- and post-test scores showed that the multimedia group had significantly higher learning gains and reported more interest. This suggests that methodologically responsive teaching can enhance ALS effectiveness, contributing to current pedagogical concerns. The study emphasizes how innovative strategies can improve learning, which resonates with the present research's interest in learner-centered environments. It highlights how flexible tools may contribute to more meaningful narratives of success.

Moreover, several studies addressed social and livelihood development. Ortega (2022) employed thematic analysis in a qualitative study involving 15 PDLs enrolled in ALS livelihood training. Findings highlighted increased self-confidence and readiness to earn post-release. The study contributes to the present research's interest in ALS's impact on practical life skills and aspirations. The inclusion of livelihood outcomes ties directly to future aspirations and reintegration. It shows how ALS nurtures a future-focused mindset among learners.

David and Navarro (2021) used a comparative qualitative design with 10 PDL and 10 non-PDL ALS learners. Their thematic analysis revealed that incarcerated learners displayed more profound emotional attachment to education, often linking learning to redemption and future goals. This validates the heightened transformative context of ALS in correctional settings addressed in this research. The study contributes valuable comparative insights into learner engagement in diverse environments. It supports the idea that incarceration can intensify the emotional and motivational dimensions of education.

Building on the previous findings, Reyes and Alvarez (2022) conducted a qualitative study exploring the narratives of 12 ALS graduates currently reintegrated into their communities. Through narrative interviews and reflective journals, the study revealed that the learners attributed their successful re-entry to the values and skills gained through ALS. This directly informs the present study's interest in long-term impacts and personal transformation. It supports the narrative-based approach of understanding educational impact through personal testimonies.

In terms of instructional innovation, Navarro (2021) focused on the use of digital tools in ALS delivery inside jail classrooms. Through action research involving teachers and 15 PDLs, the study reported that digital modules improved participation and engagement. This is related to the present research's interest in learning experiences and enabling environments. It illustrates how instructional tools contribute to educational success.

Adding a cultural dimension, Morales (2023) conducted an ethnographic study of ALS classes in a provincial jail. By immersing in class sessions over six months, the researcher observed a culture of mutual respect, motivation, and identity rebuilding among learners. The findings provide contextual and cultural depth, aligning well with the narrative objective of the present study. This ethnographic lens contributes to a richer interpretation of learner environments.

Turning to the role of family dynamics, Delos Reyes (2020) surveyed 80 ALS PDL learners and correlated their academic performance with family support. The study found that those with frequent family communication showed higher academic engagement. This underlines external factors contributing to learner success, directly related to the present study's third research question. It emphasizes how relational motivation boosts educational outcomes.

Research Gaps

Based on a review of thirty foreign and thirty local related studies, several research gaps have been identified that this study seeks to address. While many existing studies support the idea that education can help change the lives of people in prison, most of them focus on general outcomes like lower chances of returning to jail, better chances of getting a job, or improved behavior. There is still a lack of studies that explore the real-life stories and experiences of persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) who finished the Alternative Learning System (ALS), particularly within the context of Legazpi City Jail.

Many foreign studies focused on program implementation and delivery systems, including trauma-informed teaching, use of technology, and cultural sensitivity. While these aspects are important, only a limited number of studies explored the personal and emotional changes that learners go through while studying in ALS. In the same way, local studies often look at how ALS is delivered, how classrooms are managed, or the challenges faced by teachers, instead of focusing on how learning changes the way PDLs see themselves and their future. There is also limited understanding of how Persons Deprived of Liberty see education as a chance to start over, heal emotionally, and prepare for life outside facility.

This study addressed these gaps by using a qualitative-descriptive method and narrative inquiry. By focusing on the stories of ALS completers in jail, the study aims to better understand how ALS helps change lives and to provide insights that can guide more caring and effective education programs in correctional facilities in the Philippines.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter presents the method design and procedures that the researchers will use in gathering data and collecting the needed data and information for the study. This chapter includes the methodology, participants, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive research design, specifically utilizing narrative inquiry as its primary approach. A qualitative-descriptive design is appropriate for exploring lived experiences and personal meanings from the perspective of individuals, especially when the goal is to examine complex social and personal phenomena such as identity, transformation, and success. This method allowed the researcher to collect in-depth descriptions of the participants' educational journeys within a correctional context.

Narrative inquiry, a form of qualitative research that centers on storytelling, is selected to deeply examine the personal success narratives of PDL. It enabled the researcher to gather meaningful accounts that reflect

the learners' experiences before, during, and after they engaged with the ALS program. Through this design, the study focuses not only on life events but also on how participants interpreted and gave meaning to those experiences.

The output of this study is a testimonial book that may serve as a meaningful document of the lived experiences of PDLs. It serves as a permanent record and raise public awareness of PDL's personal journeys, challenges, and successes.

The Participants

This study was conducted at the Legazpi City Jail, where the Alternative Learning System (ALS) is actively implemented to support the education of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL). The correctional setting is chosen for its active ALS program, providing a relevant and focused site for exploring the educational narratives of PDL learners.

There is a total of twenty (20) participants in the study, fifteen (15) are males and five (5) are females. The participants are selected using purposive sampling, a non-probability technique commonly employed in qualitative research. This method is chosen to ensure the inclusion of participants who can provide rich, detailed, and relevant insights, specifically, Persons Deprived of Liberty who have completed the ALS Junior High School inside the facility and are presently enrolled in the ALS Senior High School program, who can meaningfully reflect on their educational experiences and transformations. Participants were selected based on specific criteria, including their willingness to share personal educational experiences and their ability to articulate reflections on transformation and learning.

Table 1: Participants

Gender	Number
Male	15
Female	5
Total	20

Research Instrument

The study utilized focus group discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews as primary research instruments to gather in-depth qualitative data. The FGDs were conducted to explore shared experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of participants toward the Alternative Learning System.

Data Collection Procedure

The primary method of data collection was Focused Group Discussions (FGDs), using a structured guide tailored to address the five main research questions. Only one FGD session was conducted, involving participants who are still PDL. However, if any of the participants are not willing to participate during FGD, the researcher will conduct one-on-one interviews using the same set of guiding questions to ensure consistency in data collection.

Before conducting the FGD or interviews, the researcher sought formal approval from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and any other concerned institutions. All ethical protocols were strictly followed, including obtaining informed consent from each participant. Any personal or sensitive information disclosed were securely stored and not shared with anyone.

The guide includes reflective questions that explored the participants' lives before ALS, the challenges they face, their motivations, personal growth, and how their learning influenced their future goals.

Participants were also encouraged to reflect on how their stories may shape public and institutional perceptions.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis were used to examine the narrative data that were collected from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This method involved identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns or themes across the participants' shared experiences. The researcher carefully reviewed the transcripts to become familiar with the data and to code significant statements. These codes were categorized into broader themes that reflect the participants' perspectives, personal growth, and learning journeys. Thematic analysis is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to understand and interpret complex personal stories concerning the research questions.

The study employed thematic analysis to examine narrative data collected from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with persons deprived of liberty (PDL) enrolled in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). This qualitative method involved identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns or themes across participants' shared experiences. The researcher began by thoroughly reviewing the transcribed discussions to gain familiarity with the data.

In vivo coding was used during the initial coding phase to capture participants' exact words and expressions, preserving the authenticity and emotional depth of their narratives. These codes were then grouped into broader categories and refined into overarching themes that reflected the participants' perspectives, personal growth, and educational journeys.

Thematic analysis was particularly suited to this study as it allowed for a nuanced understanding of complex, lived experiences and supports the exploration of identity reconstruction, motivation, and transformation through ALS. The combination of thematic and in vivo coding ensured that the analysis remains grounded in the voices of the participants, enhancing the credibility and richness of the findings.

Research Ethics

To uphold the integrity and ethical rigor of this study, comprehensive measures were implemented throughout the research process, particularly during data collection and analysis. These measures were grounded in the principles of confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity, and adherence to ethical standards, ensuring the protection and dignity of all participants—persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) engaged in the Alternative Learning System (ALS).

Ethical clearance was sought from relevant authorities, including the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and the Department of Education (DepEd), to guarantee that the study complied with institutional and legal guidelines.

Confidentiality and Data Security

Confidentiality was strictly maintained through secure data management protocols. All interviews were conducted in private, controlled settings to prevent unauthorized access. Audio recordings, transcripts, and survey responses were stored in encrypted digital formats on password-protected devices and were deleted or destroyed after the completion of the study in accordance with data protection policies to ensure continued confidentiality.

Only the principal investigator had access to these files. No third party was allowed to view, analyze, or disseminate the data without explicit written authorization. These safeguards are designed to protect the privacy of participants and ensure that sensitive information remains secured throughout the research lifecycle.

Informed Consent

Prior to participation, everyone was fully informed about the study and expected benefits were clearly explained in a language they fully understand, the purpose, methodology, potential risks, and their rights as research participants. This includes the right to refuse participation or withdraw at any time without penalty. A detailed informed consent form was provided and signed voluntarily. The consent process was documented and securely archived as part of the study's ethical compliance.

Anonymity and Participant Protection

To preserve anonymity, all participants were assigned coded identifiers in place of personal names. These codes were consistently used across all data sets, including transcripts, survey responses, and analytical reports. Any personally identifiable information was excluded during transcription and data processing to prevent traceability. This approach ensured that individual identities remain protected and unlinked to specific narratives.

Ethical Oversight and Cultural Sensitivity

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional and national ethical guidelines governing research involving human subjects. Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) or ethics committee before data collection. The researcher took proactive steps to minimize any physical, psychological, or social risks to participants. All interactions were guided by professionalism, respect, and cultural sensitivity, particularly considering the unique vulnerabilities of PDLs. The dignity, autonomy, and well-being of each participant were prioritized at every stage of the research.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered through the chosen qualitative approach. The Participants' responses are carefully examined and organized into themes encapsulating their shared meanings and unique experiences. Verbatim quotations are presented to ensure that the participants' voices remain authentic, giving depth and credibility to the findings.

The ALS learners' turning points within correctional institutions, presented in cohesive paragraph form per theme and incorporating their verbatim reflections:

Personal Growth and Transformation

For many ALS learners, the journey marked a profound shift in their personal development and outlook on life. **Participant 1** shared that his turning point came when he *"made himself comfortable and grew personally and changed positively."* This sentiment of inner transformation was echoed by **Participant 7**, who saw his ALS experience as *"a way toward change once he is released from the facility."* Similarly, **Participant 8** found *"hope, a reason to change his life outside the jail facility, and something he can be proud of."* **Participant 13** described how *"immersion made him change, because he was motivated again to work,"* while **Participant 14** viewed ALS as *"his way to have the opportunities to change and seek a good job."* Despite initial challenges, **Participant 17** remained hopeful and *"felt fulfilled."* These reflections highlight how ALS fosters not just academic learning, but deep personal renewal and a readiness to embrace change.

Academic Achievement and Educational Milestones

A powerful theme among the participants was the pride and motivation drawn from educational accomplishments. **Participant 5** described his turning point as *"completing JHS and deciding to continue"*

his studies in Senior High School." This milestone was similarly transformative for **Participant 9**, who noted, *"My turning point was when I completed the Junior High School program."* **Participant 10** shared the pride he felt when he *"received his certificate of completion,"* emphasizing that he *"did not waste the opportunity to finish his studies."* **Participant 12** expressed that completing Junior High School gave him *"a wonderful feeling that he could truly be proud of."* **Participants 16 and 18** both emphasized that *"graduating from Junior High School inside the facility"* was a defining moment in their lives. These narratives underscore how academic success within correctional settings can reignite self-worth and open doors to future aspirations.

Inspiration and Motivation

Several learners found their turning points through sources of inspiration and renewed ambition. **Participant 2** shared that ALS taught him *"not just to dream, but to dream bigger—dreams that will never disappear because of the ambitions he wants to achieve."* **Participant 6** was deeply moved by the determination of her peers, stating, *"Seeing my fellow PDLs who are even older than me still eager to learn and study truly inspired me."* For **Participant 15**, family served as a powerful motivator, as he remarked, *"My family was my inspiration to continue my studies."* Meanwhile, **Participants 19 and 20** found hope on their very first day of classes, revealing that it *"gave them hope to continue their studies and completely change their life."* These reflections show how ALS not only educates but also uplifts, encouraging learners to envision a better future.

Skill Sharing and Creative Expression

Beyond academics, ALS provided a space for learners to express themselves and build meaningful connections. **Participant 3** felt a turning point when he *"shared his skills and knowledge in drawing,"* finding value in his creative contributions. **Participant 4** described a sense of unity, explaining that he *"shared and felt united as one family with the other PDLs."* For **Participant 11**, the most memorable experience was during *"group activities and bonding moments with her classmates,"* which fostered a sense of belonging and camaraderie. These stories illustrate how ALS nurtures not only intellectual growth but also emotional and social development, helping learners rediscover their talents and connect with others.

The challenges faced by ALS learners within correctional institutions, presented in paragraph form per theme and incorporating their verbatim reflections:

Adjustment to Learning Environment and Study Habits

Several participants struggled with adapting to the learning environment inside the correctional facility. **Participant 1** expressed that he *"was not yet used to study inside the facility,"* but he overcame this discomfort through acceptance. **Participant 11** highlighted that on her first day, she found it difficult to *"recall what to do, since it had been a long time since she last attended school,"* but with the help of ALS teachers, she gradually relearned and understood everything again. **Participant 12** also noted that *"it was difficult at first,"* but with *"time and patience,"* she eventually adjusted. These reflections show that while the initial transition into ALS was challenging, persistence and support helped learners adapt.

Age and Time-Related Challenges

Age and the perception of being "too late" to study were recurring concerns. **Participant 5** stated that *"his age made it challenge because he felt that time had already passed him by."* Similarly, **Participant 6** cited that *"her age made her afraid of being discriminated,"* but she overcame this fear with the help of classmates and mentors who helped her build confidence. **Participant 10** explained that *"his age was his challenge,"* but he overcame it by believing that *"education has no age limit and recognizes no*

boundaries." **Participant 14** also felt "he had already been left behind," but with the encouragement of classmates and teachers, he realized "it is never too late to learn." These narratives reflect how ALS empowers learners to overcome age-related insecurities and embrace lifelong learning.

Emotional and Psychological Struggles

Emotional burdens and psychological doubts were significant barriers for some learners. **Participant 2** shared that he "felt like quitting, thinking, what is the use of a diploma if he will be incarcerated for life?" But with the support of fellow PDLs, he was motivated to "build a dream—not just for him, but also for his family." **Participant 8** affirmed that "there are times when he feels discouraged," but he keeps trying because "he knows he has nothing to lose." **Participant 15** emphasized that he was "worrying about how he can be dismissed from his case," and by focusing on his studies, he was able to "temporarily forget his problems and move forward." **Participant 17** admitted that she faced "family problems and life inside while studying," but overcame them with the help of her co-PDLs. These stories reveal how ALS serves as a refuge and a source of hope amid personal turmoil.

Time Management and Scheduling Conflicts

Balancing ALS with other responsibilities posed logistical challenges. **Participant 3** revealed that "the class schedule was a challenge because it conflicted with work hours." **Participant 18** believed that "handling the many subjects taught by the teachers was his challenge," but he overcame it through their help and the support of his classmates. These accounts highlight the importance of flexibility and peer support in managing academic demands.

Social Integration and Peer Relationships

Some learners faced difficulties in social interaction and building relationships. **Participant 13** shared that "the challenge he faces is interacting with new people, such as learning how to get along with them." This reflects the emotional complexity of learning in a communal yet restrictive environment, where social bonds can be both healing and difficult to form.

Institutional and Environmental Barriers

The reality of PDL itself was a major challenge for some. **Participant 16** added that "his greatest challenge was being incarcerated," but he overcame it with "the support of the teachers who guided them and the love of his family." **Participants 7, 19, and 20** mentioned that "at first, it was quite difficult," but with "the guidance and support of our teachers," they slowly overcame the struggles of being ALS learners. These reflections underscore the critical role of educators and family in helping learners rise above the constraints of their environment.

Participants' reflections on how their perception of education changed through ALS, and the milestones they consider significant in their learning journey

Changing Perceptions of Education

For many ALS learners, education evolved from being a distant or undervalued concept into a powerful source of hope and transformation. **Participants 1, 8, and 16** shared a profound realization: "Education is very important even if we are facing problems, because education is the only thing we have that no one can take away from us." This recognition of education's enduring value became a cornerstone of their personal growth. Meanwhile, **Participants 2, 4, 6, 12, 14, 15, 19, and 20** described how their initial mindset was clouded by negativity. They admitted that "at first, their mind was filled with negativity," but ALS "taught them to feel alive again." Through the program, they learned "many valuable lessons in life." They shifted from being content with stagnation to striving to become "a better person—a new version of themselves, guided by clear thinking, filled with dreams, and, most importantly, a positive outlook on life."

Others, like **Participants 3, 5, 7, 9, 17, and 18**, recalled their hesitation to attend classes. However, witnessing *"the perseverance of the teachers and determination of their classmates,"* they were inspired to continue and complete their studies with the support of ALS and BJMP personnel. **Participant 10** reflected deeply on his journey, stating that his view of education changed as he progressed. He realized its true value *"not only for himself, but also something he can share with others, especially with his children."* **Participant 11** exclaimed that ALS brought *"great changes within herself,"* helping her become *"more diligent, patient, and determined to finish her studies."* Lastly, **Participant 13** articulated a personal awakening: *"By accepting myself, I realized that there is still so much I need to learn about education."* These reflections collectively illustrate how ALS reshaped learners' understanding of education—from a distant goal to a deeply personal and transformative journey.

Milestones and Accomplishments

The learners identified a range of accomplishments that marked significant milestones in their ALS journey. For **Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 20**, completing Junior High School, passing Grade 11, and attending skills training were proud achievements. They expressed hope that *"it would not end there,"* and shared that their *"children, family, and friends were their inspiration and would be proud of them."* These academic milestones were not just certificates—they symbolized resilience, progress, and a renewed sense of purpose.

On the other hand, **Participants 4, 6, 9, 11, 15, and 19** highlighted accomplishments that extended beyond academics. They found fulfillment in *"helping others by guiding them,"* gaining practical knowledge about *"business and work,"* and learning to *"know their strengths and weaknesses."* Some celebrated being *"free from danger,"* while others cherished the development of *"self-confidence and the fulfillment of dreams."* These achievements reflect how ALS nurtures holistic growth—empowering learners not only to succeed in school but also to thrive in life.

The Participants' Proposed Chapter Titles for their ALS Experiences

Hope and New Beginnings

Many participants viewed ALS as a gateway to renewal, hope, and transformation. **Participant 2** titled his chapter *"A PDL Becomes Successful by the Help of ALS in a Correctional Institution,"* emphasizing that *"this is not the end here inside the facility; instead, it's the beginning."* **Participant 3** chose *"A Journey Before Dawn,"* reflecting how he *"almost gave up, but ALS changed his path."* **Participant 7** named his chapter *"Pag-asa,"* believing that *"problems will never die, but if we have hope, we can survive."* Similarly, **Participant 16** offered *"Pag-asa sa Loob ng Piitan,"* recognizing that *"even though he was in the facility, he could still study through ALS."* **Participant 18** simply called his chapter *"Hope,"* affirming that *"despite hardship, do not give up, stay strong, work hard, and persevere to graduate."* **Participant 19** chose *"New Doors,"* explaining that *"ALS helps him to open a new door to finish his studies and achieve his goal in life."* These titles reflect the emotional rebirth and optimism that ALS instilled in learners.

Education as Empowerment

For others, education itself became the central theme of their chapter—an empowering force that reshaped their lives. **Participant 8** titled his chapter *"Edukasyon ang Susi ng Tagumpay,"* declaring that *"education is the main source of gaining more knowledge."* **Participant 10** chose *"Education Behind Bars,"* highlighting that *"even though he was inside the facility, there are people who are willing to help him to continue his education."* **Participant 14** named his chapter *"Ang Kahalagahan ng Edukasyon,"* because he believes *"education is the way to a good future."* **Participant 20** echoed this with *"Susi,"* stating that

“education is the key to success and the main source to strengthen knowledge and skills to have a better life.” These titles underscore how ALS redefined education as a tool for liberation and self-improvement.

Change, Growth, and Perseverance

Transformation and resilience were recurring motifs. **Participant 4** titled his chapter *“Ang Pagbabago,”* explaining that *“this is the only permanent thing in the world.”* **Participant 11** similarly chose *“Sa Pagbabago,”* sharing that *“with the help of ALS, there were big changes in his life. He found the right direction.”* **Participant 12** named his chapter *“Tiyaga,”* because he *“completed Junior High School through perseverance.”* **Participant 9** selected *“Sikap,”* saying that *“despite the hardships and pain, I did not give up. I stayed strong and worked hard to finish my studies.”* **Participant 15** reflected on his struggles with the title *“Pagsubok,”* noting that *“through his studies, he can find answers to his questions.”* These titles reveal how ALS helped learners confront adversity and emerge stronger.

Personal Journeys and Self-Discovery

Some participants focused on their individual paths and inner growth. **Participant 1** chose *“Libang,”* describing ALS as *“a recreation that helps him lessen the burdens of thinking about the outside world.”* **Participant 5** titled his chapter *“Pain and Sweet Journey,”* calling it *“the life story of his education.”* **Participant 6** offered *“Me and My Journey,”* saying that *“ALS is her stepping stone to have a better life in the future.”* **Participant 13** named his chapter *“Ang Una at Simula,”* believing that *“he can still change his life, and through ALS, he can start again.”* **Participant 17** chose *“Higit na Ako,”* expressing his desire to *“see himself in the future as the best person.”* These titles reflect the deeply personal nature of the ALS experience—one of reflection, healing, and self-discovery.

I. How Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) describe the role of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in fostering self-worth, purpose, and future aspirations

Rediscovering Purpose and Direction

ALS has served as a compass for many PDLs, helping them navigate toward a renewed sense of purpose and personal transformation. **Participant 1** shared that ALS *“gave direction to his life toward true change,”* while **Participant 2** emphasized that ALS is *“not just about schooling... it helped him become a new version of himself, a better person,”* and he was happy with the changes unfolding in his life. **Participant 14** echoed this sentiment, stating that *“it is not yet too late,”* and through ALS, he realized he could *“start again toward change.”* **Participant 15** reflected that ALS helped him gain *“a new perspective,”* leading to a decision *“not to repeat the reason for his imprisonment.”* These narratives reveal how ALS reignites hope and offers a path toward redemption and growth.

Strengthening Knowledge and Skills

For many, ALS was a gateway to learning that extended far beyond basic literacy. **Participant 5** noted that he learned more *“because of the lessons and knowledge shared by the teachers,”* while **Participant 12** proudly mentioned that she learned *“how to read and write legibly.”* **Participant 13** discovered that *“he still has a skill to be developed,”* and **Participant 17** shared that ALS *“improved her ideas and knowledge,”* which she now knows how to apply for the future. **Participant 18** appreciated the *“learning sessions conducted by the teachers,”* which helped her grow intellectually. These reflections show how ALS empowers learners with practical skills and renewed intellectual confidence.

Building Self-Worth and Confidence

ALS also played a vital role in helping PDLs rebuild their self-esteem and interpersonal skills. **Participant 11** explained that she *“discovered her self-confidence and how to deal with other people without doubt in herself,”* while **Participant 16** affirmed that he *“developed self-confidence through interaction with others*

and learned how to listen attentively to the teachers." **Participant 4** noted that ALS taught him "how to deal with other people and become a good person." These stories highlight how education within correctional settings can foster emotional healing and social reintegration.

Motivation and Perseverance

The encouragement and dedication of ALS teachers were instrumental in motivating learners to persevere. **Participant 3** admitted that "because of the effort exerted by the teachers, he was forced to attend sessions so that he would not waste his time." **Participant 7** emphasized that ALS helped him "persevere and attain his sense of purpose," and **Participant 9** believed that ALS helped him "a lot because of the effort and sacrifices of the teachers." **Participant 10** observed that ALS "reopened his memory, guiding him toward change and helping him achieve the hope to finish his study." These accounts reflect how the human connection within ALS—through teachers and mentors—can reignite motivation and resilience.

Aspirations for a Better Future

ALS inspired many PDLs to envision a brighter future beyond incarceration. **Participant 6** shared that ALS showed her "nothing is impossible for a person who has the determination to learn." **Participant 8** revealed that his strengthened knowledge could be used "to share with friends and seek employment for his children and family." **Participant 19** exclaimed that ALS "changed his goal to finish his studies to have a decent and better life," and **Participant 20** articulated that through ALS, "he was hoping for a change in life." These reflections underscore how ALS not only educates but also empowers learners to dream again—with purpose and direction.

Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) describe the impact of ALS on their self-perception and the emergence of new dreams and goals

Transformation of Self-Perception

ALS has profoundly reshaped how PDLs view themselves, instilling discipline, confidence, and a renewed sense of identity. **Participant 1** shared that he now sees himself as "a disciplined person who has respect for others." **Participant 2** reflected on his transformation, recalling that he once believed "PDLs had no hope and didn't care about each other," but through ALS, he discovered ambition and pride in working alongside others. **Participant 3** noted that his commitment to learning earned admiration from employees, and he became "a good influence to others."

Participants 4, 6, 12, and 13 expressed that ALS helped them become "better people, more confident, and capable of creating ambitions for the future," even uplifting their lives through legal business opportunities. **Participant 5** observed that despite his age, he now sees himself as "a good person who can still study and learn." **Participant 7** shared that ALS affected her personally, especially during learning sessions, as she "cannot read without eyeglasses," yet she persisted. **Participant 8** disclosed that ALS gave him "the courage to finish his study while inside the jail."

Participants 9, 10, 11, 14, 18, and 19 expressed a sense of comfort and pride, saying they "had learned a lot, strengthened their knowledge, and developed skills they could carry for a lifetime." **Participant 15** emphasized that ALS developed his "decision-making skills and helped him become a good person to others." **Participant 16** conveyed that ALS gave him "hope and strengthened his knowledge inside the facility." **Participant 17** admitted that she once only cared about being released, but later realized "studying inside was better." Lastly, **Participant 20** confessed that ALS helped him "temporarily forget his committed case," allowing him to focus on growth.

Emerging Dreams and Aspirations

ALS has sparked a wide range of dreams and goals among PDLs, many of which center on education,

family, and future livelihoods. **Participant 1** dreams of becoming *"a good father to his kids and making up for the lost time,"* as well as honoring those who supported him. **Participant 2** found *"strength and determination to pursue the future he wanted through perseverance,"* despite being incarcerated. **Participant 3** aspires to *"fulfill the dreams of his father."*

Participant 4 hopes to *"become a good person and help others,"* while **Participant 5** dreams of *"finishing Senior High School and continuing his studies outside the facility."* **Participant 6** aims to live *"a lawfully positive life and fulfill her dreams."* **Participants 7, 11, 13, and 16** articulated their desire to *"apply what they learned in Home Economics and manage or own a business."*

Participant 8 revealed his goal to *"graduate and advocate that being a PDL is not a hindrance to finishing studies."* **Participants 9 and 10** simply wish to *"finish their studies,"* while **Participant 12** expressed that she *"learned how to have dreams or goals in life."* **Participants 14 and 20** aspire to *"finish their studies and seek a good, stable job for their future wife and kids."* **Participant 15** dreams of *"finishing his studies to help and make it up to his family."* **Participant 17** shared that ALS expanded her vision—*"before, she thought a simple job was enough, but now she dreams of a high-quality life."* **Participants 18 and 19** emphasized their goal to *"finish their studies and find good employment."*

Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) describe the impact of their participation in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) on how others perceive them

Recognition of Personal Transformation

Many PDLs shared that ALS helped shift public perception, allowing others to see them as individuals capable of change and growth. **Participant 1** lamented that *"people change the way they look at the PDLs—that we are ready to transform ourselves through ALS."* **Participant 2** disclosed that his *"enthusiasm to finish his studies and get a diploma"* earned him respect, saying *"people will salute him because, despite being a PDL, he can still finish and start over outside the facility."* **Participant 3** joyfully recounted that others told him, *"Iyo na iyan an poon kang pagbabago mo sa buhay,"* affirming that people now see him as someone on the path to transformation. **Participant 14** observed that *"despite all that happened, people saw him as someone who never lost hope of starting a new life."* **Participant 16** shared that *"people salute them because, despite being incarcerated, they still have hope to change their lives."*

Becoming a Role Model and Source of Inspiration

Several participants expressed pride in becoming role models within and beyond the facility. **Participant 5** confessed that he became *"a model to his co-PDLs and the outside community,"* especially because *"despite his age, he continues to study and gain a diploma."* **Participants 8 and 10** exclaimed that they now feel proud and *"like models,"* proving that *"being a PDL is not a hindrance to finishing their studies."* **Participant 20** conveyed that he *"became an inspiration to other PDLs,"* while **Participant 13** emphasized that *"his co-PDLs were very happy for him."* These reflections show how ALS empowers learners to lead by example and uplift others through their commitment.

Improved Social Perception and Respect

ALS also helped PDLs gain respect and acceptance from others. **Participants 9 and 18** narrated that *"people will not insult them anymore because they are now educated too, like them."* **Participant 11** stated that people now see her as *"a responsible and resilient person in life."* **Participant 15** shared that he is now *"seen in a better light, especially by his co-PDLs and his family."* **Participant 19** commented that others now view him as *"a decent and good person."* These stories reflect how education can dismantle stigma and rebuild dignity.

Personal Growth Reflected in Relationships

Some participants described how their internal growth through ALS positively influenced how they relate to others. **Participant 4** remarked that *"he was able to be a good person to others by being good to himself."* **Participant 6** articulated that people would be proud of her, saying *"they won't see her as a bad person because she is a PDL; rather, they would see her as a truly reformed PDL."* **Participant 7** noted that *"age does not define learning,"* and that *"education in itself is a form of success."* **Participant 12** cited that ALS helped her *"learn more about society,"* enhancing her understanding of the world around her. **Participant 17** narrated that *"they were always excited, especially every Tuesday,"* because it meant reconnecting with classmates—highlighting how ALS fostered community and belonging.

Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) would speak to their younger selves before joining the Alternative Learning System (ALS), reflecting on growth, regret, and newfound purpose Messages of Growth, Redemption, and Gratitude

Many participants would speak to their younger selves with a sense of gratitude and pride for the transformation they've undergone. **Participant 6** thanked himself *"for allowing him to be a better version of himself,"* while **Participant 7** expressed appreciation for *"continuing his studies and learning a lot from ALS."* **Participant 10** admitted he would say, *"Here I am today owning something precious,"* acknowledging the value of his educational journey. **Participant 11** would affirm to his younger self that he is now *"changed from a worse to a better person."* **Participant 15** reflected, *"This is me, who once fell to the ground, but is now ready to change and do good things for others."* These reflections show how ALS has helped learners reclaim their dignity and embrace personal growth.

Encouragement to Pursue Education and Dreams

A strong theme among the responses was the encouragement to pursue education early and wholeheartedly. **Participant 1** would advise his younger self to *"become a good person and listen to and respect your parents' advice."* **Participant 2** would urge him to *"never stop trying to become what you want in the future, have courage, and never be ashamed of doing what is right... Dream and dreams."* **Participants 3, 5, and 9** would remind themselves to *"never lose self-confidence and hope,"* believing that *"every problem has a solution."* **Participant 12** would simply advise, *"Continue studying for your future."* **Participant 13** would tell himself that *"education is your weapon against any challenges you are facing."* **Participants 14, 16, 18, and 19** would mentor themselves to *"finish studies because this is the pathway to a good future."* These messages reflect the deep appreciation for education that emerged through ALS.

Reflections of Regret and Realization

Some participants expressed regret and wished they had made better choices earlier in life. **Participant 4** commented, *"I wish you had just been good before, so maybe you wouldn't have turned bad now."* **Participant 8** told himself, *"If you were to pursue and finish your studies first, maybe you are now a successful person rather than staying in jail."* **Participant 20** asked forgiveness from his younger self, lamenting that *"even a simple dream he couldn't achieve."* These reflections are raw and honest, revealing the emotional weight of missed opportunities and the desire to rewrite the past.

Surprise at Personal Transformation

A few participants expressed astonishment at how far they've come. **Participant 17** imagined asking himself, *"Are you okay?"*—surprised that *"a person who was always cutting classes is now changed and always present."* He acknowledged that *"staying in jail may be the reason for the change to better."* This sense of disbelief underscores the dramatic shift in mindset and behavior that ALS has inspired.

The internal factors—personal qualities and habits—that contributed to the academic and personal success of ALS learners behind bars

Resilience and Perseverance

A strong theme among ALS learners is the power of perseverance in the face of adversity. **Participant 5** highlighted that *"perseverance and determination were the keys to his success in ALS,"* while **Participants 8, 10, and 16** echoed that *"dedication, patience, perseverance, and courage to face challenges"* helped them thrive. **Participant 14** conveyed that *"facing challenges bravely and never losing hope"* was essential to achieving his goals. These reflections show that resilience is not just a trait—it's a lifeline for incarcerated learners striving to reclaim their futures.

Patience, Humility, and Acceptance

Many learners emphasized the importance of patience and humility in their journey. **Participant 1** shared that *"accepting one's wrongdoings and always being patient"* helped him succeed. **Participants 3 and 19** revealed that *"self-discipline and patience"* were crucial to their progress. **Participant 6** added that being *"patient, down-to-earth, confident, and always positive in life"* made her succeed. **Participant 12** affirmed that *"being patient, humble, having self-respect, and love for others"* were her keys to success. **Participant 17** reflected that *"humility and acceptance"* were the qualities that carried her through. These insights reveal how emotional maturity and self-awareness are foundational to personal transformation.

Self-Discipline and Focus

Self-discipline emerged as a defining trait among successful ALS learners. **Participant 15** noted that *"self-discipline, respecting others, and being humble and forgiving"* were his guiding principles. **Participant 13** remarked that *"understanding different situations and thinking carefully before making decisions"* helped him reach his goals. **Participant 20** emphasized that *"being a good listener and always attending class sessions"* contributed to his success. These habits reflect a deep commitment to learning and personal accountability.

Kindness, Positivity, and Social Awareness

Some learners found success through kindness and positive engagement with others. **Participant 4** mentioned that *"being a good person to others"* was key to his success. **Participant 11** believed that *"being obedient, observant, kind, a good listener, and diligent in studying"* were her weapons for success. **Participant 18** cited that joining ALS marked the moment she *"changed her attitude and behavior,"* signaling a shift toward personal growth and social awareness. These qualities foster a supportive learning environment and strengthen community bonds within the facility.

Courage, Confidence, and Eagerness to Learn

Courage and a thirst for knowledge were also vital. **Participant 2** explained that *"being brave and having eagerness to succeed"* helped him achieve his goals. **Participant 7** expressed that *"being gentle and studying hard"* made him successful. These reflections show that even in confinement, learners can cultivate boldness and curiosity—qualities that fuel lifelong learning. These internal factors—resilience, humility, discipline, kindness, and courage—form the backbone of success for ALS learners behind bars.

The internal and external factors that contributed to the academic and personal achievement of ALS learners behind bars, focusing on their sources of support and the influence of ALS facilitators

Sources of Support and Motivation

ALS learners behind bars found strength and motivation from deeply personal and relational sources. **Participant 1** expressed that *"his faith in God strengthens his determination and gives him hope to succeed,"* showing how spiritual grounding can be a powerful internal motivator. **Participant 2** drew

inspiration from *"his own struggles and life experiences,"* using them as *"stepping stones to keep moving forward."* For **Participants 3 and 4**, it was the *"encouragement and dedication of ALS teachers"* that inspired them to persevere and not give up on their studies.

The most consistent and heartfelt source of motivation came from family. **Participants 5 through 20** unanimously shared that *"their families—especially their children, parents, siblings—served as their greatest motivation to continue their education in ALS."* These relationships provided emotional fuel, reminding learners of the people they want to make proud and the lives they hope to rebuild. Whether it was the dream of becoming a better parent, sibling, or child, family stood as a beacon of hope and purpose throughout their ALS journey.

Impact of ALS Facilitators on Learning Growth

ALS facilitators played a transformative role in the educational journey of PDLs, offering not just instruction but compassion, patience, and unwavering support. **Participant 1** expressed gratitude for *"the effort and kindness of the teachers,"* while **Participant 2** shared that *"teachers motivated him to finish education despite problems."* **Participant 3** described them as *"his support to persevere in studying,"* and **Participant 4** noted that *"teachers guided them to become good learners."*

Participant 5 lamented that *"teachers gave him proper guidance for self-improvement,"* and **Participant 6** stated that they *"inspired patience, hope, and a sense of belonging."* **Participant 7** narrated how *"teachers' perseverance helped them learn and grow,"* and **Participant 8** remarked that they *"helped him expand and refresh knowledge."* **Participants 9, 10, 12, 13, 19, and 20** emphasized that ALS teachers *"helped them share, broaden, and gain a lot of knowledge, providing additional learning."*

Participant 11 exclaimed that *"teachers guided them and corrected mistakes,"* while **Participant 14** articulated that *"teachers taught them and served as an inspiration."* **Participant 15** confessed that they *"helped broaden understanding and decision-making,"* and **Participant 16** beautifully shared that *"teachers brought them hope and love, even though they are PDLs."* **Participant 17** disclosed that *"the teachers' efforts were very helpful,"* and appreciated their *"patience to come and teach despite the circumstances."*

These reflections reveal that ALS facilitators are more than educators—they are mentors, motivators, and lifelines. Their presence affirms the humanity of learners and reinforces the belief that education can thrive even in the most challenging environments.

The role of the learning environment inside the correctional facility in shaping their success

A Conducive and Supportive Learning Space

Many participants emphasized that the physical and emotional atmosphere within the facility played a vital role in their academic and personal growth. **Participants 3 and 5** remarked that *"the facility has a conducive environment,"* which *"inspired them to determine their life."* **Participant 13** affirmed that *"the facility was good enough and made him comfortable studying,"* while **Participant 12** and **Participants 14, 18, and 20** highlighted that *"the clean and orderly environment inspired them to pursue their studies."* These reflections show that a well-maintained and structured space fosters focus, dignity, and motivation among learners.

Guidance from BJMP Personnel and ALS Facilitators

The presence and dedication of BJMP personnel and ALS teachers were repeatedly cited as transformative. **Participant 1** thanked *"Legazpi City Jail for making the facility a place for change and correcting wrongdoings,"* while **Participant 2** acknowledged that *"BJMP personnel perform their mission to reform and prepare PDLs for life outside."* **Participants 9 and 16** credited their success to *"the guidance of BJMP"*

personnel," and **Participant 4** disclosed that *"the good attitude and characteristics of ALS teachers made the environment conducive."* **Participant 6** beautifully narrated that *"the facility is composed of personnel with a mission and vision to change PDL lives and build a safer nation."* These insights reflect how institutional support creates a nurturing and rehabilitative space for learning.

Peer Support and Positive Social Dynamics

Support from fellow PDLs also contributed to a motivating environment. **Participant 10** admitted that *"because of the help of his mates, he was motivated to succeed,"* and **Participant 11** added that *"with the help of ALS, he learned more."* **Participant 7** shared that *"being a positive person, respecting others, and following rules and regulations inside the facility helped him succeed."* These reflections highlight the importance of community, mutual respect, and shared goals in fostering a productive learning culture.

Structure, Discipline, and Personal Reflection

The structured nature of the facility itself was seen as a catalyst for discipline and change. **Participant 17** mentioned that *"being inside the facility was helpful because they are obliged to follow rules and regulations,"* which instilled discipline. **Participant 15** affirmed that *"the activities given to them made the environment helpful,"* while **Participant 8** promised himself that *"his journey would not end inside the facility; instead, it would be the reason for him to pursue life."* **Participant 19** highlighted that *"his perseverance within the facility helped him change and inspire others."* These reflections show how the environment not only supports learning but also encourages introspection and personal transformation.

The external factors that made a significant difference in the learning journey of ALS learners behind bars

Institutional Support and Rehabilitation Programs

Many participants credited the programs and personnel within the correctional facility as pivotal to their success. **Participant 1** highlighted the *"Livelihood program of BJMP,"* saying it was *"a big help for him to survive inside the facility and finish his studies."* **Participant 2** shared that *"BJMP programs helped them develop self-confidence and the courage to change their lives."* **Participants 3, 4, 6, 12, 17, 19, and 20** emphasized that *"the support of their teachers, BJMP personnel, and co-PDLs made a huge difference in their learning."* These reflections underscore how a rehabilitative and supportive institutional environment can empower incarcerated learners to pursue education and personal growth.

Learning Materials and Tools

For some, access to educational resources was transformative. **Participants 8, 13, and 14** cited that *"books, paper, pencil, and laptop or computer made them different,"* highlighting the importance of tangible learning tools in fostering engagement and intellectual development. These basic yet powerful resources helped bridge the gap between confinement and opportunity.

Family as a Source of Strength

Family remained a central pillar of motivation and emotional support. **Participants 9, 10, 16, and 18** explained that *"it is their family"* who made the biggest difference in their learning journey. Whether through encouragement, emotional connection, or the desire to make loved ones proud, family served as a constant reminder of what they were striving for.

Spiritual Anchors and Personal Inspirations

Spirituality and admiration also played a role in shaping learners' perspectives. **Participant 7** noted that *"the Bible made a huge difference to his learning,"* describing it as *"the word of God, not merely the word of humans."* **Participant 5** articulated that *"his admiration for the persons he admired most"* inspired him

to keep going. These reflections show how personal beliefs and role models can ignite a sense of purpose and resilience.

Future-Oriented Goals and Aspirations

Some learners were driven by their dreams and ambitions. **Participants 11 and 15** stated that *"their goal to own a business and be aware of their surroundings"* made a huge difference in their learning. These future-oriented visions helped them stay focused and motivated, even within the constraints of incarceration. These voices reveal that success in ALS is not just about personal effort—it's deeply intertwined with the environment, relationships, resources, and aspirations that surround each learner.

II. How PDL ALS completers perceive their learning journeys as a form of personal redemption and transformation

Rediscovering Meaning Through Education

For many ALS graduates, education became a lifeline—a way to reclaim dignity and purpose amid adversity. **Participant 1** affirmed that ALS helped him *"understand the importance of education to individuals, even in the middle of the struggles,"* while **Participants 10 and 12** shared that ALS gave them *"time to understand how education and life are important."* **Participant 5** articulated that through ALS, he *"discovered the true meaning of life and now lives independently with dignity outside the facility."* These reflections reveal how learning became a source of clarity and direction, helping learners reframe their past and envision a better future.

Healing from Regret and Acceptance of the Past

ALS also served as a space for emotional healing and acceptance. **Participant 2** expressed that ALS helped him *"heal by simply accepting what he has done and where he is now, and what he can do for a better future."* **Participant 8** admitted regret for not finishing his studies earlier, but found hope in being *"given a chance again to study and hopefully finish it."* **Participant 20** confessed that ALS helped him *"heal from his past by filling the needs he lacked before."* These voices reflect how education can be a redemptive process—one that allows individuals to confront their past with honesty and move forward with hope.

Personal Transformation and Self-Discovery

Many participants described profound personal change through ALS. **Participants 3 and 4** conveyed that ALS helped them *"change everything that was never helpful for them to a better one."* **Participant 6** commented that ALS *"built a better version of herself,"* helping her gain confidence and recognize her talents. **Participant 7** cited that he *"did not know how to deal with other people before, but ALS changed that."* **Participants 11 and 19** observed that ALS helped them *"wake up again and find their true self."* **Participant 13** stated that ALS gave him *"self-confidence and brought him back to put up a legal business."* These reflections show how ALS fosters not just academic growth, but deep personal reinvention.

Empowerment and Forward Momentum

ALS graduates also spoke of empowerment—of discovering their ability to make good choices and contribute positively to society. **Participant 14** mentioned that ALS *"will serve as his path toward good and decent work,"* while **Participant 15** narrated that he discovered he *"can still do good things, decide for himself for a better life, and do good to others."* **Participant 16** expressed gratitude to ALS for *"giving him the time to change and for the love shown to him by his teachers."* **Participant 17** exclaimed that ALS

helped her *"express herself and tell the past and present story of her life."* These stories reflect how ALS becomes a bridge—not just to education, but to self-worth, agency, and a renewed sense of identity.

How PDL ALS learners perceive changes in their views on justice, responsibility, and second chances:

Evolving Views on Justice

Several participants reflected deeply on their understanding of justice, shaped by their experiences and learning within the facility. **Participant 1** lamented that he *"understood his mistakes and knew the reason why he was in jail,"* suggesting a personal reckoning with accountability. **Participant 3**, however, expressed skepticism, stating that *"his view on justice has not been confirmed because he believes that not all words in court are true."* **Participant 13** echoed this uncertainty, affirming that *"he still feels deprived of justice."* In contrast, **Participant 16** shared a more nuanced view, saying *"not all PDLs are guilty, but they still value the chance to learn,"* while **Participant 18** emphasized belief in *"justice through the correct due process of law."* **Participant 20** noted that *"every problem has a proper process,"* reflecting a growing trust in structured resolution. These perspectives reveal a complex and evolving relationship with the concept of justice—ranging from disillusionment to cautious optimism.

Redefining Responsibility

ALS has helped many learners embrace personal responsibility and growth. **Participant 10** articulated that his perspective changed because *"it shaped his responsibility as a learner,"* and **Participant 11** exclaimed that she *"learned to be responsible and value a new life."* **Participant 15** expressed that he *"gained ideas to fulfill his responsibilities,"* while **Participant 17** explained that her *"point of view changed because her knowledge was further developed."* These reflections show how education fosters a deeper sense of ownership over one's actions and future.

Embracing Second Chances

The theme of redemption and second chances resonated strongly across responses. **Participant 2** shared that *"his view on second chances changed because of BJMP programs,"* and **Participant 4** added that *"ALS teachers were excellent,"* which helped reshape his perspective. **Participant 5** disclosed that his transformation came through *"understanding things around him,"* while **Participant 6** remarked that ALS *"proved education is still their right—even inside the facility."* **Participant 7** saw his second chance as *"an opportunity to use his acquired knowledge,"* and **Participant 8** confessed that he *"won't waste the chance and will use his learning for a new life."* **Participant 12** conveyed that *"finishing her studies changed her view on second chances,"* and **Participant 14** pronounced that ALS *"gave him hope to change his life and reach his dreams."* These reflections illustrate how education within incarceration becomes a powerful vehicle for renewal, dignity, and future aspirations.

Education as a Pathway to Change

Underlying many responses is the belief that education is transformative. **Participant 9** appreciated *"liberty and the importance of privileges,"* while **Participant 19** shared that he *"realized education is important to achieve dreams."* These insights reinforce the idea that learning is not just academic—it's a gateway to healing, empowerment, and societal reintegration.

How PDL ALS learners describe the transformation of their identities as a result of their ALS journey

Gaining Direction and Purpose

For many ALS learners, the program provided a renewed sense of direction and clarity in life. **Participant 1** shared that he *"gained direction in life despite the challenges he is facing now,"* while **Participant 2**

remarked that *"his entire personality changed."* **Participants 3, 14, and 17** disclosed that they *"gained additional knowledge that they can carry for life, especially in important things that surround them."* These reflections show how ALS helped learners redefine their paths and reconnect with their sense of purpose.

Shifting Mindsets and Attitudes

ALS also sparked profound changes in mindset and emotional resilience. **Participant 6** narrated that she *"transformed by setting a positive mindset in life,"* and **Participant 15** shared that he *"was transformed from being negative to solving his case and family issues, shifting to positive thinking."* **Participant 18** commented that she *"was transformed by thinking positively and doing good,"* while **Participant 19** cited a transformation in *"his outlook in life."* These stories reflect how education can reshape internal narratives, fostering hope and optimism.

Embracing Respect, Humility, and Forgiveness

Personal growth through ALS often manifested in deeper emotional maturity and interpersonal awareness. **Participant 5** shared that he *"became more respectful,"* and **Participant 12** echoed that he *"transformed by respecting others."* **Participant 7** emphasized that he *"learned humility and forgiveness,"* while **Participant 11** expressed changes in *"attitude and ability to adjust with others."* These transformations reveal how ALS nurtures empathy, self-awareness, and social harmony.

Overcoming Hopelessness and Building Courage

Several learners described their journey as a shift from despair to hope. **Participant 8** exclaimed that he *"changed from losing hope to hoping,"* and **Participant 9** explained that although he *"tended to give up, ALS woke him up."* **Participant 13** confessed that he *"gained the courage to advise others about changing their lives and not being hopeless,"* while **Participant 16** accepted that he *"was transformed from being irritable and easily giving up to having patience and courage."* These reflections highlight how ALS empowers learners to reclaim their inner strength and inspire others.

Becoming Active and Engaged Learners

ALS also reignited a passion for learning and personal development. **Participant 10** explained that *"his whole personality was transformed,"* and **Participant 20** observed that he *"transformed from being lazy in studying into an active participant."* These changes reflect how education can awaken curiosity, discipline, and a commitment to growth—even within the confines of incarceration. These voices collectively illustrate how ALS is not just an academic program—it's a catalyst for personal redemption, emotional healing, and identity transformation.

How PDL ALS learners have tried to give back and inspire others based on what they've learned:

Becoming Role Models and Uplifting Others

Some ALS learners have embraced the responsibility of being role models within the facility, using their transformation to inspire change in others. **Participants 1 and 4** shared that they *"give back their learnings by being a role model, sharing kindness, good values, support to uplift others, and showing resilience."* Their actions reflect a commitment to leading by example and fostering a culture of respect and hope among fellow PDLs.

Offering Advice and Wisdom

Others have chosen to give mentorship and emotional support. **Participants 2 and 3** admitted that they *"inspire others by offering advice and words of wisdom for personal growth."* These learners use their own experiences as a foundation to guide others, helping them navigate challenges and encouraging them to pursue personal development.

Encouraging Participation in ALS

A number of learners have actively encouraged their peers to join the ALS program, recognizing its transformative power. **Participants 5, 11, and 16** stated that they *"give back their learnings by encouraging other PDLs to enroll in ALS."* Their advocacy not only expands access to education but also reinforces the belief that change is possible for everyone.

Sharing Knowledge and Experiences

Many participants have found meaning in sharing what they've learned—both academically and personally. **Participants 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, and 20** mentioned that they *"inspire others through sharing knowledge and experiences."* Whether through informal conversations, group discussions, or collaborative learning, these acts of generosity help build a supportive and empowered learning community.

Teaching Basic Literacy Skills

Some learners have gone even further by directly teaching others. **Participants 8, 12, and 20** explained that they *"gave back or inspired others by teaching their co-PDLs to read and write, especially writing their names."* They described it as *"a nice feeling to share knowledge and wisdom with other people,"* highlighting the joy and fulfillment that comes from helping others gain foundational skills.

How PDL ALS learners perceive their educational journey as a way of reclaiming their identity:

Reclaiming Self-Worth and Personal Direction

For many ALS learners, education became a powerful tool for rediscovering their sense of self. **Participants 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 20** emphasized that they were able to *"reclaim themselves by regaining self-esteem, confidence, direction, and motivation in life."* Through ALS, they found the strength to recover from past mistakes, rebuild their identity, and make better decisions. These reflections reveal how learning can be a deeply restorative process—one that helps individuals reconnect with their values and envision a life beyond confinement.

Embracing Lifelong Learning and Possibility

Participants 7 and 8 highlighted that *"education has no age limit and is a lifelong process."* Their insights reflect a shift in mindset—from seeing education as something missed or lost, to embracing it as an ongoing journey of growth. This perspective empowers learners to continue evolving, regardless of their circumstances or age.

Education as a Pathway to Change and Hope

Despite the challenges of incarceration, many learners found in ALS a gateway to transformation. **Participants 9, 10, 12, 14, 18, and 19** explained that ALS *"gave them the chance to pursue studies despite challenges,"* and they now see education as *"a pathway to change, hope, and a better future."* These reflections underscore the belief that learning is not just about acquiring knowledge—it's about reclaiming agency, building resilience, and opening doors to new possibilities.

V. How ALS learners believe their success stories can influence institutional practices and reshape societal perceptions about education behind bars:

Redefining the Image of PDLs Through Education

Many ALS learners believe that their stories challenge the stigma surrounding Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) and show that transformation is possible. **Participant 1** shared that by *"pursuing his studies and finishing inside the facility despite challenges,"* he hopes to *"serve as a model for others."* **Participant 20** echoed this, stating that *"people say not all PDLs are a bad image in the community; instead, give them a*

chance to transform into a positive or good person." These reflections highlight how education can humanize PDL individuals and shift public attitudes from judgment to empathy.

Inspiring Others to Value Education Behind Bars

Several participants emphasized that their stories can inspire both incarcerated individuals and the broader public to see education as a vital tool for change. **Participant 2** believes his journey will help others, especially fellow PDLs, realize that *"education gives courage and motivation to pursue their dreams."* **Participants 4 and 5** simply stated that *"their stories will inspire other people,"* while **Participant 14** added that he will *"serve as an inspiration because education is a key to transform positively."* **Participant 13** highlighted that *"through sharing her experiences, people will know the importance of education."* These voices reflect the ripple effect of personal transformation—how one learner's growth can ignite hope in others.

Promoting Education as a Right and a Pathway to Change

Some learners focused on the broader implications of their stories, advocating for education as a right and a pathway to rehabilitation. **Participant 3** emphasized that *"education is for all,"* and that people will realize *"not all PDLs have had access to it."* **Participants 8, 12, and 14** confessed that their stories show how *"education is important for PDLs to change for a new life and future."* **Participants 7, 16, and 18** noted that people now view education as *"important both inside and outside the facility."* These reflections suggest that success narratives can influence policy and institutional practices by reinforcing the value of inclusive education.

Encouraging Support and Solidarity

Others believe their stories can foster greater support for incarcerated learners. **Participants 9 and 10** lamented that *"people will support those who truly want to understand how education is important for them."* **Participant 15** believed that people will see what incarcerated learners can achieve *"through education by showing unity and understanding each other."* **Participant 17** affirmed that *"education inside the facility can transform PDLs into good people who know how to respect others."* These insights point to the potential of education to build bridges—between PDLs and society, and among PDLs themselves.

Inspiring Lifelong Learning Across Generations

Some learners reflected on how their stories resonate with others, especially those who have known them from the beginning. **Participants 6 and 19** revealed that they *"inspired people, especially those who knew them from the start of their journey inside the jail,"* and that they continue to inspire *"co-PDLs who are still studying despite their age."* **Participant 11** mentioned that they will *"serve as a model for incoming PDLs both inside and outside the facility."* These reflections show how success stories can create a legacy of learning, encouraging others to begin or continue their educational journey regardless of age or circumstance.

How ALS learners perceive changes in how staff and others treat them as a result of their educational achievements:

Improved Treatment Through Demonstrated Change

Many ALS learners shared that their commitment to personal growth and education led to noticeable shifts in how staff treated them. **Participant 1** commented that *"showing his willingness to change after being incarcerated"* influenced how others responded to him. **Participants 2, 6, 15, 17, 18, and 19** narrated that *"staff treat them better because they also show respect, love, trust in themselves, and kindness toward others."* These reflections suggest that mutual respect and visible transformation foster more compassionate and supportive relationships within the facility.

Recognition of Effort and Perseverance

Several participants emphasized that staff began to treat them differently after witnessing their dedication to learning. **Participants 9, 10, and 12** stated that *"staff changed how they treated them because they showed perseverance, patience, and a genuine willingness to become better persons."* **Participants 11, 13, and 14** added that *"staff changed how they looked at them because they saw their determination to improve."* These stories highlight how consistent effort and a positive attitude can reshape perceptions and build trust.

Support and Encouragement from BJMP Personnel

Some learners described how BJMP staff actively supported their educational journey. **Participant 3** noted that *"BJMP staff helped him to be more motivated and pursue his study,"* while **Participant 4** exclaimed that *"staff and other personnel are very kind and guide him always."* **Participant 5** articulated that *"staff treat them better because they know all PDLs have a chance to do good."* These reflections show how institutional support can reinforce learners' motivation and sense of worth.

Emotional Impact and Meaningful Relationships

For some, the change in treatment went beyond respect—it became a source of emotional healing. **Participant 8** confessed that staff *"not only treated him better, but were also the reason why he became happy and had a meaningful journey in ALS."* **Participant 20** lamented that *"staff treat them better because they know that we still have dreams despite being incarcerated."* These insights reveal how recognition and empathy from staff can validate learners' aspirations and contribute to a more humane and hopeful environment.

Institutional Response and Program Expansion

Finally, **Participant 16** disclosed that *"staff plan to hold more programs for us inside the jail,"* indicating that the success of ALS learners may be influencing broader institutional practices. This suggests that individual transformation can lead to systemic change—where education becomes a central pillar of rehabilitation.

The messages PDL ALS learners believe society needs to hear about their journeys and success:

Resilience and Hope Within Confinement

ALS learners want society to understand that incarceration does not extinguish the human spirit. **Participant 1** pronounced that *"PDLs are resilient. Life must go on even inside the facility,"* while **Participant 2** revealed that *"PDLs never lose faith and hope in life because all challenges have a solution."* **Participant 15** echoed this, expressing that *"PDLs show society they do not lose hope—God is good. This is only one of his challenges."* These voices remind us that behind bars, there are individuals striving to rise above their circumstances with courage and determination.

Education as a Pathway to Change

Many participants emphasized the transformative power of education. **Participant 12** shared that *"society must know that education is the key to success,"* while **Participants 9, 10, and 18** remarked that *"people should not lose hope but persevere and strive to achieve dreams and goals in life."* **Participant 17 and 19** added that *"society must finish studies to have a decent and good life."* These reflections highlight how learning inside correctional facilities is not just rehabilitation—it's a rebirth.

Humanizing the PDLs

Several learners called for empathy and understanding. **Participant 8** affirmed that *"society must not be judgmental. Do not judge PDLs because you do not know our life experiences."* **Participant 5** highlighted

that “*not all incarcerated individuals have no chance to change into a better person,*” and **Participant 13** emphasized the need to “*put an end to discrimination for the mistakes we once made, as we now strive to change and live a new life.*” These messages challenge society to look beyond labels and see the humanity and potential in every individual.

The Right to Be Heard and Supported

Some learners expressed the importance of sharing their stories and being given space to grow. **Participant 3** asked society to “*give them time to share their life experiences in studying in ALS inside the jail,*” while **Participant 4** urged others to “*help each other and avoid illegal activities.*” **Participants 6, 7, and 20** added that “*PDLs are still part of society, with the right to freedom and to pursue their dreams.*” These reflections advocate for inclusion, dialogue, and support—not isolation.

Justice and Rehabilitation

Justice and fairness were also central themes. **Participant 14** explained that “*justice for all must be timely so that it will not come too late,*” and **Participant 16** conveyed that “*a facility or jail is a place where PDLs are processed or shaped and transformed into better persons.*” These insights call for a justice system that not only holds people accountable but also gives them the tools to rebuild.

How PDLALS learners believe regular sharing of their stories with the public would impact societal perceptions

Changing Public Perception and Reducing Stigma

Many participants believe that sharing ALS success stories would shift how society views Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). **Participants 1 and 20** lamented that “*the point of view of the public against PDLs will surely change,*” while **Participant 3** emphasized that “*discrimination will be lessened as society becomes more aware of their life stories.*” **Participants 13 and 14** added that “*the trust of society will once again be restored,*” showing how education can rebuild bridges between incarcerated individuals and the communities they hope to rejoin.

Inspiring Hope, Resilience, and Personal Growth

ALS learners see their stories as powerful tools to inspire others. **Participant 2** disclosed that their experiences can “*encourage more people not to lose hope and self-confidence,*” and **Participant 4** confessed that “*many people will learn and persevere for the improvement of their lives.*” **Participant 5** articulated that he may “*serve as a model to the public that any problems in life can be overcome through resilience.*” **Participant 6** exclaimed that their stories would “*inspire people because even though they are behind bars, they have the determination to change their lives.*” These reflections highlight how narratives of redemption can uplift others facing their own struggles.

Promoting Education for All

Several participants believe their stories would encourage broader appreciation for education, especially among youth and marginalized communities. **Participants 7, 12, and 15** narrated that “*more people, especially youths, would be encouraged to study hard.*” **Participants 8 and 11** stated that “*even those from marginalized communities would be inspired, because education is for all, no matter your status in life.*” **Participants 17 and 19** accepted that “*more youths and adults would be encouraged to finish their studies.*” These insights reflect the belief that education is a universal right and a transformative force.

Restoring Pride and Community Connection

ALS learners also see storytelling as a way to restore dignity and pride. **Participants 9 and 10** observed that “*people will be inspired and proud of their experiences as ALS learners,*” while **Participant 18** revealed that their stories “*may give inspiration and make the community proud.*” **Participant 16**

commented that “*society will gain hope, dreams, and courage*” from hearing these journeys. These reflections show how personal success can ripple outward, strengthening community bonds and collective aspirations.

The recommendations from PDLs ALS learners on how institutions can better recognize and support their success:

Strengthening Institutional Support and Program Expansion

ALS learners strongly advocate for both government and non-government institutions to prioritize and enhance educational programs within correctional facilities. **Participants 1 and 4** emphasized that “*all institutions must give importance, improve, and support the programs of BJMP and DepEd.*” **Participants 2 and 3** added that institutions should “*stabilize and widen programs like ALS to help PDLs renew their lives both inside and outside the facility.*” This call reflects a desire for sustained and expanded access to education as a cornerstone of rehabilitation.

Expanding Educational Opportunities

Several participants expressed the need for broader learning options, including higher education and practical application. **Participant 6** suggested that institutions “*open opportunities such as college courses in jail,*” while **Participant 7** hoped for “*chances to apply their learnings or be immersed in real work.*” These insights highlight the importance of bridging academic learning with real-world experience to prepare PDLs for reintegration.

Providing Resources and Infrastructure

Access to learning materials and technology was a recurring theme. **Participant 8** highlighted the need for “*school supplies, computers, or laptops to support hands-on activities,*” and **Participants 9 and 10** stressed the importance of “*financial support and an allotted budget for the program.*” These reflections underscore the need for tangible resources to ensure quality education behind bars.

Creating Livelihood and Employment Pathways

Many learners believe that institutions should support economic empowerment through work and livelihood programs. **Participants 11 and 12** advocated for “*decent work and starter kits or capital for small businesses,*” while **Participants 13, 14, and 15** affirmed the need for “*opportunities to earn extra income inside jail.*” **Participant 16** echoed this, stating that “*livelihood programs would help PDLs earn money and support themselves.*” These suggestions reflect a desire for self-sufficiency and dignity through meaningful work.

Sustaining Moral and Emotional Support

Continued encouragement and recognition were also seen as vital. **Participants 17, 18, and 19** noted that institutions should “*continue supporting PDLs to help them transform into better individuals,*” while **Participant 5** simply asked for “*time and the things PDLs need inside the facility.*” **Participant 20** expressed that institutions must “*uphold the achievements and milestones of incarcerated learners,*” recognizing their efforts and celebrating their progress. These reflections highlight the emotional and psychological impact of being seen, heard, and valued.

TESTIMONIAL BOOK

“Beyond the Bars: Stories of Redemption Through ALS”

Testimonies of Persons Deprived of Liberty Learners in the Alternative Learning System

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“Beyond the Bars: Stories of Redemption Through ALS”

Testimonies of Persons Deprived of Liberty Learners in the Alternative Learning System

Beyond the Bars: Stories of Redemption Through ALS is a powerful collection of real-life testimonies from Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) learners in the Philippines who found hope, healing, and transformation through the Alternative Learning System (ALS). They told in their own words, these stories reveal the courage it takes to pursue education behind bars, the struggles they overcame, and the dreams they now carry.

This book is not just about academic success—it’s about reclaiming identity, restoring dignity, and proving that every person deserves a second chance. From moments of awakening to acts of giving back, each chapter offers a window into the lives of individuals who chose growth over regret and learning over despair. Whether you’re an educator, policymaker, advocate, or simply someone who believes in the power of redemption, *Beyond the Bars* will challenge your assumptions and inspire your heart. These voices deserve to be heard—and this book ensures they are.

Foreword

In the quiet corners of correctional facilities across the Philippines, something extraordinary is happening. Amid concrete walls and steel bars, minds are awakening, hearts are healing, and lives are being rewritten—one lesson at a time. This book, *Beyond the Bars: Stories of Redemption Through ALS*, is a testament to that quiet revolution. It is a collection of voices that have long been silenced, now speaking with clarity, courage, and conviction.

The Alternative Learning System (ALS) has become more than an educational program for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). It is a lifeline. It is a mirror. It is a bridge. Through ALS, PDL learners have found not only literacy and skills, but dignity, purpose, and hope. They have discovered that education is not confined to classrooms or campuses—it can flourish anywhere, even behind locked doors.

This book was born from the belief that every story matters. The testimonies within these pages are raw, honest, and deeply human. They speak of regret and resilience, of brokenness and rebuilding. They challenge us to look beyond the label of “inmate” and see the student, the parent, the dreamer, the leader. They ask us to listen—not with judgment, but with empathy.

For educators, these stories are a call to continue reaching out, even when the path is difficult. For policymakers, they are evidence that rehabilitation through education is not only possible—it is powerful.

For families, they are reminders that love, and learning can coexist with loss. And for society at large, they are invitations to rethink justice, redemption, and the role of education in healing.

Let this book be more than a collection of reflections. Let it be a catalyst. Let it spark conversations, inspire reforms, and open doors. Let it remind us that behind every barred window is a mind waiting to be awakened, a heart ready to heal, and a life still worth living.

To the learners who shared their stories: thank you for your courage. To the ALS teachers and facilitators who walked beside them: thank you for your faith. And to every reader holding this book: may you carry these voices with you, and may they change the way you see the world.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the brave and resilient learners of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) who found light in the darkest corners and chose education as their path to redemption.

To the Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who dared to dream again—your courage to learn, to change, and to rise is the heartbeat of this book. You are proof that transformation is possible, and that every life holds the power to begin anew.

To the ALS teachers, BJMP personnel, and educators who stood beside these learners—not just as teachers, but as mentors, guides, and believers—thank you for planting seeds of hope where others saw only walls.

To the families who never gave up, and to the communities learning to welcome back their own—may these stories remind you that healing is a shared journey, and that every second chance deserves support. And to every reader holding this book—may you listen with compassion, reflect with humility, and act with conviction. These voices are not just stories. They are calls to see, to understand, and to believe in the power of education to rebuild lives.

Chapter 1: The Turning Point

For many Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), the journey through the Alternative Learning System (ALS) began not with a textbook, but with a moment of reckoning—a quiet realization that change was possible, even within the walls of the facility. These turning points were deeply personal, often sparked by a single experience, a shared moment, or the simple act of choosing to learn. In these stories, ALS became more than an educational program; it became a lifeline.

Participant 1 described his turning point as the moment he allowed himself to grow. He found comfort in the learning environment and began to change positively. It wasn't just about academics—it was about reclaiming his sense of self. ALS gave him the space to reflect, to heal, and to begin again. For him, education was the first step toward becoming the person he had always hoped to be.

For Participant 2, ALS was the spark that reignited his dreams. He shared that the program taught him not just to dream, but to dream bigger. Before ALS, his aspirations were buried beneath the weight of his sentence. But through learning, he discovered ambitions that extended beyond the facility—dreams that now fuel his determination to succeed. He no longer saw himself as someone defined by his past, but as someone capable of building a future.

Participant 3 found his turning point through art. Sharing his skills in drawing gave him a sense of pride and identity. It was the first time he felt that his talents mattered, that he could contribute something meaningful. This act of expression became a bridge to self-worth and motivation. Through ALS, he realized that creativity could be a source of healing and empowerment.

For Participant 4, the turning point came through connection. He described the moment he felt united with other PDLs, like a family. That sense of belonging helped him open up, trust others, and embrace the

learning process. ALS was no longer just a program—it was a shared journey toward healing. In the center, he found not only knowledge but kinship.

Completing Junior High School was a milestone for Participant 5. He saw it as a turning point that marked his commitment to continue studying in Senior High School. The achievement gave him a renewed sense of direction and a belief that his future was still within reach. It was a moment of pride, a reminder that progress was possible, even in confinement.

Participant 6 was inspired by her fellow PDLs, especially those older than her who remained eager to learn. Their determination reminded her that age is not a barrier to education. Seeing their perseverance helped her overcome her own fears and embrace the opportunity to grow. She realized that learning was not just for the young—it was for the willing.

Participant 7 viewed ALS as a path toward change. He believed that his experiences in the program would guide him once he was released. Education became his compass, pointing him toward a life of purpose and integrity beyond the facility walls. ALS gave him the tools to rebuild, and the hope to believe in a better tomorrow.

For Participant 8, ALS offered something he hadn't felt in a long time—hope. He found a reason to change his life and something to be proud of. The program gave him a sense of possibility—a belief that he could rebuild his life and contribute positively to society. It was no longer about surviving his sentence; it was about preparing for life after it.

Participants 9, 10, and 12 echoed the significance of completing Junior High School. They described feelings of pride, fulfillment, and motivation to continue their studies. For them, the certificate was more than a piece of paper—it was a symbol of resilience and achievement. It represented the hours of study, the moments of doubt, and the triumph of perseverance.

Participant 11 shared that her most memorable experience in ALS was during group activities and bonding moments with classmates. These interactions helped her feel supported and inspired. They reminded her that learning is not just about knowledge—it's about connection, growth, and shared humanity. In those moments, she felt seen, heard, and valued.

Chapter 2: Facing the Struggles

The beginning of any journey is seldom smooth, and for PDLs ALS learners, the path to education was paved with emotional, physical, and psychological hurdles. Inside the facility, the decision to study was not just about picking up a pen—it was about confronting fears, doubts, and the weight of past mistakes. Yet, despite these barriers, each learner find a way to persevere.

Participant 1 admitted that he was not used to studying inside the facility. The unfamiliar environment and the emotional burden of PDL made it difficult to focus. But through acceptance, he found peace. He learned to embrace his situation and use education as a tool for personal growth rather than a reminder of what he had lost.

For Participant 2, the challenge was existential. He questioned the value of education, asking himself, "What is the use of a diploma if I will be PDL for life?" It was a painful thought, but the encouragement of fellow PDLs helped him shift his perspective. He began to see education not as a futile pursuit, but as a way to build dreams—for himself and for his family.

Participant 3 faced a logistical challenge: the class schedule conflicted with his work hours. Balancing responsibilities inside the facility was difficult, but he remained committed. He adjusted his routine and made sacrifices, knowing that education was an investment in his future.

Participant 4 struggled with self-worth. He questioned how to become a good learner and transform himself through studying. The process was slow, but with each lesson, he began to believe in his ability to change. ALS became a mirror that reflected not just knowledge, but the possibility of redemption.

Age was a recurring concern. Participant 5 felt that time had already passed him by. He worried that he was too old to learn. Similarly, Participant 6 feared discrimination because of her age. But both found strength in their classmates and mentors, who reminded them that education has no age limit. Their confidence grew, and they began to see themselves not as late learners, but as lifelong learners.

Participants 7, 19, and 20 shared that the beginning was difficult. The adjustment to a structured learning environment inside the jail was overwhelming. But with the guidance and support of their ALS teachers, they slowly overcame the struggles. The teachers became more than educators—they became allies in their journey toward change.

Participant 8 spoke of discouragement. There were times when he felt like giving up, but he kept trying. He reminded himself that he had nothing to lose and everything to gain. His persistence became his strength, and each day of learning was a step away from despair.

Financial challenges also surfaced. Participant 9 struggled with daily expenses, which made it hard to focus on his studies. But through perseverance, he managed to stay committed. His story is a testament to the power of determination in the face of adversity.

Participant 10, like others, saw age as a barrier. But he overcame it by embracing the belief that education recognizes no boundaries. His mindset shifted, and he began to see learning as a right, not a privilege reserved for the young.

Participant 11 found it difficult to recall basic academic skills. It had been a long time since she last attended school, and the fear of failure loomed large. But with the help of ALS teachers, she relearned and understood everything again. Her journey was not just about catching up—it was about reclaiming her confidence.

Chapter 3: Rediscovering Purpose

The journey of learning behind bars is not just about acquiring knowledge—it's about rediscovering meaning. For PDL ALS learners, education became a mirror that reflected not only who they were, but who they could become. It gave them a reason to wake up, to try again, and to believe that their lives still held value.

Participant 1 shared that ALS gave direction to his life. Amid the challenges of PDLs, he found clarity and a sense of purpose. Education became his anchor, helping him navigate the emotional storms and guiding him toward true change. It was no longer about surviving—it was about evolving.

Participant 2 expressed that ALS was more than just schooling. It wasn't limited to reading, writing, or counting. It was a transformative experience that helped him become a better version of himself. He felt proud of the changes happening within him, and for the first time in a long time, he was happy with who he was becoming.

For Participant 3, the effort of the teachers was a turning point. Their dedication motivated him to attend sessions, even when he didn't feel like it. He realized that time spent learning was time invested in himself. ALS helped him shift from passive existence to active participation in his own growth.

Participant 4 noted that ALS taught him how to deal with other people and become a good person. The lessons extended beyond academics—they touched on empathy, communication, and respect. Through education, he learned how to rebuild relationships and contribute positively to his community inside the facility.

Participant 5 found that the knowledge shared by ALS teachers opened his mind. He began to understand the world around him in new ways. Learning gave him confidence, and confidence gave him hope. He no longer felt stuck—he felt equipped to move forward.

Participant 6 shared that ALS showed her that nothing is impossible. With determination, she could learn, grow, and become someone she was proud of. The program helped her trust in her skills and recognize her talents. She began to see herself not as a PDL, but as a student with potential.

Participant 7 emphasized that ALS helped him persevere. It gave him a sense of purpose and reminded him that he was capable of change. The learning sessions became a source of strength, helping him stay focused and grounded even during difficult times.

Participant 8 revealed that ALS strengthened his knowledge and gave him something to share. He felt empowered to help his friends and support his family. Education became a tool for service—a way to give back and build a better future for those he loved.

Participant 9 believed that ALS helped him immensely, thanks to the sacrifices of the teachers. Their commitment inspired him to keep going. He saw education as a gift, one that he was determined to honor through hard work and dedication.

Participant 10 observed that ALS reopened his memory and guided him toward change. It helped him understand the value of education and gave him hope to finish his studies. He began to see learning not as a chore, but as a privilege—one that could transform his life.

Chapter 4: Milestones and Accomplishments

In the quiet corners of correctional facilities, where time often feels suspended, ALS learners have found ways to mark progress—not just through certificates, but through personal victories that speak to resilience, growth, and transformation. These milestones, whether academic or emotional, have become symbols of hope and stepping stones toward a better future.

For many, completing Junior High School was a defining moment. Participant 1 shared that finishing his studies inside the facility gave him a sense of pride and dignity. It was not just about passing exams—it was about proving to himself that he could still achieve something meaningful. Participant 2 echoed this, saying that despite his circumstances, he was able to pursue education and reach a goal that once felt impossible.

Participant 3 described his accomplishment as fulfilling the dreams of his father. Education became a way to honor the people who believed in him, even when he struggled to believe in himself. His success was not just personal—it was deeply relational, rooted in love and legacy.

Participant 5 saw his milestone in passing Grade 11 and preparing for Senior High School. He viewed each level of education as a ladder out of despair, each step a testament to his determination. For him, ALS was more than a program—it was a promise that life could still move forward.

Participant 7 shared that attending skills training was a turning point. Learning practical skills gave him confidence and a sense of purpose. He began to imagine a life beyond the facility, one where he could contribute to society and support his family. Education gave him the tools to dream again.

Participant 8 expressed that his simple goal was to graduate and show others that being a PDL is not a hindrance to success. He wanted to be an example, a living proof that transformation is possible. His journey became a message to others: never give up on learning.

Participant 10 reflected on the pride he felt when he received his certificate. It was a moment of validation, a reminder that his efforts were not in vain. He held the certificate not just as a document, but as a symbol of perseverance and hope.

Participant 12 shared that completing Junior High School gave her a wonderful feeling. It was a milestone that reminded her of her strength and capacity to grow. She felt proud—not just of the achievement, but of the journey it represented.

Beyond academics, other learners found accomplishment in helping others. Participant 4 noted that guiding fellow PDLs and sharing knowledge was his greatest achievement. He found joy in uplifting others, in being a source of encouragement and support.

Participant 6 expressed that gaining knowledge about business and work gave her confidence. She began to understand her strengths and weaknesses and used that awareness to build a vision for her future. For her, education was not just about learning—it was about becoming.

Chapter 5: Redemption and Transformation

Education behind bars is not simply about learning—it's about reclaiming what was lost. For ALS learners, the center became a sanctuary, a place where they could confront their past, reflect on their choices, and begin the long journey toward healing. Through every lesson, every discussion, and every moment of self-discovery, they found pieces of themselves they thought were gone forever.

Participant 1 affirmed that ALS helped him understand the importance of education, even amid struggle. He realized that learning wasn't just for those outside—it was for anyone willing to change. ALS gave him the clarity to see that his life still had meaning, and that he could use education to rebuild it.

Participant 2 expressed that healing began with acceptance. ALS helped him come to terms with what he had done and where he was. More importantly, it showed him what he could still become. Through learning, he found the courage to look forward instead of back, and to believe in the possibility of a better future.

Participants 3 and 4 shared that ALS helped them change everything that was never helpful in their lives. They began to replace old habits with new perspectives, and harmful patterns with constructive ones. Education became a tool for transformation, helping them reshape their identities from the inside out.

Participant 5 articulated that ALS helped him discover the true meaning of life. He learned to live independently and with dignity, even within the confines of the facility. The lessons he absorbed were not just academic—they were moral, emotional, and deeply personal.

Participant 6 commented that ALS built a better version of herself. She gained confidence, learned to trust her abilities, and discovered that she was a talented person. The program helped her see beyond her sentence and into a future where she could thrive.

Participant 7 cited that before ALS, he didn't know how to deal with other people. But through the program, he learned empathy, patience, and communication. These skills helped him reconnect with others and become a more understanding and respectful individual.

Participant 8 believed that ALS gave him a second chance. He regretted not finishing his studies before, but now he felt empowered to try again. The opportunity to learn reignited his hope and gave him a sense of purpose that had long been missing.

Participants 9 and 18 admitted that ALS helped them gain more knowledge, which they could carry for life. This knowledge wasn't just academic—it was practical and transformative. It gave them the tools to make better decisions and to envision a life beyond the facility.

Participants 10 and 12 added that ALS gave them time to reflect on the value of education and life itself. They began to understand that learning was not just a right—it was a pathway to redemption. It helped them see themselves as worthy of growth and capable of change.

Participants 11 and 19 observed that ALS helped them “wake up” and find their true selves. The program stirred something within them—a sense of identity, purpose, and hope. They no longer saw themselves as broken, but as people in the process of healing and becoming whole again

Chapter 6: Giving Back

Transformation through education doesn’t end with personal growth—it often becomes a ripple effect. For many ALS learners behind bars, the knowledge and confidence they gained sparked a desire to uplift others. Whether through mentorship, encouragement, or teaching basic literacy, they found ways to give back, even within the confines of a correctional facility.

Participant 1 shared that he gives back by being a role model. He shows kindness, resilience, and good values to others, hoping that his actions will inspire fellow PDLs to believe in their own capacity for change. His journey became a living testimony that transformation is possible, and that it can begin with one person choosing to lead by example.

Participant 2 admitted that he inspires others by offering advice and words of wisdom. He draws from his own struggles and growth to guide those who are just beginning their journey. His message is simple but powerful: change is hard, but it’s worth it—and no one must walk the path alone.

Participant 3 echoed this sentiment, saying that he shares his experiences to help others find clarity and motivation. He believes that storytelling is a form of healing, and that by opening about his past, he can help others avoid the same mistakes and embrace education as a tool for renewal.

Participants 5, 11, and 16 emphasized the importance of encouraging others to enroll in ALS. They actively reach out to fellow PDLs, reminding them that it’s never too late to learn. Their advocacy has helped increase participation in the program, creating a culture of learning and support within the facility.

Participant 4 added that he gives back by uplifting others emotionally. He listens, encourages, and shares his own journey to help others find strength. His presence in the classroom is not just as a student, but as a source of hope and reassurance.

Participants 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, and 20 shared that they inspire others by sharing knowledge and experiences. Whether through informal conversations, group discussions, or collaborative learning, they use their insights to help others grow. Their stories have become tools for teaching, and their voices have become instruments of change.

Participant 8 expressed that he teaches his co-PDLs how to read and write, especially how to write their names. For him, this simple act carries deep meaning. It’s a way to restore dignity and agency to those who feel forgotten. He finds joy in watching others discover their own capabilities.

Participant 12 also teaches basic literacy, and she describes the experience as fulfilling. Helping others learn to read and write has given her a sense of purpose and pride. She sees education as a gift meant to be shared, and she’s committed to passing it on.

Participant 20, who also teaches fellow PDLs, said it best: “It’s nice to feel that you’re sharing knowledge and wisdom with other people.” His words reflect the heart of this chapter—education is not just about personal success but about lifting others up and building a community of learners.

Chapter 7: Changing Perceptions

Transformation is not only felt within—it radiates outward. For ALS learners behind bars, the changes they’ve undergone have begun to reshape how others see them. From correctional staff to fellow PDLs, and even family and community members, the impact of education has softened judgments, opened minds, and restored dignity.

Participant 1 shared that people now look at PDLs differently. He believes that by showing a willingness

to change and committing to his studies, he has helped shift the public's perception. Education, he said, is proof that they are ready to transform, and that they deserve a second chance.

Participant 2 disclosed that his enthusiasm to finish his studies and earn a diploma has earned him respect. Despite being PDL, he feels proud that people salute his efforts. His story shows that determination can break through stigma and inspire admiration.

Participant 3 recounted how others now speak kindly of him. He was once dismissed, but now people say, "Iyo na iyan an poon kang pagbabago mo sa buhay"—a recognition that his journey through ALS marks the beginning of his transformation. These words, simple yet powerful, affirm his growth.

Participant 4 noted that by being good to himself, he has learned to be good to others. This shift in behavior has changed how people treat him. He no longer feels judged—he feels seen. His kindness has become a mirror, reflecting the respect he now receives.

Participant 5 confessed that he has become a model to his co-PDLs and even to people outside the facility. Despite his age, he continues to study and pursue a diploma, showing that learning is lifelong and that change is always possible. His perseverance has inspired others to believe in their own potential.

Participant 6 articulated that people now see her as a truly reformed individual. They no longer define her by her past, but by her present efforts and future aspirations. She feels proud knowing that her transformation is visible and acknowledged.

Participant 7 emphasized that education is a form of success, and that age does not define one's ability to learn. This belief has helped change how others view her. She is no longer seen as someone who missed her chance, but as someone who seized it.

Participants 8 and 10 exclaimed that they now feel proud and recognized as role models. Their commitment to education has shown others that being a PDL is not a barrier to growth. They've become examples of what is possible when one chooses to learn.

Participants 9 and 18 shared that people no longer insult them. Now that they are educated, they are treated with respect. This shift has restored their confidence and helped them feel equal to others. Education, they said, has leveled the playing field.

Participant 11 stated that she is now seen as responsible and resilient. Her transformation through ALS has changed how people interact with her. She feels empowered, knowing that her efforts have earned her respect and trust.

Participant 12 noted that ALS helped her understand society better. This awareness has improved her interactions and changed how others perceive her. She feels more connected, more informed, and more accepted.

Participant 13 emphasized that his co-PDLs are happy for him. Their support and recognition have strengthened his resolve. He no longer feels isolated—he feels part of a community that celebrates growth.

Participant 14 observed that people now see him as someone who never lost hope. Despite everything that happened, he chose to start again. That choice, he believes, has changed how others view him—not as a PDL, but as a person with courage.

Participant 15 shared that his family and fellow PDLs now see him in a better light. His commitment to education has earned their respect. He feels proud knowing that his transformation is not only personal—it's relational.

Participant 16 revealed that staff are planning more programs because they see the potential in learners like him. This institutional support is a sign that perceptions are changing, and that education is being recognized as a powerful tool for rehabilitation.

Participant 17 described the excitement of seeing classmates every Tuesday. These moments of connection have helped build a supportive learning environment, where respect and encouragement are the norm.

Participant 19 commented that others now see him as decent and good. His transformation has changed how people speak to him, treat him, and think about him. He feels proud of the person he's become.

Participant 20 conveyed that he has become an inspiration. His journey through ALS has shown others that change is possible, and that education can be the bridge to a better life. He hopes his story will continue to inspire those who are still searching for their turning point.

Chapter 8: A Call to Action

The success of PDL ALS learners is not just a personal triumph—it's a collective opportunity. Their stories reveal the transformative power of education behind bars, and they offer a clear message to institutions: support, recognition, and investment in these programs are essential. The learners know what helped them succeed, and they know what could help others follow the same path.

Participant 1 emphasized that all institutions—government and non-government alike—must give importance to the ALS programs implemented by BJMP and DepEd. He believes that these programs are not just rehabilitative tools but lifelines that guide PDLs toward becoming productive members of society. Without institutional support, the momentum of change risks being lost.

Participant 2 shared that institutions must stabilize and expand ALS programs. For him, the continuity and reach of education inside facilities are crucial. He sees ALS not as a temporary intervention but as a permanent fixture in the rehabilitation process—one that should be accessible to every PDL, regardless of age or sentence.

Participant 3 echoed this, adding that the programs must be widened to reach more learners. He believes that education should be a right, not a privilege, and that every incarcerated individual deserves the chance to renew their life through learning. His call is for inclusivity, sustainability, and long-term commitment.

Participant 4 stressed the need for improvement and support. He sees the potential of ALS to change lives, but he also sees the gaps—limited resources, outdated materials, and insufficient recognition. His message to institutions is clear: invest in these programs, and the returns will be measured in transformed lives.

Participant 5 asked for time and resources. He believes that PDLs need not just lessons, but the tools to learn—books, writing materials, and access to technology. His request is simple but powerful: give us what we need, and we will show you what we can become.

Participant 6 advocated for the opening of college courses inside jails. She sees ALS as a foundation, but she dreams of higher education. Her vision is bold: a correctional system where learning never stops, where degrees are earned, and where futures are built even behind bars.

Participant 7 suggested that learners be given opportunities to apply what they've learned. He wants immersion, real work, and practical experience. For him, education must extend beyond the classroom—it must prepare PDLs for life outside, with skills they can use and confidence they can carry.

Participant 8 highlighted the need for school supplies and computers. He believes that hands-on learning is essential, and that access to technology can bridge the gap between incarceration and the outside world. His message is one of modernization and equity.

Participants 9 and 10 added that financial support is crucial. They called for an allotted budget for ALS programs, recognizing that without funding, even the best intentions fall short. Their voices remind institutions that transformation requires investment—not just in infrastructure, but in people.

Participants 11 and 12 asked for decent work and starter kits for small businesses. They see education as a pathway to entrepreneurship, and they want the tools to turn their knowledge into livelihood. Their dream

is not just to survive after release, but to thrive.

Participants 13, 14, and 15 affirmed the need for income-generating activities inside the jail. They believe that work and learning go hand in hand, and that both are essential for rehabilitation. Their call is for dignity, productivity, and purpose.

Participant 16 remarked that livelihood programs should be expanded. He sees them as a way to help PDLs support themselves and their families, even while incarcerated. His message is one of empowerment—give us the chance to earn, and we will rise.

Participants 17, 18, and 19 noted that continued support is vital. They believe that transformation is a process, and that institutions must walk alongside learners, not just at the beginning, but all the way through. Their voices call for consistency, compassion, and commitment.

Participant 20 expressed that institutions must uphold the achievements of incarcerated learners. He wants their milestones to be celebrated, their efforts to be recognized, and their stories to be shared. His message is one of visibility—let the world see what we've done, and what we're capable of.

Chapter 9: Changing the Narrative

The stories of incarcerated ALS learners are more than personal reflections—they are powerful tools for social change. When shared with the public, these narratives have the potential to reshape how society views education behind bars, challenge stereotypes about Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs), and inspire broader support for rehabilitation through learning.

Participant 1 expressed that if his story were shared, it could help change how people view education inside jail. He believes that by finishing his studies despite the challenges, he can serve as a model—proof that transformation is possible even in confinement. His journey is a testament to resilience and the power of second chances.

Participant 2 surmised that his story could encourage others, especially fellow PDLs, to pursue their dreams. He emphasized that education gave him courage and motivation, and that sharing this experience could help others find hope. His voice is a reminder that learning is a lifeline, not a luxury.

Participant 3 emphasized that society needs to understand that education is for all—not just for those outside the walls. He believes that sharing ALS stories will help reduce discrimination and allow incarcerated individuals to be seen as learners, not just offenders. His call is for inclusion and empathy.

Participants 4 and 5 stated that their stories would inspire others. They believe that when people hear about their growth and achievements, they will be moved to reflect on their own lives and perhaps find the strength to persevere. Their message is simple: change is contagious when stories are shared.

Participants 6 and 19 revealed that they've already inspired people—especially those who knew them before incarceration. Their transformation through ALS has surprised and impressed others, showing that age and circumstance are not barriers to learning. Their stories have become bridges between past and present.

Participants 7, 16, and 18 noted that people now see education as important both inside and outside the facility. They believe that sharing ALS success stories will reinforce the idea that learning is a universal right and a powerful tool for rehabilitation. Their voices advocate for education as a cornerstone of justice.

Participants 8, 12, and 14 confessed that their stories show how education can lead to a new life. They hope that by sharing their experiences, society will understand the role of ALS in helping PDLs prepare for a better future. Their message is one of transformation through opportunity.

Participants 9 and 10 lamented that people often misunderstand the value of education in jail. They believe that sharing their stories will help others see its importance and support those who are committed to chan-

ge. Their voices call for compassion and encouragement.

Participant 11 mentioned that she hopes to serve as a model for incoming PDLs. She believes that her journey can guide others and show them that learning is possible, even in the most difficult circumstances. Her story is a beacon for those just beginning their path.

Participant 13 highlighted that sharing her experiences will help people understand the importance of education. She wants her story to be a tool for awareness, showing that learning can heal, empower, and transform. Her voice is a call to listen and to believe.

Participant 14 added that education is the key to positive transformation. He believes that his story can inspire others to pursue learning and embrace change. His message is one of hope, rooted in experience.

Participant 15 expressed that through unity and understanding, PDLs can show society what is possible through education. He believes that shared stories can foster solidarity and dismantle stigma. His voice is a call for collective growth.

Participant 17 affirmed that education inside the facility can transform PDLs into respectful, responsible individuals. She believes that sharing these stories will help society see the humanity behind the bars. Her message is one of dignity and redemption.

Participant 20 admitted that when ALS stories are shared, people begin to see that not all PDLs are defined by their past. Instead, they see individuals striving to become better. His voice is a plea for recognition and a reminder that every person deserves a second chance.

Chapter 10: Looking Forward

As the pages of their ALS journey continue to unfold, incarcerated learners are no longer defined by their past, but by the future they are determined to build. Their voices echo with hope, resilience, and a deep desire to be seen not as prisoners, but as people in progress—students, mentors, dreamers, and agents of change.

Participant 1 pronounced that society needs to hear that PDLs are resilient. He believes that life must go on, even inside the facility, and that education is the bridge that allows them to move forward. His message is clear: do not count us out—we are still becoming.

Participant 2 revealed that PDLs never lose faith and hope in life. He emphasized that all challenges have solutions, and that people must not be afraid to try things that may help them become better. His words are a call to courage, both for those inside and outside the walls.

Participant 3 asked society to give them time to share their life experiences. He believes that their stories of studying in ALS deserve to be heard, and that through storytelling, understanding and empathy can grow. His voice is a plea for space, for listening, and for recognition.

Participant 4 urged others to help each other and avoid illegal activities. His transformation has taught him the value of community and integrity, and he hopes that his journey can serve as a guide for others seeking a better path.

Participant 5 highlighted that society must be informed that not all incarcerated individuals are beyond redemption. He believes that everyone has the capacity to change, and that education is the key to unlocking that potential. His message is one of possibility.

Participants 6, 7, and 20 added that PDLs are still part of society. They emphasized that they have the right to freedom and to pursue their dreams. Their voices challenge the notion of exclusion and affirm the humanity of every learner behind bars.

Participant 8 affirmed that society must not be judgmental. He reminded others that they do not know the full story of each PDL's life. His message is one of compassion—look deeper, and you will find someone trying to rise.

Participants 9, 10, and 18 remarked that people should not lose hope. They believe that perseverance and striving for dreams are essential, and that their stories can inspire others to keep going, no matter the obstacles.

Participant 11 noted that all challenges have solutions. She encouraged others not to give up, and to see education as a way to overcome adversity. Her voice is one of quiet strength and unwavering belief.

Participant 12 shared that society must know education is the key to success. She sees ALS as a gateway to opportunity, and she hopes that others will support and invest in learning for all, including those behind bars.

Participant 13 emphasized the need to end discrimination against PDLs. She believes that they are striving to begin new lives, and that their efforts deserve respect. Her message is one of justice and dignity.

Participant 14 explained that justice must be timely. He believes that delayed justice can rob people of their chance to change. His voice is a call for fairness, for reform, and for compassion in the legal system.

Participant 15 expressed that PDLs show society they do not lose hope. He believes that his incarceration is only one of life's challenges, and that with faith and education, he can overcome it. His message is one of spiritual resilience.

Participant 16 conveyed that jail is not just a place of punishment—it is a place of transformation. He believes that facilities should be seen as spaces where people are shaped and prepared for reintegration. His voice reframes incarceration as a process of renewal.

Participants 17 and 19 commented that society must finish their studies to live a decent and good life. They believe that education is the foundation of dignity, and that their stories can inspire others to pursue learning with purpose.

Participant 20 concluded that ALS stories must be shared. He believes that when people hear what incarcerated learners have achieved, they will begin to see them not as criminals, but as individuals with dreams, talents, and the courage to change.

Points of Reflection and Lessons Learned

The stories shared throughout this book are not just accounts of academic achievement—they are testimonies of human resilience, transformation, and the power of second chances. Each learner's voice echoes a truth that society often overlooks: that growth is possible anywhere, even behind bars, and that education is not a privilege—it is a right, a remedy, and a rebirth.

One of the most profound reflections is the realization that **education heals**. For many incarcerated learners, ALS became a space to confront their past, understand their mistakes, and begin the process of emotional recovery. Learning was not just about literacy—it was about dignity. It gave them the language to express regret, the tools to rebuild, and the courage to hope.

Another lesson that emerged is the importance of **community and support**. Whether it was the encouragement of ALS facilitators, the guidance of BJMP personnel, or the solidarity among fellow PDLs, transformation was never a solo journey. These learners thrived because someone believed in them, showed up for them, and reminded them that they mattered.

The narratives also highlight the power of **purpose and perseverance**. Many learners faced doubts, stigma, and logistical challenges. Yet, they persisted. Their stories remind us that change is not instant—

it is earned through effort, reflection, and the decision to keep going, even when the odds seem stacked against them.

A recurring theme is the desire to **give back**. These learners didn't just absorb knowledge—they shared it. They taught others to read, encouraged enrollment in ALS, and became role models within their facilities. Their transformation sparked a ripple effect, proving that education multiplies when passed on.

Equally important is the shift in **identity and self-worth**. Through ALS, learners began to see themselves not as inmates, but as students, mentors, and future contributors to society. They reclaimed parts of themselves that had been buried by shame, and they began to dream again—with clarity and conviction.

The stories also challenge society to **rethink incarceration**. Jail, for these learners, became a place of reflection and renewal—not just punishment. Their journeys call on institutions to invest in education, expand opportunities, and recognize the humanity of every person behind bars.

Perhaps the most powerful lesson is that **transformation is possible**. These learners are living proof that no one is too far gone, too old, or too broken to change. Their achievements remind us that redemption is not a myth—it is a process, and it begins with a single step toward learning.

As we close this book, we carry with us the voices of those who dared to believe in themselves again. Their stories are not just theirs—they belong to all of us. They challenge us to listen more deeply, support more generously, and believe more boldly in the power of education to rebuild lives.

Let these reflections serve as a call to action—for educators, policymakers, families, and communities. Let them remind us that behind every barred window is a mind waiting to be awakened, a heart ready to heal, and a life still worth living.

Epilogue

As the final pages of this book come to a close, what remains is not just a collection of stories, but a chorus of voices—resilient, hopeful, and deeply human. These are the voices of incarcerated learners who dared to believe in change, who chose education over despair, and who now stand as living proof that transformation is possible, even in the most unlikely places.

The journey through ALS inside correctional facilities is not merely about academic achievement. It is about reclaiming identity, restoring dignity, and rewriting the narrative of one's life. Each testimony in this book reveals a moment of awakening—a turning point where a learner decided to rise above regret and reach toward renewal.

These stories remind us that education is not confined to classrooms or campuses. It can thrive in silence, in struggle, and in solitude. It can reach those who have been forgotten, and it can illuminate paths that were once obscured by shame and circumstance. ALS has shown that learning is not just a tool—it is a lifeline.

To the readers of this book—whether educators, policymakers, family members, or fellow citizens—may these voices challenge you to see beyond the bars. May they stir compassion, ignite advocacy, and inspire action. Let this book be a bridge between those inside and those outside, built on understanding, respect, and the shared belief that every person deserves a second chance.

To the learners whose stories fill these pages: your courage is the heartbeat of this book. You have turned confinement into a classroom, and regret into resolve. You have shown that redemption is not a destination—it is a journey, and you are walking it with grace.

And to the world beyond these walls: listen. Learn. Believe. Because behind every barred window is a mind waiting to be awakened, a heart ready to heal, and a life still worth living.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This chapter presents the findings from the focus group discussions conducted with Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners who are Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) at Legazpi City Jail. The data are organized according to the five main research questions of the study, with subtopics drawn from the focus group discussions under each question. Each theme is presented from participants' responses, followed by an analysis and interpretation that connects the findings to the research questions, the conceptual framework, and relevant literature. This structure allows for a clear understanding of the learners' experiences, perspectives, and insights in relation to the objectives of the study.

PERSONAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES DEFINE THE SUCCESS STORIES OF ALS LEARNERS WITHIN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

1.1 The ALS Learners' Turning Points within Correctional Institutions

This section highlights the turning points experienced by ALS learners within correctional institutions. These are significant moments that shaped their attitudes, motivation, and personal growth during incarceration.

1.1.1 Personal Growth and Transformation

For many ALS learners, the journey marked a profound shift in their personal development and outlook on life. The learners' stories show that ALS is more than just a way to study. It became a path for many of them to pick themselves up and regain hope. Majority of the participants stated that attending ALS gave them a chance to reflect on their past and see a brighter future. This shows a clear pattern that learning was not only about academics, but also about feeling whole again. While most participants spoke positively, the level of change varied. Some described a full personal renewal, saying ALS gave them a new purpose. Others simply expressed hope for small improvements, like getting a job after release. What integrates them is that all saw ALS as a turning point that helped them think beyond their life in jail.

These findings relate to Transformative Learning Theory. Mezirow explained that transformation happens when people reflect on their old beliefs and see new possibilities. This is exactly what the learners described: they used their experience in ALS to rebuild their self-image from "inmates with no chance" to "learners with potential." This also reflects Humanistic Education, which believes education should support the whole person, not only their mind but also their emotions, values, and sense of self. Similarly, according to Smith (2021), education in correctional facilities often helps learners build a new self-image and discover purpose in life. In the same way, Johnson (2022) found that inmates who participate in ALS programs often express greater optimism and willingness to rejoin society positively. These studies support the claims made by the research participants that receiving an education while incarcerated offered them a new outlook on themselves and hope for the future.

1.1.2 Academic Achievement and Educational Milestones

A powerful theme among the participants was the pride and motivation drawn from educational accomplishments. can reignite self-worth and open doors to future aspirations.

From the learners' point of view, achievements like graduating or receiving certificates meant a lot more than simply getting a piece of paper. These milestones were evidence that their hard work mattered and was recognized. Many shared that completing junior high school or earning a certificate gave them a deep sense of pride, dignity, and encouragement to keep pursuing their education. These achievements made them feel like they were no longer failures but achievers with proof of progress. This was a strong source of motivation to continue with Senior High School or plan for future jobs. The typical pattern is that

recognition through certificates or graduations helped them build confidence and gave them a sense of dignity. For many, these were the first times they felt celebrated for their efforts. Some participants also shared that it mattered not just to them, but also to their families, who would see their progress and take pride in it. These academic milestones became both personal victories and gifts to their loved ones.

This finding is closely connected with Self-Determination Theory. Deci and Ryan (2020) explained that people try harder when they feel good about themselves, have others to lean on, and get to make their own choices. The students felt proud of what they had achieved, thankful for the support from teachers and friends, and wanted to continue learning. When these things were true, school mattered more to them. In the same way, Lee (2023) noticed that hitting even small school goals in prison made people feel more sure of themselves and hopeful. Davis (2024) also found that digital classes in U.S. prisons helped people believe they could have a better life after prison. What these studies found was just what the students experienced: learning, even one step at a time, can help them believe in themselves and see new chances.

1.1.3 Inspiration and Motivation

Several learners found their turning points through sources of inspiration and renewed ambition. The reflections of the learners show that inspiration and motivation were at the heart of their ALS experience. For some, their turning points came when they realized that ALS allowed them to dream bigger and reach for goals, they never thought possible. For others, inspiration came from seeing classmates, even those older than them, still eager to learn. Families also became powerful motivators, giving the learners strength to continue despite the challenges of PDL. A few participants even said that their first day in ALS gave them hope to keep studying and entirely change their lives. This reveals a clear pattern: inspiration came from diverse sources, yet all led to renewed ambition and determination to succeed.

There were differences in the sources of motivation for learners. These differences reveal that the program touches learners in unique ways. Nevertheless, the emotional tone is consistent: hope, pride, and determination. Regardless of the source, inspiration was the spark that gave meaning to their learning journey.

Recent studies support this perspective. Sala (2024) found that PDL ALS learners in the Philippines often described their families and peers as their strongest motivators, helping them overcome stigma and challenges inside jail. Higgins (2021) emphasized that educational opportunities inside prisons provide not only knowledge but also a renewed sense of self-worth and determination. Similarly, UNESCO UIL (2020) reported that prison education worldwide often inspires learners to see a future beyond their sentences, strengthening resilience. These findings affirm that inspiration and motivation are central to educational success in correctional ALS programs.

1.1.4 Skill Sharing and Creative Expression

Beyond academics, ALS provided a space for learners to express themselves and build meaningful connections. The stories of the learners show that ALS gave them more than just academic learning. It became a place where they could share their talents, connect with others, and build a sense of family. The pattern is clear: ALS offered emotional and social growth by giving learners chances to express themselves and feel connected.

There were differences in how learners experienced this. Although their stories were not the same, the emotional tone was consistent—they all felt joy, pride, and belonging. These experiences are important in the jail setting, where feelings of isolation and hopelessness are common.

Supporting studies align with these findings. Granados (2023) showed that socio-emotional skills programs in correctional settings significantly enhanced inmates' ability to express themselves and

connect with others. Johnson (2021) also reported that creative activities, such as art and group collaboration, increased self-esteem and reduced feelings of isolation among incarcerated learners. UNESCO UIL (2020) likewise recognized that incorporating creativity into prison education fosters resilience and positive identity formation. These studies confirm that ALS functions not only as a pathway to learning but also as a venue for creative and social development

1.2 The Challenges Faced by ALS Learners within Correctional Institutions

This section explores the experiences of ALS learners regarding the difficulties they face within correctional institutions. These challenges impact their engagement, learning process, and overall growth while participating in the program. The experiences shared by the learners are organized below:

1.2.1 Adjustment to Learning Environment and Study Habits

Several participants struggled with adapting to the learning environment inside the correctional facility. The learners' words show that entering ALS was not easy because of the long gap in their schooling and the unusual setting of a jail classroom. Some struggled to remember basic routines, while others simply needed time to feel comfortable again with learning. Despite these difficulties, the participants showed resilience and a willingness to adapt. They also mentioned that the encouragement of ALS teachers and their own patience helped them adjust. The pattern is clear: although the adjustment period was hard, persistence and support allowed learners to overcome the initial discomfort.

Research reinforces these points. Sala (2024) highlighted that PDL ALS learners initially struggle with adjustment but thrive when teachers provide guidance and structure. Davis et al. (2024) found that consistent teacher engagement and adapted learning practices help learners in prison regain their study habits. McNeeley (2023) further noted that PDL learners who adjust well to structured programs are more likely to persist and complete their education. These findings align with the participants' experiences, showing that ALS fosters resilience through support and adaptation.

1.2.2 Age and Time-Related Challenges

Age and the perception of being "too late" to study were recurring concerns. The learners expressed strong concerns about age as a barrier. Some felt left behind, others feared discrimination, and some doubted whether studying at their age was still worthwhile. Yet, with the encouragement of teachers and classmates, they discovered that learning is possible at any age. Their stories show a shift from self-doubt to empowerment, where age no longer defined their ability to learn. The common pattern here is that the support of peers and teachers helped erase feelings of being "too late" and replaced them with confidence. Scholars confirm these insights. Higgins (2021) reported that adult learners in correctional facilities often express initial doubts related to age but eventually thrive when supported by peers and mentors. Sala (2024) documented similar findings among ALS learners in jail, where older participants embraced education as a second chance. Lee (2021) also highlighted that adult learners who overcome age insecurities build stronger motivation to complete their studies. These studies validate the participants' stories, affirming that ALS creates opportunities for growth at any age

1.2.3 Emotional and Psychological Struggles

Emotional burdens and psychological doubts were significant barriers for some learners. The learners described deep emotional struggles such as discouragement, hopelessness, and stress from family or legal problems. These feelings sometimes made them think of quitting. However, the support of classmates and the act of studying itself gave them comfort and hope. For some, education became a distraction from their

problems, while for others it was a way to keep dreaming despite their situation. The pattern shows that ALS acted not only as an academic program but also as a safe space for emotional relief and motivation. Research echoes this. Granados (2023) found that socio-emotional programs in prisons reduce feelings of hopelessness and improve motivation. McNeeley (2023) noted that education reduces psychological distress and provides incarcerated learners with purpose. Royer et al. (2021) also explained that educational engagement during the pandemic helped incarcerated students cope with stress and uncertainty. These findings support the participants' voices, proving that ALS helps ease emotional and psychological struggles

1.2.4 Time Management and Scheduling Conflicts

Balancing ALS with other responsibilities posed logistical challenges. Time management was one of the barriers that learners faced while studying inside the facility. Some learners had to choose between attending ALS classes and meeting work responsibilities. Others found the number of subjects overwhelming. Despite these challenges, the presence of supportive classmates and flexible teachers allowed them to cope. The pattern shows that while scheduling conflicts were common, teamwork and teacher guidance helped learners adjust and continue their studies.

Supporting studies highlight similar findings. Herrera (2023) observed that PDL learners often rely on peer support to balance school and other obligations. Martinez (2022) stressed that flexible teaching schedules in ALS programs are necessary to sustain participation. WorkRise Network (2024) further recommended adaptive scheduling for vocational and academic programs in prisons to maximize outcomes. These studies align with the participants' stories, showing that time management challenges can be resolved through flexibility and collaboration.

1.2.5 Social Integration and Peer Relationships

Some learners faced difficulties in social interaction and building relationships. Adjusting socially was also a challenge for some learners. In a correctional environment where trust is often difficult to build, social interaction requires patience and understanding. This highlights that ALS is not only about academics but also about developing social skills that help learners adapt to group learning. This suggests that social integration is a personal challenge but one that can be overcome through interaction and shared goals.

Research supports this. Smith (2021) found that collaborative learning in facility builds trust and helps students form meaningful social connections. Rivera (2022) also highlighted that peer support is critical for ALS learners, as it strengthens their confidence and persistence. Lee (2023) added that positive peer relationships boost motivation and reduce isolation. These studies confirm that ALS facilitates social integration, creating an environment where learners thrive.

1.2.6 Institutional and Environmental Barriers

The reality of PDL itself was a major challenge for some. The reflections of the learners clearly show that the facility environment itself created serious obstacles to their education. Being PDL meant that they were constantly surrounded by noise, strict routines, and a lack of freedom, which made focusing on learning more difficult. They also experienced restrictions on time, space, and resources, since security protocols often limited when and where classes could take place. Despite these barriers, the encouragement of teachers and the love of family gave them a sense of hope. These accounts highlight the balance between struggle and support—while the institution created many barriers, positive relationships became the reason they kept going.

Looking deeper, participants identified both practical challenges and emotional struggles. On the practical side, they mentioned the lack of quiet spaces, limited access to materials, and interruptions to their schedules. These restrictions disrupted their learning rhythm and made it hard to fully concentrate on their lessons. On the emotional side, the very fact of being PDL weighed heavily on them, often leading to discouragement and a sense of hopelessness. Yet, they also said that a kind teacher or a supportive family message could lift their spirits and make them believe in themselves again. This shows that while the facility system put limits on their education, human connections played a vital role in keeping their motivation alive.

Studies reinforce this theme. Fernandez (2021) described how institutional barriers, such as limited resources and strict rules, often hinder correctional education. Davis et al. (2024) found that systemic challenges in prison learning during COVID-19 required adaptive strategies to maintain participation. UNESCO UIL (2020) similarly noted that supportive educators and families play a decisive role in overcoming environmental challenges in prison education. These findings validate the participants' experiences and stress the importance of strong support networks.

1.3 Changing Perceptions of Education

For many ALS learners, education evolved from being a distant or undervalued concept into a powerful source of hope and transformation. The reflections of the participants show that ALS transformed the way they viewed education. At first, many saw schooling as something far away or even unnecessary. Over time, however, they began to see it as a vital part of their lives, a source of strength that no one could take away from them. This shift was not only about gaining knowledge but also about finding hope, self-worth, and a renewed sense of direction. The accounts reveal a powerful change—from negativity and hesitation to determination and pride.

The changes described by the participants also highlight the role of both teachers and peers. For some, encouragement from classmates and the commitment of ALS teachers pushed them to continue despite their doubts. Others found inspiration in realizing that education was not only for personal growth but also something they could pass on to their children. These differences show that while each learner's journey was unique, the overall impact of ALS was consistent: it gave them a deeper appreciation for learning and a belief in lifelong education.

These changes are confirmed by recent studies. Sala (2024) reported that ALS learners in jail described a shift from skepticism to valuing education as a lasting resource. Mangao et al. (2024) also found that PDL learners in Cavite shifted their literacy views after engaging in ALS programs. Romero-Carazas et al. (2025) emphasized that prison education fosters resocialization by reshaping how PDL individuals perceive the value of education. These sources back the participants' report that education became meaningful and life changing.

In summary, the reflections show that ALS allowed learners to move from doubt and negativity toward confidence and purpose. By rediscovering the value of education, they embraced it as a source of personal growth and a gift they could share with others. This theme answers the research question by showing how ALS changed not only their knowledge but also their mindset, giving them renewed hope and meaning through learning.

1.4 Milestones and Accomplishments

The learners identified a range of accomplishments that marked significant milestones in their ALS journey. The reflections of the learners reveal that accomplishments in ALS were diverse and meaningful. For some, completing academic levels such as Junior High or passing Grade 11 represented not just

certificates but proof that they could overcome obstacles and achieve success. These milestones symbolized progress and inspired hope for a better future. For others, the real achievements were in personal growth, like gaining confidence, guiding others, and discovering strengths they never knew they had. Both academic and non-academic accomplishments show that ALS impacts the whole person, shaping both knowledge and character.

The accounts also highlight how inspiration from family and peers gave deeper meaning to their achievements. Many learners saw their success not just for themselves but as something to make their children and families proud. Others expressed joy in helping classmates and sharing what they learned, proving that ALS fostered not only learning but also community and service. This pattern shows that accomplishments in ALS are tied to both personal pride and the desire to inspire others.

Research supports the value of milestones. McNeeley (2023) found that formal and vocational milestones in facility education boost employment prospects and reduce recidivism risks. Albert et al. (2024) emphasized that ALS certifications give learners stronger confidence and motivation to pursue higher goals. Romero-Carazas et al. (2025) noted that education programs in facility act as milestones that mark social reintegration. These studies back the participants' view that milestones matter both personally and practically.

In summary, the reflections show that milestones and accomplishments in ALS go beyond academic certificates. They include life lessons, service to others, and the growth of confidence and self-worth. These stories demonstrate that ALS is not only about formal education but also about preparing learners to thrive with dignity, purpose, and pride in themselves.

1.5 The Participants' Proposed Chapter Titles for their ALS Experiences

This section presents the chapter titles proposed by the participants to reflect their ALS learning experiences. These provide insight into how the learners perceive and summarize their personal journeys within the program. The responses are organized below:

1.5.1 Hope and New Beginnings

Many participants viewed ALS as a gateway to renewal, hope, and transformation. The chosen titles reveal that ALS gave participants a fresh sense of hope and a chance for new beginnings. Their words show that education inside the correctional facility was not an ending but a starting point for transformation. For many, ALS became a light during dark times, reminding them that despite hardships, there are always new doors to open and goals to pursue. The pattern is clear: hope and renewal were central to how they viewed their ALS journey. These titles symbolize not just achievements but the emotional rebirth that ALS inspired.

Looking deeper, the learners connected hope with perseverance, resilience, and the possibility of a brighter future. Together, these voices demonstrate that hope is not abstract—it is lived out in determination, strength, and a renewed outlook on life.

These ideas are echoed in the literature. Sala (2024) found that learners often frame their in-jail education as a new beginning. Baccal and Ormilla (2021) emphasized that ALS can transform perceptions of learners, motivating them to see hope in education. Romero-Carazas et al. (2025) highlighted that prison education supports optimism and resocialization. These sources validate the titles as meaningful personal narratives, not just labels.

1.5.2 Education as Empowerment

For others, education itself became the central theme of their chapter—an empowering force that reshaped

their lives. The titles chosen by the learners in this theme show how ALS allowed them to see education as a source of power and transformation. They expressed that education is not only about lessons but also about equipping themselves with tools to build a better life. For these participants, education became a pathway to strength, independence, and a brighter future beyond the walls of incarceration. Their reflections highlight a shift from seeing education as optional to recognizing it as essential for success and growth.

Looking closer, participants emphasized the idea of education as a key—something that can unlock opportunities even in the most difficult conditions. They believed that despite being behind bars, education gave them dignity and confidence. It also showed them that there are people willing to support their journey, making education a shared effort of teachers, classmates, and mentors. This proves that empowerment through education is not only personal but also social, as it connects learners to a network of support and encouragement.

The research supports this belief. Borela (2020) showed that ALS programs can empower juvenile learners by giving them access to education as a right. Mukeredzi (2021) found that prisoners saw adult education as empowering, giving them dignity and purpose. Romero-Carazas et al. (2025) stressed that prison education helps learners reclaim agency and social value. These studies back the learners' view of education as an instrument for change.

1.5.3 Change, Growth, and Perseverance

Transformation and resilience were recurring motifs. The proposed titles in this theme highlight the transformative power of ALS in helping learners embrace change, persevere through trials, and grow stronger in the process. For many, ALS symbolized a turning point, showing them that even in a difficult environment, growth is possible. They viewed perseverance as the key to success, celebrating their ability to endure pain, struggles, and challenges without giving up. The reflections illustrate that education was not only about knowledge but also about building inner strength and resilience.

Looking closer, the learners tied change to direction, growth to effort, and perseverance to triumph. Participants expressed that ALS gave them the courage to face their trials, redefine themselves, and move toward better futures. These accounts reveal a common pattern: by holding on and staying determined, learners not only completed their studies but also developed a renewed sense of purpose and hope.

Recent studies agree. Mangao et al. (2024) documented how ALS learners in correctional facilities linked literacy gains to perseverance. Mukeredzi (2021) emphasized that persistence is key to adult education in prisons. Romero-Carazas et al. (2025) found that perseverance in prison education is a critical element of resocialization. These works confirm that the titles reflect genuine experiences of change and perseverance.

1.5.4 Personal Journeys and Self-Discovery

Some participants focused on their individual paths and inner growth. The titles under this theme reveal how learners used ALS as a pathway to better understand themselves and their personal journeys. Education was described not just as academic training, but as a process of reflection, healing, and self-discovery. For some, ALS became a recreation that helped them ease their burdens, while for others it was a stepping stone to a better future. These perspectives show that ALS supported both emotional relief and personal growth, giving participants a sense of renewal and possibility.

Looking deeper, learners emphasized that through ALS they could start fresh, redefine who they are, and imagine who they could become. Some participants described their experiences as a mix of struggles and

rewards, while others expressed hope for transformation into the best version of themselves. The common thread is clear: ALS gave them space to rediscover their identity and chart new paths for the future.

Research supports the personal dimension of prison education. Albert et al. (2024) showed that ALS learners undergo self-discovery as they engage in meaningful education. Mukeredzi (2021) highlighted that adult learners in prison often describe their experiences as deeply personal. Romero-Carazas et al. (2025) confirmed that prison education fosters self-reflection and self-acceptance, which aid resocialization. These studies confirm that ALS supports both learning and inner transformation.

ROLE OF THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM (ALS) IN FOSTERING SELF-WORTH, PURPOSE, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

2.1 ALS as a Path to Self-Discovery

This section highlights how ALS served as a means for learners to reflect on their lives and rediscover their inner strengths. It presents their insights on how the program helped them reshape their identity and sense of direction, showing that self-discovery became a vital part of their learning journey. The participants' responses are organized into themes as follows.

2.1.1 Rediscovering Purpose and Direction

ALS has served as a compass for many PDLs, helping them navigate toward a renewed sense of purpose and personal transformation. These show how ALS provided them with a renewed sense of direction and meaning. For many, the program was not only about learning academic subjects but also about reshaping their lives. These voices reveal a pattern of personal renewal: learners see ALS as a compass that brings them hope, guiding them to embrace transformation and redemption.

In connection to these, Romero-Carazas et al. (2025), who highlighted that prison education plays a crucial role in resocialization, providing PDL individuals with opportunities to redefine their sense of self and life direction. Similarly, Mangao et al. (2024) found that ALS programs in correctional facilities in Cavite provided learners with a renewed sense of purpose, enabling them to view education as a pathway to personal growth and transformation. Mukeredzi (2021) also reported that adult learners in facility perceived education as a turning point that encouraged them to change their self-identity and strive for reintegration. These studies confirm that ALS not only provides education but also supports personal transformation and the rediscovery of purpose.

2.1.2 Strengthening Knowledge and Skills

For many, ALS was a gateway to learning that extended far beyond basic literacy. These highlight that ALS was more than a pathway to completing education; it became a means to acquire practical skills and intellectual confidence. Collectively, these experiences demonstrate that ALS not only enhances basic literacy but also cultivates practical competencies and fosters learners' confidence in their own intellectual abilities.

This is consistent with findings from Albert et al. (2024), who concluded that ALS serves as a critical platform for literacy and skill-building among marginalized learners in the Philippines. Borela (2020) similarly noted that ALS implementation for juvenile learners highlighted the program's strength in equipping them with both academic and life skills. These studies validate the participants' experiences, showing that ALS enhances both knowledge and practical skill sets.

2.1.3 Building Self-Worth and Confidence

ALS also played a vital role in helping PDLs rebuild their self-esteem and interpersonal skills. These reveal that ALS was not only about learning academics but also about rebuilding self-worth and

confidence. These experiences demonstrate that ALS facilitates emotional healing and fosters a positive self-image, both of which are essential for reintegration and personal growth. The program helped learners see themselves as capable individuals who can actively contribute to their communities.

Research backs these findings. Baccal and Ormilla (2021) found that ALS fosters not just academic learning but also self-esteem and confidence among learners in the Philippines. Rivera (2023) further highlighted that supportive learning environments contribute to building self-worth, which is crucial for sustaining participation in correctional ALS programs. These studies validate the participants' experiences that ALS can empower individuals by rebuilding their confidence and social abilities.

2.1.4 Motivation and Perseverance

The encouragement and dedication of ALS teachers were instrumental in motivating learners to persevere. They played a critical role in building perseverance and sustaining learners' motivation to continue despite the challenges.

These accounts reflect how the human connection within ALS, through teachers and mentors, can reignite motivation and resilience.

These insights are consistent with broader findings. Albert et al. (2024) concluded that teacher commitment and encouragement have a direct influence on learners' persistence in ALS programs across the Philippines. Higgins (2021) found that in prison education, supportive teacher-student relationships were linked to stronger motivation and sustained learning engagement. Romero-Carazas et al. (2025) also emphasized that mentorship within prison education builds resilience and drives PDLs learners to pursue their goals. Together, these studies validate that teacher support is not just instructional—it is a powerful motivator that nurtures perseverance and purpose among learners.

2.1.5 Aspirations for a Better Future

ALS inspired many PDLs to envision a brighter future beyond incarceration. The participants' reflections indicate that ALS provided a foundation for rebuilding hope and envisioning a future beyond PDLs. These accounts reveal how ALS helped learners not only to value education but also to dream again, this time with a more explicit purpose and renewed direction. The program provided them with tools to envision futures where they could live with dignity and make a positive contribution to society.

These insights are similar with Evans and Minas' (2021) findings, who reported that correctional education programs encourage goal setting and strengthen hope among PDL learners, helping them plan for reentry. Similarly, Davis and Drake (2022) explained that prison-based education enhances employment opportunities after release, while inspiring participants to pursue long-term goals, especially when life skills components are included. More recently, Trevino, Petersilia, and Svejnar (2024) highlighted that adult education programs in correctional institutions not only lower recidivism but also reinforce learners' self-concept, resilience, and their ability to envision productive futures. Together, these studies validate that ALS nurtures aspirations and empowers learners to rebuild their lives with dignity and direction.

2.2 Transformation of Self-Perception

ALS has profoundly reshaped how PDLs view themselves, instilling discipline, confidence, and a renewed sense of identity.

The responses of the participants show that ALS not only teaches academic knowledge but also reshapes how learners define themselves as individuals. Their stories suggest that personal transformation is possible even within restrictive environments, such as correctional institutions. When participants describe themselves as more disciplined, confident, and hopeful, it implies that ALS is helping to address deeper

emotional and social needs, not just educational gaps. This shift in self-perception has significant implications for rehabilitation, as it suggests that education can restore dignity and prepare individuals for a meaningful reintegration into society. Moreover, when learners report gaining respect, courage, and pride, their responses show that ALS cultivates positive identity traits that can reduce negative behaviors and encourage active participation in both learning and community life. In this way, the transformation of self-perception highlights the potential of ALS to break cycles of hopelessness and to rebuild individuals into more responsible and motivated citizens.

This implication is supported by Schuster and Stickle (2022), who emphasized in their meta-analysis that prison education is closely tied to improvements in self-concept and self-esteem, which in turn reduce recidivism and promote reintegration. Likewise, Griffith and Zettler (2024) noted that incarcerated learners often report identity reconstruction through education, which helps them see themselves as capable and future-oriented individuals rather than defined solely by their crimes. These studies confirm that the transformation of self-perception described by the participants is a critical outcome of ALS, extending far beyond academics—it lays the foundation for long-term personal and social change.

2.3 Emerging Dreams and Aspirations

ALS has sparked a wide range of dreams and goals among PDLs, many of which center on education, family, and future livelihoods. The participants' dreams and goals, for family, education, lawful employment, and business, demonstrate that ALS does more than teach facts: it reshapes learners' futures. When PDLs speak about wanting to be better parents, finish Senior High, start businesses, or "finish their studies," they are signaling a shift from short-term survival to long-term planning and responsibility; this matters because goal-oriented thinking is strongly linked to successful reintegration and lower reoffending. The fact that many describe concrete ambitions, such as education, employment, and family stability, implies that ALS helps translate learning into practical, post-release plans that can improve economic security and social bonds. If these aspirations are supported by training, credentials, and post-release employment help, they become protective factors that reduce the chances of returning to crime. In short, the dreams participants named are not just personal wishes; they are practical stepping stones toward rehabilitation, stronger family ties, and better community reintegration.

McNeeley (2023) found that vocational and training programs delivered in custody were associated with improved employment outcomes after release and contributed to lower rates of reoffending among participants, suggesting that skills-focused education helps turn aspirations into jobs. The Vera Institute (2023) reported that participation in college-in-prison programs is associated with significant reductions in reconviction and increases in motivation and future orientation, indicating that higher-quality educational programs can alter life trajectories. Connell et al. (2023), in a systematic review, concluded that employment-focused interventions delivered around the time of release can improve some employment outcomes, which reinforces the idea that learners' education-driven aspirations have the best chance of succeeding when education is paired with employment supports.

2.4 The Impact of their Participation in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) on how Others Perceive them

This section discusses how the participants' involvement in ALS influenced the way they were viewed by their families, peers, and communities. The participants' responses are organized into themes as follows.

2.4.1 Recognition of Personal Transformation

Many PDL shared that ALS helped shift public perception, allowing others to see them as individuals cap-

able of change and growth. These highlighted that ALS not only transforms how PDL view themselves but also how others perceive them. Recognition from peers, teachers, family, and the broader community suggests that education can help break down stigma and redefine PDL learners as individuals capable of growth and change. This shift in perception is significant, as it implies that ALS contributes to restoring dignity and social identity, which are often damaged by PDL. When PDL are viewed as hardworking learners rather than offenders, it creates opportunities for trust, respect, and reintegration. The responses also suggest that transformation recognized by others reinforces the learners' motivation to sustain positive behavior and continue pursuing education. In this way, recognition serves as both validation of progress and encouragement for continued rehabilitation, thereby bridging the gap between correctional environments and society.

This is supported by Behan (2020), who found that prison education enhances not just academic skills but also public recognition of PDL learners as capable of transformation, reducing stigma and fostering reintegration. Similarly, McNeill and Armstrong (2022) emphasized that visible educational achievements reshape community perceptions, presenting PDL individuals as motivated citizens rather than permanent offenders. Together, these studies affirm that recognition of change through education is a crucial factor in rebuilding identity and social acceptance for PDLs.

2.4.2 Becoming a Role Model and Source of Inspiration

Several participants expressed pride in becoming role models within and beyond the facility. These reflections show how learners are empowered to lead by example and uplift others through their commitment.

The data show that learners not only benefit individually but also have a ripple effect within the correctional community. When PDL describe themselves as role models or inspirations, it implies that education fosters leadership and positive influence among peers. This transformation has broader implications for rehabilitation: it demonstrates that educated PDL can help create supportive learning environments, motivating others to participate and persist in their studies. The fact that learners are recognized by both co-PDL and the outside community highlights that ALS reshapes not just self-identity but also social roles, turning incarcerated individuals into sources of encouragement and proof that change is possible. In this sense, becoming a role model through ALS strengthens solidarity inside correctional facilities and prepares learners to inspire positive change after release.

This is supported by Hopkins and Farley (2021), who found that PDL learners who succeed in education often emerge as peer leaders, fostering a culture of encouragement and raising aspirations for others in custody. Similarly, Ubah and Robinson (2022) argued that prison education promotes prosocial identity, where learners become motivators and community role models, helping to counteract the negative influences of being PDL. Together, these findings affirm that ALS participants who serve as inspirations are not only achieving personal growth but are also contributing to the collective rehabilitation of their peers.

2.4.3 Improved Social Perception and Respect

Participants gain respect and acceptance from others. Based on their responses, ALS contributes to reducing stigma and reshaping how others perceive PDL learners. When PDL are viewed as responsible, educated, and decent individuals, it implies that education not only enhances their skills but also restores their dignity in the eyes of their peers, family, and the broader community. This shift in perception is crucial because stigma often acts as a barrier to reintegration, leading to exclusion and limiting opportunities after release. By changing how learners are viewed, ALS creates a bridge between

incarceration and community acceptance, making reintegration more possible. The implication is that education is not simply about gaining knowledge but about rebuilding social identity, fostering mutual respect, and challenging negative labels that define PDL solely by their offenses.

Supporting this, Maruna and Mann (2020) highlighted that identity transformation through education is key to reducing stigma and promoting reintegration, as it helps people with convictions to be seen as learners rather than offenders. In addition, Owens and Hutchinson (2021) found that correctional education programs foster respect and trust within both correctional facilities and the broader community, contributing to stronger social ties and reducing social exclusion. These studies confirm that the improved respect described by the participants is a direct outcome of education's power to change public perception and rebuild dignity.

2.4.4 Personal Growth Reflected in Relationships

Some participants described how their internal growth had a positive influence on their relationships with others. These indicate that the program not only changes how they view themselves but also how they engage with others. Their responses suggest that education promotes empathy, mutual respect, and community building within correctional settings. When learners describe themselves as becoming "good to others by being good to themselves" or being proud to be seen as reformed, it indicates that internal growth leads to healthier social interactions. These experiences suggest that ALS promotes prosocial behaviors, making participants more capable of forming positive relationships inside the facility and, eventually, outside in society. Furthermore, the emphasis on belonging and shared excitement in group learning sessions fosters social cohesion, counteracting the isolation and stigma that often accompany incarceration. In this way, personal growth through ALS strengthens not just individual resilience but also collective well-being, paving the way for smoother reintegration into families and communities.

Supporting this, Meek and Lewis (2021) found that prison education fosters prosocial identity development, which directly enhances how PDL learners interact with peers and authority figures. Likewise, Tett and Maclachlan (2022) emphasized that adult education in correctional contexts improves social relationships and a sense of belonging, both of which are critical for rehabilitation and reintegration. Together, these findings align with the participants' experiences, confirming that ALS plays a vital role in reshaping relationships through personal growth.

2.5 Growth, Regret, and Purpose: PDLs' Reflections on Life before Joining ALS

This section presents the reflections of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) as they look back on their lives before entering the Alternative Learning System (ALS), offering a window into their past struggles, missed opportunities, and turning points.

2.5.1 Messages of Growth, Redemption, and Gratitude

Many participants would speak to their younger selves with a sense of gratitude and pride for the transformation they have undergone. These reveal that they were provided with the opportunity to reclaim their dignity and narrate their own stories of growth and redemption. Speaking to their younger selves with gratitude suggests that learners recognize education as a turning point that reshaped not only their academic capacity but also their sense of identity and purpose. These responses suggest that ALS fosters a space for self-forgiveness and resilience, where past mistakes are not erased but reframed as lessons that lead to personal transformation. This internal dialogue reflects a more profound psychological shift, where PDLs view themselves as worthy of hope, progress, and contributing to others. Such expressions of gratitude and redemption are powerful because they demonstrate that the program fosters healing, enabling

learners to integrate their past experiences into a more positive and purposeful sense of self. Ultimately, this shift underscores the rehabilitative potential of education, demonstrating that ALS is not merely an academic program but also a means of restoring hope and humanity.

Supporting this, Costelloe and Warner (2020) noted that prison education helps PDL learners reconstruct their personal narratives in ways that affirm dignity and support desistance from crime. Similarly, Pike and Farley (2022) found that reflective learning in prison settings enables individuals to express gratitude and self-compassion, both of which are key elements in sustaining long-term rehabilitation. These findings reinforce that the participants' gratitude and acknowledgment of growth are clear markers of ALS's role in supporting not just intellectual development but also emotional and moral transformation

2.5.2 Encouragement to Pursue Education and Dreams

A strong theme among the responses was the encouragement to pursue education early and wholeheartedly. These messages reflect the deep appreciation for education that emerged and underscore how they instilled not only a renewed sense of self-worth but also a firm conviction about the value of education as a foundation for life. By advising their younger selves to continue studying, hold on to hope, and see education as a "weapon" for the future, the participants reveal that their experiences transformed their view of learning from a missed opportunity into a life priority. The implications are significant: these messages show how education inside correctional facilities can break cycles of regret and instead plant the seeds of resilience, persistence, and purpose. Encouraging themselves and others to dream and persevere demonstrates that they develop a forward-looking mindset, one where education is no longer viewed as inaccessible, but as essential for achieving dignity, stability, and reintegration. This shift highlights the role of ALS in inspiring not just individual growth but also broader cultural change, as learners become advocates for the power of education.

Supporting this, Runell (2020) found that prison education cultivates hope and goal setting, encouraging learners to view themselves as capable of achieving meaningful futures. Likewise, Kim and Clark (2021) emphasized that educational participation among incarcerated adults fosters self-advocacy and motivation, with many becoming vocal supporters of education as a tool for both personal and community transformation. These findings align with the participants' advice to their younger selves, confirming that ALS nurtures encouragement and advocacy that extend beyond the classroom.

2.5.3 Reflections of Regret and Realization

Some participants expressed regret and wished they had made better choices earlier in life. These reflections are raw and honest, revealing the emotional weight of missed opportunities and the desire to rewrite the past. They have an open space for self-reflection, allowing PDL to confront missed opportunities and poor decisions from their past. Their messages to their younger selves highlight both the emotional weight of unfulfilled dreams and the recognition that education could have steered their lives in a different direction. The implication is that ALS not only provides new skills but also creates a framework for critical reflection, where learners process their histories and turn regret into motivation for change. Such realizations are crucial for rehabilitation, as they signal a shift from denial or blame toward personal accountability and future-oriented growth. While regret carries pain, it also fuels determination to make better choices, reinforcing education as both a corrective tool and a catalyst for building resilience against repeating past mistakes.

Supporting this, Schinkel and Hardie (2020) emphasized that reflective learning in prison encourages incarcerated individuals to acknowledge past missteps, which becomes a vital step toward desistance and personal growth. Similarly, Maruna and LeBel (2021) found that narratives of regret among incarcerated

learners often evolve into "redemption scripts," where regret is reframed into motivation for transformation and reintegration. These studies confirm that the regrets voiced by participants are not signs of hopelessness, but essential milestones in their journey of change through education.

2.5.4 Surprise at Personal Transformation

A few participants expressed astonishment at how far they have come. This sense of disbelief underscores the dramatic shift in mindset and behavior. They were surprised at their own transformation, which shows how ALS can exceed even their personal expectations, reshaping habits, mindsets, and self-concept. The astonishment expressed reflects the depth of change that education can inspire, especially among individuals who once disengaged from learning or lacked direction. This sense of disbelief implies that ALS not only provides academic learning but also disrupts negative patterns and instills new discipline and consistency in daily life. When learners acknowledge that incarceration and education together produced a dramatic shift, it highlights the rehabilitative potential of structured programs in correctional settings. Most importantly, this surprise reveals that transformation is not always anticipated but emerges gradually, reinforcing the idea that education can reframe identities in ways that even learners themselves had not thought possible.

Supporting this, Behan (2020) reported that many PDL learners express astonishment at their own progress, noting that prison education helps them discover capacities they had long underestimated. Likewise, Meek (2021) found that education in correctional facilities often surprises learners by fostering new habits of persistence and attendance, transforming individuals previously disengaged from schooling into committed students. These studies confirm that the surprise described by participants is a natural marker of profound personal change, showing ALS's effectiveness in transforming learners beyond their own expectations.

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL SUCCESS OF ALS LEARNERS BEHIND BARS

3.1 Personal Qualities helped the learners succeed in ALS

This section describes the personal qualities that contributed to the success of learners in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Their reflections emphasize the values, attitudes, and inner strengths that enabled them to persevere and achieve their goals despite the challenges they faced. The participant's responses are organized into the following themes.

3.1.1 Resilience and Perseverance

A strong theme among ALS learners is the power of perseverance in the face of adversity. These reflections show that resilience is not just a trait—it is a lifeline for incarcerated learners striving to reclaim their futures. These highlight resilience and perseverance as essential qualities that enabled them to succeed in ALS despite the difficult circumstances of PDLs. Their reflections suggest that education within correctional institutions is not just about acquiring academic content, but also about cultivating the resilience to overcome setbacks and pursue long-term goals. By framing perseverance as the "key" to success, the learners demonstrate that resilience is not innate but strengthened through structured learning and supportive environments. These narratives suggest that ALS functions as both a practical educational pathway and a psychological anchor, equipping PDL with the determination to withstand adversity and remain focused on the future. Importantly, resilience cultivated in prison education has broader implications, as it can serve as a protective factor against recidivism, supporting reintegration and sustained personal growth after release.

Supporting this, Langer (2021) found that PDLs learners who develop perseverance through education display greater commitment to rehabilitation and reintegration, showing resilience as a learned capacity that sustains change. Similarly, Appleton and Meek (2022) emphasized that jail education fosters coping strategies and determination, which help learners transform challenges into opportunities for personal growth and improvement. These findings confirm that resilience, as expressed by ALS participants, serves as a lifeline, enabling them to reclaim their futures and persist in their transformation.

3.1.2 Patience, Humility, and Acceptance

Many learners emphasized the importance of patience and humility in their journey. These insights reveal how emotional maturity and self-awareness are foundational to personal transformation.

The participants' responses indicate that education in correctional settings encompasses not only intellectual development but also the cultivation of emotional maturity. Their emphasis on patience, humility, and acceptance suggests that ALS helps learners recognize the value of inner discipline as much as academic achievement. The implication is that correctional education fosters self-awareness, enabling learners to confront their past with honesty while building the personal qualities necessary for change. By practicing humility and acceptance, PDLs strengthen their ability to cope with challenges and to rebuild respectful relationships with others. This demonstrates that ALS contributes to rehabilitation by guiding learners to develop character traits that are vital for reintegration, such as patience in facing societal judgment and humility in acknowledging mistakes. Ultimately, these responses highlight that emotional growth is a cornerstone of transformation, making education a holistic tool for healing and reform.

Supporting this, Armstrong and Ludlow (2020) found that prison education encourages self-reflection and humility, which play a crucial role in identity transformation and desistance from crime. Likewise, Pike (2022) emphasized that learning in correctional environments promotes patience and emotional regulation, essential skills for maintaining resilience while inside the facility and reintegration. These findings confirm that the qualities expressed by ALS learners, patience, humility, and acceptance, are not only personal achievements but also critical steps toward lasting transformation.

3.1.3 Self-Discipline and Focus

Self-discipline emerged as a defining trait among successful ALS learners. These habits reflect a deep commitment to learning and personal accountability.

These highlight that self-discipline and focus are central to success. Their reflections imply that education in correctional institutions instills habits of responsibility, consistency, and self-control; qualities that extend beyond academics into daily life. By learning to listen, attending classes regularly, and making thoughtful decisions, PDLs demonstrate that they are taking responsibility for their growth and actively shaping a new version of themselves. The implication is that ALS does more than teach content; it creates a structured environment where learners can practice discipline and develop life skills that are essential for reintegration into society. Cultivating self-discipline within the facility also reduces idle time and negative behaviors, replacing them with constructive habits that contribute to the rehabilitation process. In this sense, discipline and focus are not just tools for educational success, but also pathways to building trust, respect, and responsibility that extend beyond the classroom.

Supporting this, Brunton-Smith and McCarthy (2022) found that PDL learners who developed self-discipline through educational programs were more likely to persist with studies and avoid misconduct inside facilities. Likewise, Eikeland and Reuss (2020) emphasized that correctional education fosters structured routines and focus, which help learners build resilience and prepare for reintegration. These studies reinforce the participants' reflections, confirming that self-discipline is a defining outcome of cor-

ectional learning that supports both academic and personal transformation.

3.1.4 Kindness, Positivity, and Social Awareness

Some learners found success through kindness and positive engagement with others. These qualities foster a supportive learning environment and strengthen community bonds within the facility.

These reveal that success is not only measured through academic progress but also through the cultivation of kindness, positivity, and awareness of others. Their emphasis on being good, respectful, and cooperative shows that education fosters social skills that help create a supportive and inclusive learning community within the correctional setting. The implication is that ALS nurtures prosocial attitudes, encouraging learners to shift away from self-centered behaviors and instead prioritize empathy and collective well-being. This development of social awareness is critical, as it prepares learners to reintegrate into society with stronger interpersonal skills and a more positive orientation toward others. By promoting kindness and positivity, ALS helps reduce tensions within facilities, strengthens peer support, and lays the groundwork for smoother community reintegration after release.

Supporting this, Millana et al. (2021) found that prison education contributes to positive behavior change by fostering empathy and prosocial values, which in turn improve peer relationships and reduce conflict inside facilities. Likewise, Duguid and Pawson (2022) argued that kindness and prosocial learning promote community-oriented rehabilitation, with PDL learners reporting increased social awareness and cooperative attitudes after participating in educational programs. These findings align with the participants' reflections, confirming that ALS contributes to fostering a culture of respect and positivity, which is essential for both personal growth and societal reintegration.

3.1.5 Courage, Confidence, and Eagerness to Learn

Courage and a thirst for knowledge were also vital. The participants' reflections highlight that courage and an intense eagerness to learn are central drivers of success. Their stories suggest that education within correctional settings not only fosters knowledge but also builds confidence to face challenges and the boldness to embrace change. By describing themselves as brave, eager, and hardworking, learners show that ALS nurtures qualities essential for lifelong learning and resilience. The implication is that courage and curiosity enable incarcerated learners to redefine themselves, transforming confinement into an opportunity for growth rather than stagnation. Moreover, when these internal factors are combined with humility, kindness, discipline, and perseverance, they form a holistic foundation that strengthens rehabilitation and prepares learners for reintegration. In this sense, ALS does more than teach skills; it instills character traits that can help sustain success long after release.

Supporting this, Vandala (2020) found that participation in correctional education fosters self-confidence and a renewed willingness to learn, which are strongly linked to persistence in education and post-release success. Similarly, Allmendinger et al. (2021) showed that courage and positive academic identity developed in adult learning programs enhance motivation and encourage learners to pursue lifelong education, even under challenging circumstances. These findings validate the participants' reflections, confirming that courage and eagerness to learn are not only markers of individual growth but also protective factors for long-term rehabilitation.

3.2 The Internal and External Factors that Contributed to the Academic and Personal Achievement of ALS Learners Behind Bars

This section presents the internal and external factors that influenced the academic and personal achievements of PDL ALS learners. It highlights how their motivation, determination, and resilience

interacted with the support provided by teachers, peers, and institutions to foster meaningful learning experiences and personal growth. The participants' responses are organized into the following themes.

3.2.1 Sources of Support and Motivation

Learners behind bars found strength and motivation from deeply personal and relational sources. These relationships provided emotional fuel, reminding them of the people they want to make proud and the lives they hope to rebuild. Whether it was the dream of becoming a better parent, sibling, or child, family stood as a beacon of hope and purpose throughout their journey.

These reveal that support systems such as faith, life experiences, teachers, and especially family, are central to sustaining their educational journey inside the facility. These responses suggest that while individual resilience is crucial, external sources of encouragement provide the emotional support necessary to persevere in the face of adversity. The emphasis on family as the most consistent motivator underscores the relational dimension of rehabilitation: learners are not only studying for themselves but also for the loved ones they hope to reunite with and support in the future. This highlights the rehabilitative power of education, as it reconnects PDL learners with their roles as parents, children, and siblings, reinforcing their sense of responsibility and purpose. The implication is that ALS succeeds not only by offering academic instruction but also by nurturing these relational and spiritual motivators that transform learning into a profoundly personal and future-oriented pursuit.

Supporting this, Britton (2024) emphasized that family connections are one of the strongest protective factors in correctional education, serving as a primary motivator for persistence and reducing recidivism. Similarly, Payton (2021) found that both teacher support and family encouragement foster long-term engagement in prison education, with family relationships acting as powerful anchors of hope and resilience. These findings affirm that the learners' reliance on faith, teachers, and family reflects a universal truth: rehabilitation thrives when education is rooted in supportive and meaningful relationships.

3.2.2 Impact of ALS Teachers on Learning Growth

ALS teachers played a transformative role in the educational journey of PDL, offering not just instruction but compassion, patience, and unwavering support.

These show that ALS teachers are more than educators; they are mentors who shape the learners' persistence, confidence, and personal growth. Their gratitude for the facilitators' patience, compassion, and guidance implies that teaching in correctional settings requires not only subject knowledge but also relational skills that build trust and motivation. This suggests that teachers play a pivotal role in creating a safe and supportive learning environment where learners can thrive despite the challenges of PDL. The implication is clear: when teachers demonstrate care and encouragement, they help learners internalize values such as perseverance and discipline, which extend far beyond the classroom. In doing so, ALS teachers not only contribute to academic progress but also foster rehabilitation by modeling positive behavior and offering hope to their learners.

Supporting this, Bhatti (2020) found that the relational qualities of PDL educators, empathy, encouragement, and respect, are key drivers of student engagement and persistence. Likewise, Behan (2020) highlighted that teachers in correctional education are often remembered less for their lessons and more for their compassion and belief in learners' potential, which significantly shapes long-term transformation. These findings support the participants' reflections, indicating that the role of ALS teachers is crucial to both educational and rehabilitative outcomes.

3.3 The Role of the Learning Environment Inside the Correctional Facility in Shaping Their Success

This section discusses how the learning environment within the correctional facility influenced the educational progress and personal development of ALS learners. It underscores the importance of classroom atmosphere, availability of resources, and the support of facilitators in creating conditions that foster success. The participants' responses are organized into the following themes.

3.3.1 A Conducive and Supportive Learning Space

Many participants emphasized that the physical and emotional atmosphere within the facility played a vital role in their academic and personal growth. The participants' reflections imply that the learning environment within correctional facilities significantly affects their motivation and academic growth. Their emphasis on cleanliness, order, and comfort implies that a positive physical and emotional atmosphere helps restore dignity, encourages focus, and reduces stress, making education more effective. This highlights that rehabilitation is not only about curriculum or teaching but also about creating spaces where learners feel respected and capable of learning. A supportive environment within facility shows PDL that they are valued as learners, which can strengthen self-esteem and determination to pursue their studies. The implication is that investing in conducive learning spaces within correctional facilities is a vital step in promoting both academic achievement and personal transformation, as learners associate structured, respectful environments with the possibility of a better future.

Supporting this, Kaplan and Patrick (2019) found that the quality of the physical learning environment in correctional settings strongly influences learners' concentration, motivation, and sense of self-worth. Similarly, Farley and Pike (2025) emphasized that structured, clean, and safe environments enhance educational engagement and contribute to rehabilitation by reinforcing dignity and hope. These findings confirm the participants' views that a conducive and supportive learning environment is not a luxury, but a crucial element in their success.

3.3.2 Guidance from BJMP Personnel and ALS Teachers

The presence and dedication of BJMP personnel and ALS teacher were repeatedly cited as transformative. These highlight that the guidance of BJMP personnel and ALS teacher goes beyond maintaining order and teaching; it creates a rehabilitative environment where PDLs feel supported, motivated, and valued. Their accounts imply that when correctional officers and educators embody compassion, patience, and vision, they become powerful agents of change, helping learners see PDL not as the end of opportunity but as a turning point. The recognition of BJMP personnel as reformers and mentors indicates that institutional support is essential for transforming correctional spaces into communities of learning and growth. The implication is that education programs thrive when security staff and teachers work hand in hand, modeling discipline and encouragement while providing a sense of stability and safety. This collaboration not only enables academic progress but also reinforces rehabilitation by showing PDL that change is possible through collective guidance and care.

Supporting this, VAndala (2020) found that the supportive role of correctional officers and educators fosters trust and strengthens rehabilitation outcomes, as learners are more motivated when they feel respected and guided. Similarly, Diego and Luqman (2023) emphasized that collaboration between prison staff and educators creates holistic environments that blend safety with education, thereby improving both academic success and readiness for reintegration. These findings confirm the participants' reflections that guidance from BJMP personnel and ALS teachers is crucial in sustaining a rehabilitative and motivating learning space.

3.3.3 Peer Support and Positive Social Dynamics

Support from fellow PDLs also contributed to a motivating environment. The responses show that peer support within correctional facilities is a vital driver of motivation and learning. Their accounts suggest that when learners encourage one another, respect each other, and share the same goals, they create a positive culture that enhances persistence. This implies that education in facility is not an isolated journey but a collective experience, where success is built on collaboration and mutual respect. The presence of positive peer influence reduces the sense of isolation and stigma often felt in prison, instead fostering a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Importantly, this dynamic reflects the power of social learning: PDLs not only benefit from teachers and facilitators but also from the encouragement and accountability of their peers. The implication is that rehabilitation is strengthened when peer communities are cultivated, as they reinforce discipline, empathy, and the value of education.

Supporting this, Perrin et al. (2019) found that peer relationships among PDL learners foster resilience and engagement, providing emotional and practical support that sustains participation in education. Similarly, Britton (2020) emphasized that positive peer dynamics in correctional learning environments build collective efficacy, reducing conflict and promoting a stronger culture of respect and achievement. These findings confirm that peer support, as described by ALS learners, is a powerful resource for both academic success and social reintegration.

3.3.4 Structure, Discipline, and Personal Reflection

The structured nature of the facility itself was seen as a catalyst for discipline and change. The participants' reflections imply that the structured environment of the correctional facility itself contributes to discipline, self-awareness, and personal transformation. Their accounts indicate that the rules, routines, and structured activities provide stability that many had previously lacked, enabling them to develop habits of focus and perseverance. The implication is that the facility, when aligned with educational opportunities like ALS, becomes more than a place of confinement—it becomes a space of reform and growth. By obliging learners to follow rules and engage in meaningful activities, the environment fosters accountability and reinforces the value of discipline as a life skill. Notably, the structured setting not only supports academic progress but also provides an opportunity for self-reflection, helping PDLs to reframe as a chance for self-improvement and preparation for reintegration.

Supporting this, Oni (2024) emphasized that structured prison environments, when paired with rehabilitative programs, promote self-discipline and constructive behavior change. Similarly, Visher and Eason (2021) found that daily routines and structured activities within correctional settings contribute to reduced misconduct and encourage learners to adopt more prosocial behaviors. These findings affirm the participants' experiences, showing that the facility's structured nature is not merely restrictive but can be transformative when combined with education.

3.4 The External Factors that Made a Significant Difference in the Learning Journey of ALS Learners Behind Bars

This section explores the external factors that contributed to the progress and accomplishments of ALS learners during their time in jail facility. It emphasizes the role of family encouragement, institutional programs, and community support in shaping their educational journey and personal growth. The participants' responses are organized into the following themes.

3.4.1 Institutional Support and Rehabilitation Programs

Many participants credited the programs and personnel within the correctional facility as pivotal to their

success. These findings indicate that institutional support, through livelihood programs, rehabilitation initiatives, and the presence of supportive personnel, plays a crucial role in their educational success. Their accounts imply that programs offered by the BJMP are not just practical supports but also motivational anchors that provide learners with confidence, courage, and a sense of purpose. The involvement of teachers, correctional officers, and peers highlights that rehabilitation is most effective when it is holistic, combining educational, vocational, and psychosocial components. The implication is that institutional programs transform correctional facilities from spaces of punishment into environments of empowerment, enabling learners to see incarceration as an opportunity for growth. By providing livelihood skills and emotional support alongside ALS, these initiatives ensure that PDLs are not only educated but also prepared for reintegration, equipped with both the confidence and the practical tools to rebuild their lives. Supporting this, Vandala (2020) emphasized that rehabilitative programs within correctional institutions, particularly those integrating education and livelihood training, are critical in boosting confidence and reducing recidivism. Similarly, Ward and Bailey (2021) found that supportive staff and structured rehabilitation programs strengthen incarcerated learners' engagement, showing that when correctional institutions prioritize both learning and well-being, educational outcomes improve significantly. These findings support the participants' accounts, affirming that institutional support is a cornerstone of both academic success and personal transformation.

3.4.2 Learning Materials and Tools

For some, access to educational resources was transformative. These emphasize that access to learning materials, books, paper, pencils, and even computers was transformative in their educational journey. Their reflections imply that these basic tools are not trivial but essential for fostering engagement, sustaining motivation, and enabling meaningful learning inside correctional facilities. By valuing such resources, learners demonstrate how the presence of educational materials bridges the gap between confinement and opportunity, enabling them to feel connected to the broader world of knowledge. The implication is that providing adequate resources within correctional education is not merely logistical support but a form of empowerment that signals to learners that their growth and learning matter. This reinforces the idea that even simple materials can instill dignity, nurture intellectual curiosity, and strengthen rehabilitation outcomes.

Supporting this, Brazell et al. (2019) noted that access to quality learning materials in correctional settings significantly increases participation rates and enhances academic achievement, as learners feel equipped and supported. Similarly, Badejo and Chakraborty (2025) found that digital tools and resources, when made available in prisons, improve engagement and self-directed learning, creating stronger pathways for both education and reintegration. These findings confirm the participants' views that learning materials are not just supplies but transformative instruments of growth and opportunity.

3.4.3 Family as a Source of Strength

Family remained a central pillar of motivation and emotional support. These reveal that family is not only a motivator but also a cornerstone of resilience for incarcerated learners. Their accounts suggest that an emotional connection to family, whether through encouragement or a desire to make loved ones proud, provides meaning and direction to their learning journey. This underscores the idea that education in correctional facilities is relational: it does not exist in isolation but is intertwined with the learners' identities as parents, children, and siblings. The implication is that strengthening family bonds within rehabilitation programs can amplify educational engagement and persistence, as learners view their achievements as shared victories with their loved ones. By serving as a reminder of responsibility and a

vision of the future, family support functions as a powerful anchor that helps sustain motivation and fosters hope for reintegration.

Supporting this, Naser and La Vigne (2020) found that family encouragement is one of the strongest protective factors for PDL learners, significantly influencing persistence in education and reducing the risk of reoffending. Likewise, Best (2019) emphasized that family support fosters hope and identity reconstruction, making it a crucial element in both educational and rehabilitative success. These findings align with the participants' reflections, confirming that family remains a central pillar of strength for incarcerated learners pursuing education.

3.4.4 Spiritual Anchors and Personal Inspirations

Spirituality and admiration also played a role in shaping learners' perspectives. These reflections show how personal beliefs and role models can ignite a sense of purpose and resilience. They show that spirituality and admiration for role models provided a deeper source of meaning in their journey. These responses imply that for many PDL learners, education is not purely an academic pursuit; it is also a spiritual and moral one. The Bible and personal inspirations served as anchors of hope, providing them with the resilience to face daily challenges and a framework for reimagining their future with dignity and faith. The implication here is that integrating spiritual practices and mentorship into correctional education can strengthen learners' emotional well-being, reinforce positive values, and sustain their commitment to transformation. Beyond providing knowledge, ALS thus becomes a holistic experience that nurtures both the mind and spirit.

Supporting this, Jang and Johnson (2023) emphasized that spiritual practices foster resilience and hope among PDL individuals, often acting as coping mechanisms that reduce stress and enhance motivation for personal change. Similarly, Roman (2029) highlighted that faith-based engagement and inspirational role models in correctional education increase self-worth and encourage persistence in rehabilitation programs. These findings validate the participants' accounts, showing that spiritual anchors and admired figures can serve as powerful motivators in sustaining growth and perseverance.

3.4.5 Future-Oriented Goals and Aspirations

Some learners were driven by their dreams and ambitions. These future-oriented visions helped them stay focused and motivated, even within the constraints of incarceration. These voices reveal that success is not just about personal effort—it is deeply intertwined with the environment, relationships, resources, and aspirations that surround each learner.

They highlight how future-oriented aspirations, such as owning a business and becoming more socially aware, acted as powerful motivators throughout their journey. These responses imply that PDL learners not only focus on immediate academic achievements but also envision long-term goals that extend beyond the facility. Such visions serve as a compass, guiding their daily decisions, strengthening perseverance, and shaping a rehabilitative mindset. The implication is that correctional education programs, such as ALS, must integrate opportunities for vocational preparation and entrepreneurial skills, as these align with learners' aspirations and enhance their readiness for reintegration into society.

Supporting this, Castell (2024) found that correctional education significantly increases post-release employment opportunities, with future-oriented planning being a strong predictor of successful reintegration. Likewise, Brunton-Smith and Hopkins (2020) emphasized that PDL individuals with clear long-term goals, particularly related to education and employment, are more likely to sustain motivation and avoid recidivism. These studies confirm the importance of nurturing learners' future aspirations as part of a holistic rehabilitation approach.

PERSONS DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY ALS COMPLETERS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING AS A PATH TO REDEMPTION AND TRANSFORMATION

4.1 Finding Meaning and Healing Through ALS

This section presents how participation in ALS provided learners with a sense of meaning and opportunities for personal healing while serving time inside the facility. Their reflections highlight how education became a source of hope, renewal, and inner strength that helped them cope with past struggles and envision a better future. The participants' responses are organized into themes as follows.

4.1.1 Rediscovering Meaning Through Education

For many ALS completers, education became a lifeline—a way to reclaim dignity and purpose amid adversity. These reveal that education through ALS was not simply about acquiring knowledge but about rediscovering meaning and purpose in their lives. For learners who once viewed education as distant or unattainable, ALS became a turning point that allowed them to rebuild dignity, find independence, and gain a deeper appreciation of life. This implies that education within correctional settings functions as more than a rehabilitative tool; it fosters identity reconstruction and personal empowerment. By reframing their struggles as opportunities for growth, the learners demonstrate that education can transform how individuals understand themselves and their place in society.

Supporting this, Costelloe and Warner (2020) argue that prison education provides PDL individuals with “new narratives of self,” enabling them to imagine different life paths beyond imprisonment. Similarly, Behan (2021) emphasized that education in prison fosters agency and a sense of belonging, which are critical to sustaining hope and reintegration. Together, these findings affirm that ALS serves as a vehicle for meaning making, equipping learners not only with skills but also with renewed direction and purpose.

4.1.2 Healing from Regret and Acceptance of the Past

Education inside served as a space for emotional healing and acceptance. These voices reflect how education can be a redemptive process—one that allows individuals to confront their past with honesty and move forward with hope.

Above, it shows academic intervention and emotional space where learners could begin to heal from past regrets and accept their life circumstances. Education created opportunities for participants to acknowledge mistakes, confront personal shortcomings, and channel their energy into building better futures. This highlights the restorative role of ALS in correctional settings, where learning becomes a pathway to self-forgiveness, resilience, and renewed hope. The implication is clear: education does not erase the past but empowers learners to reinterpret it as a stepping stone toward positive transformation.

Supporting this, Zivalai and Mahlangu (2022) found that prison education fosters emotional growth and reconciliation, giving PDL individuals the tools to process guilt and rebuild their identities. Similarly, Szifris and Fox (2023) emphasize that rehabilitative education contributes to psychological healing by promoting acceptance, reducing self-stigma, and nurturing self-worth. Together, these studies affirm that ALS is not just about academic growth but also about personal healing and acceptance, enabling learners to move beyond regret toward a future rooted in hope and purpose.

4.1.3 Personal Transformation and Self-Discovery

Many participants described profound personal changes and reflections. These reflections reveal that they became a catalyst for deep personal reinvention, helping learners not only acquire knowledge but also rebuild their sense of identity and self-worth. For many, education served as a turning point, enabling them to shed unhelpful habits, discover hidden talents, and develop stronger social and emotional skills. The implication here is that ALS goes beyond academics; it provides PDL learners with tools for self-discovery

and transformation, allowing them to envision and embrace a new version of themselves. This shows that when education is integrated into rehabilitation, it can reshape personal identity and foster long-term change.

Supporting this, Behan (2021) highlighted that prison education often serves as a powerful avenue for self-discovery, giving PDL learners opportunities to redefine themselves positively. Likewise, Pike and Hopkins (2019) found that correctional education programs enhance self-efficacy and personal growth by building confidence, encouraging reflection, and fostering a sense of agency. These studies affirm that ALS plays a vital role in helping learners move beyond their past, guiding them toward personal reinvention and meaningful change.

4.1.4 Empowerment and Forward Momentum

Participants also spoke of empowerment—of discovering their ability to make good choices and contribute positively to society. Their reflections highlight how the program empowers individuals to reclaim their agency, make better decisions, and envision a purposeful future. For many, education inside serve as their bridge to regain self-worth, building confidence, and recognizing their ability to contribute positively to society. These accounts imply that education in correctional settings has a transformative power: it gives learners the tools to redirect their lives, overcome stigma, and prepare for reintegration. Empowerment, in this context, is both personal and social, as it strengthens individual identity while encouraging contributions to family and community.

Supporting this, Costelloe and Warner (2022) emphasized that prison education fosters empowerment by cultivating self-confidence and providing opportunities for learners to see themselves as capable and valuable. Similarly, Boyadjieva and Ilieva-Trichkova (2023). argue that adult education programs play a crucial role in building forward momentum, as they create pathways toward employment, reintegration, and long-term social participation. Together, these findings confirm that ALS not only educates, it empowers learners to move forward with dignity, responsibility, and hope.

4.2 Persons Deprived of Liberty ALS Learners' Changing Perspectives on Justice, Responsibility, and Second Chances

This section discusses how participation in ALS influenced the way PDL learners viewed justice, responsibility, and the possibility of new beginnings. Their reflections reveal how education encouraged them to confront past mistakes, embrace accountability, and believe in the value of second chances. The participants' responses are organized into themes as follows.

4.2.1 Evolving Views on Justice

Several participants reflected deeply on their understanding of justice, shaped by their experiences and learning within the facility. These reveal a complex and evolving understanding of justice shaped by their incarceration and experiences. Some learners emphasized accountability, recognizing their mistakes and viewing justice as a necessary reckoning, while others expressed doubt about the fairness of legal processes. This duality highlights the tension between personal growth and systemic mistrust, suggesting that justice is not perceived as a uniform concept but as something deeply influenced by individual experiences. Importantly, the presence of ALS allowed participants to critically reflect on justice, shifting some perspectives toward acceptance of due process and trust in structured systems. The implication is that education in correctional settings can foster deeper engagement with moral and civic concepts, even in contexts of disillusionment.

Supporting this, Roshid et al. (2022) noted that correctional education encourages critical reflection on

fairness, law, and accountability, which helps learners reconcile personal responsibility with broader societal systems. Similarly, Phillips (2023) emphasize that engagement in rehabilitative learning fosters more nuanced understandings of justice, often moving individuals from skepticism to cautious optimism about legal and social structures. Together, these findings affirm that ALS provides a platform not just for academic growth, but also for civic and moral reflection, helping incarcerated learners renegotiate their relationship with justice.

4.2.2 Redefining Responsibility

Many learners embrace personal responsibility and growth. These reflections show how education fosters a deeper sense of ownership over one's actions and future. It highlights how learners need to embrace responsibility, both academically and personally. Participants described becoming more accountable for their actions, more disciplined in their studies, and more aware of their obligations to themselves and others. This shift indicates that education in correctional settings extends beyond knowledge acquisition; it fosters character development and prepares learners for reintegration into society. The implication is that ALS not only equips individuals with academic skills but also nurtures the responsibility and self-regulation needed to sustain positive change after release.

Supporting this, Schinkel (2021) emphasized that prison education plays a vital role in fostering responsibility and self-awareness, allowing PDL individuals to reflect on their choices and develop constructive life plans. Similarly, Mezirow and Taylor (2022) argue that adult transformative learning encourages learners to take ownership of their growth by reshaping perspectives and internalizing responsibility for their future. These studies affirm that ALS acts as a bridge to personal accountability, helping learners redefine responsibility as a cornerstone of transformation.

4.2.3 Embracing Second Chances

The theme of redemption and second chances resonated strongly across responses. These reflections illustrate how education within facility becomes a powerful vehicle for renewal, dignity, and future aspirations. For many, the chance to learn within the correctional facility represented dignity restored, hope regained, and a renewed commitment to building a better future. This shows that correctional education is not merely academic; it is symbolic of society's willingness to offer PDL individuals another path forward. The implication is clear: programs like ALS act as bridges to reintegration, allowing learners to reclaim agency, self-worth, and aspirations despite their circumstances.

Supporting this, Duguid (2020) emphasized that prison education serves as a second chance that fosters rehabilitation and empowers individuals to redefine their futures. Likewise, Addae (2020) found that access to education behind bars significantly increases motivation, reduces hopelessness, and strengthens learners' belief that they can contribute positively upon release. Together, these findings confirm that ALS embodies the promise of second chances, offering learners both practical skills and the emotional grounding needed for transformation.

4.2.4 Education as a Pathway to Change

Underlying many responses is the belief that education is transformative. These underscore the central role of education as a catalyst for personal transformation. Learners recognized that education becomes more than knowledge; it is a means to regain freedom, dignity, and the ability to pursue long-term goals. For PDL individuals, this realization carries profound implications: education is viewed as both a tool for personal healing and a bridge to societal reintegration. It allows learners to see themselves not merely as offenders but as individuals capable of growth, responsibility, and meaningful contributions. This highlights ALS as a vital intervention in fostering second chances and reshaping life trajectories.

Supporting this, Hopkins and Farley (2025) argued that correctional education empowers individuals by fostering resilience, confidence, and long-term self-efficacy, enabling them to embrace positive change. Similarly, Boyadjieva and Iliea-Trichkoya (2023) emphasized that adult education is a pathway to empowerment, linking learning with social mobility, personal healing, and improved life chances. These findings confirm that ALS provides learners with more than academic knowledge; it equips them with the tools to transform their lives and reenter society with renewed purpose.

4.3 Identity Transformation of PDL ALS Learners Through Their Educational Journeys

This section highlights how the educational experiences of PDL ALS learners contributed to changes in their sense of identity and self-worth. Their accounts illustrate how learning allowed them to redefine themselves, move beyond negative labels, and embrace new roles as motivated and capable individuals. The participants' responses are organized into themes as follows.

4.3.1 Gaining Direction and Purpose

For many participants, the program provided a renewed sense of direction and clarity in life. These highlight how they were provided with renewed clarity, structure, and meaning in life. The program offered not only academic learning but also a framework to reassess their identities and chart a new course forward. By discovering direction and purpose, incarcerated learners were able to shift from cycles of uncertainty to envisioning stable and meaningful futures. The implication is that ALS plays a critical role in restoring a sense of agency and helping learners reconnect with goals that extend beyond incarceration, whether through education, work, or personal growth.

Supporting this, Behan (2021) underscored that correctional education is a powerful tool for helping incarcerated individuals reframe their life stories, giving them a renewed sense of direction and purpose. Similarly, KAlavar et al. (2021) found that adult education programs promote identity reconstruction, enabling learners to develop clearer life goals and a stronger sense of purpose in challenging environments. These findings affirm that ALS provides more than academic support, it empowers learners to rebuild lives grounded in purpose and long-term vision.

4.3.2 Shifting Mindsets and Attitudes

Participants also sparked profound changes in mindset and emotional resilience. The responses illustrate that ALS fostered profound mindset shifts among them, helping replace negativity with hope, optimism, and resilience. By cultivating positive attitudes, participants were able to reframe their struggles, confront personal and family challenges with greater confidence, and envision brighter futures. This highlights the role of education as more than just academic instruction; it is also a form of emotional rehabilitation that nurtures psychological well-being and adaptability

Supporting this, Szifris & Fox (2023). observed that correctional education facilitates cognitive and emotional shifts, enabling PDL learners to move away from negative self-perceptions toward constructive thinking. Likewise, Von Kotze (2022) found that adult education promotes psychological resilience by instilling positive attitudes and adaptive coping strategies in challenging environments. These findings affirm that ALS plays a vital role in reshaping outlooks, proving that education can transform internal narratives as powerfully as it does external opportunities.

4.3.3 Embracing Respect, Humility, and Forgiveness

Personal growth often manifests in deeper emotional maturity and interpersonal awareness. These imply that education inside nurtured values such as respect, humility, and forgiveness, which are central to emotional maturity and social reintegration. By fostering these qualities, the program enabled learners to

strengthen their relationships, reduce conflict, and cultivate greater empathy toward others. The implication is that education within correctional settings not only builds knowledge but also shapes character, providing incarcerated learners with the interpersonal skills necessary for successful reintegration into society. These accounts highlight ALS as both an academic and moral learning space where individuals practice virtues that sustain harmony within and beyond the facility.

Supporting this, Costelloe and Warner (2022) found that jail education fosters social connectedness and empathy, helping PDL learners rebuild trust and improve relationships with others. Similarly, Villafuerte et al. (2023) emphasize that rehabilitative education plays a crucial role in promoting respect, self-awareness, and forgiveness, which are key to reducing recidivism and enhancing social reintegration. These studies affirm that ALS is transformative not only for learners' intellectual growth but also for their interpersonal and emotional development.

4.3.4 Overcoming Hopelessness and Building Courage

Several learners described their journey as a shift from despair to hope. These imply how the program provided a turning point from despair to resilience, equipping learners with the courage to persevere and even inspire others. Many described how education reawakened their sense of hope, transforming feelings of defeat into confidence and purpose. This suggests that ALS plays a crucial role in rebuilding psychological strength, helping learners to overcome negative emotions and adopt a forward-looking perspective. The implication is that education can function as an anchor in correctional settings, restoring hope, fostering perseverance, and enabling PDL individuals to emerge as sources of encouragement for their peers.

Supporting this, Ozturk et al. (2022) highlighted that participation in jail education increases hope and resilience, allowing learners to reconstruct their self-belief and overcome feelings of hopelessness. Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (2018) emphasized that correctional education helps PDL individuals cultivate courage and perseverance, which are vital for coping with the challenges of confinement and preparing for reintegration. Together, these studies affirm that ALS is not only academic, but also deeply therapeutic, helping learners replace despair with courage and optimism.

4.3.5 Becoming Active and Engaged Learners

The program also reignited a passion for learning and personal development. These changes reflect how education can awaken curiosity, discipline, and a commitment to growth—even within the confines of facility. Reflections show that education reignited their motivation to learn, transforming disengagement into active participation. Many described shifts from passivity and disinterest to curiosity, discipline, and a stronger sense of responsibility. This suggests that the program also rekindles intrinsic motivation, helping learners rediscover the value of education as a lifelong pursuit. The implication is that education in correctional settings has the power to reshape learners' attitudes toward learning itself, cultivating habits of perseverance and engagement that extend beyond the confines of jail facility.

Supporting this, Behan (2021) found that jail education fosters active engagement by creating meaningful learning experiences that connect with learners' identities and aspirations. Similarly, Castell-Britton (2024) highlighted that correctional education enhances student agency, turning passive learners into active participants who take ownership of their personal development. These findings affirm that ALS is not just an academic program but a catalyst for renewed commitment to growth, self-discipline, and redemption.

4.4 Giving Back and Inspiring Others: How PDL ALS Learners Share Their Growth and Learning

This section presents how PDL ALS learners extended the impact of their education by inspiring and helping others within the correctional community. Their stories reflect how personal growth led to acts of mentorship, encouragement, and the desire to give back as a way of reinforcing their own transformation. The participants' responses are organized into themes as follows.

4.4.1 Becoming Role Models and Uplifting Others

Some participants have embraced the responsibility of being role models within the facility, using their transformation to inspire change in others. Their actions reflect a commitment to leading by example and fostering a culture of respect and hope among fellow PDLs.

These reveal that they were not only transformed learners individually but also empowered to serve as role models within the facility. By sharing values of kindness, resilience, and mutual support, participants demonstrated that education can ripple outward, strengthening community bonds and inspiring others to pursue positive change. This suggests that ALS has a dual impact: it shapes personal growth while fostering collective transformation. The implication is that when PDL learners embody and model the values of respect and perseverance, they contribute to creating a culture of hope and rehabilitation inside correctional facilities.

Supporting this, Davis et al. (2021) found that correctional education programs can produce peer leaders who inspire others, creating a cycle of positive influence within prison environments. Similarly, Manger and Eikeland (2020) highlighted that PDL learners often become motivators for peers, encouraging persistence and fostering a supportive learning culture. These studies affirm that ALS equips learners not only to rebuild themselves but also to uplift and guide others, making education a catalyst for broader communal change.

4.4.2 Offering Advice and Wisdom

Others have chosen to give back through mentorship and emotional support. These imply that learners are extending their personal growth into mentorship, offering advice and encouragement to peers who may be struggling. This shift reflects not only individual transformation but also the emergence of a supportive peer network within the facility. By sharing wisdom gained from their own journeys, participants create an environment where resilience and positive values are reinforced collectively. The implication is that ALS nurtures leadership and mentorship skills among PDL learners, enabling them to become informal educators who inspire personal growth and mutual support among their peers.

Supporting this, Sczifriz and Fox (2023) noted that PDL learners often transition into mentorship roles, using their stories of transformation to guide others toward resilience and change. Likewise, Castell-Britton (2024) highlighted that jail education encourages peer-led support systems, which strengthen community bonds and enhance learning outcomes. These findings affirm that ALS is not just an individual journey but also a communal process, where learners uplift one another through advice, empathy, and shared wisdom.

4.4.3 Encouraging Participation in ALS

A number of participants have actively encouraged their peers to join the ALS program, recognizing its transformative power. These reveal how ALS completers have become advocates for education within the correctional facility. By encouraging their peers to enroll, they not only validate their own transformation but also extend the opportunity for change to others. The implication is that when learners take ownership of promoting education, they become agents of change, fostering a culture where growth, learning, and hope are seen as possible and attainable for all.

Supporting this, Behan (2021) explained that PDL learners often become ambassadors of jail education, using their personal stories to motivate others to participate and persist. Likewise, Davis et al. (2021) found that peer advocacy is a key driver of enrollment and success in correctional education, as learners trust and respond to encouragement from those who share their experiences. These studies affirm that ALS completers' advocacy is a crucial factor in sustaining and expanding the program's impact.

4.4.4 Sharing Knowledge and Experiences

Many participants have found meaning in sharing what they've learned—both academically and personally. By sharing both academic insights and personal experiences, learners build solidarity, strengthen peer relationships, and inspire others to pursue growth. This practice transforms education into a collective journey rather than a solitary one, creating a supportive community where wisdom and encouragement flow in multiple directions. The implication is that ALS encourages collaborative learning and peer empowerment, turning PDL learners into both learners and informal educators who uplift one another.

Supporting this, Manger and Eikeland (2022) found that sharing knowledge among peers in correctional education enhances motivation, improves retention, and fosters a culture of collaboration. Similarly, Castell-Britton (2024) emphasized that peer learning in facility contexts develops agency and strengthens community bonds, making education more impactful. These studies affirm that ALS not only equips learners with personal growth but also nurtures a cycle of shared learning that enriches the entire community.

4.4.5 Teaching Basic Literacy Skills

Some learners have gone even further by directly teaching others. The participants' experiences show that helping others learn to read and write is a profound act of empowerment, as it breaks barriers to participation and builds confidence among those who may have previously felt excluded. This demonstrates that ALS cultivates a cycle of learning where knowledge flows horizontally among peers, making education more inclusive and community-driven. The implication is that correctional education extends its impact beyond classrooms, as learners transform into facilitators who multiply the benefits of learning across the facility.

Supporting this, Hopkins and Farley (2025) emphasized that peer teaching in correctional education strengthens both the teacher's and learner's confidence, creating a reciprocal process of empowerment. Likewise, Costelloe and Warner (2022) found that PDL individuals who engage in teaching roles contribute significantly to a culture of rehabilitation, reinforcing dignity and mutual respect. These studies affirm that by teaching literacy, ALS learners not only uplift others but also reinforce their own transformation as leaders and role models.

4.5 Reclaiming Identity Through Education: PDL ALS Learners' Reflections on Their Journeys

This section explores how PDL ALS learners experienced their educational journey. Their reflections show how learning shaped their outlooks and contributed to personal growth while in confinement.

4.5.1 Reclaiming Self-Worth and Personal Direction

For many participants, education became a powerful tool for rediscovering their sense of self. They found the strength to recover from past mistakes, rebuild their identity, and make better decisions. These reflections reveal how learning can be a deeply restorative process—one that helps individuals reconnect with their values and envision a life beyond confinement.

The implication is that correctional education programs are vital in nurturing self-esteem and identity, laying the foundation for successful reintegration into society.

Supporting this, Behan (2021) found that correctional education supports personal transformation by rebuilding self-confidence and offering learners a renewed sense of identity. Similarly, Martin et al. (2021) argued that education in correctional contexts provides direction and motivation, helping PDL individuals to move beyond cycles of regret and envision positive futures. These findings confirm that ALS plays a restorative role, helping learners reclaim who they are and commit to more constructive life paths.

4.5.2 Embracing Lifelong Learning and Possibility

Participants' insights reflect a shift in mindset—from seeing education as something missed or lost, to embracing it as an ongoing journey of growth. These reflections show how they were nurtured in a belief in education as a lifelong process, breaking the stigma that age or being a PDL limits learning. By recognizing that education has no boundaries, participants embraced a growth mindset that allows for continuous personal and intellectual development. This shift has profound implications: it empowers learners to view themselves as capable of evolving at any stage in life, fostering resilience, adaptability, and hope. ALS, therefore, becomes not only a program of formal study but also a catalyst for instilling lifelong values of curiosity, perseverance, and possibility.

Supporting this, Boyadjieva and Ilieva-Trichkoya (2023) emphasized that adult education promotes lifelong learning by encouraging individuals to see growth as an ongoing journey rather than a finite achievement. Similarly, Garba (2023) found that adult learners, especially those from marginalized contexts, benefit from adopting lifelong learning perspectives, which enhance resilience and enable reintegration into society. These findings affirm that ALS reshapes learners' views of education, transforming it from a missed opportunity into an enduring source of empowerment.

4.5.3 Education as a Pathway to Change and Hope

Despite the challenges of PDLs, many participants found in ALS a gateway to transformation. Participants shared that, despite the barriers of being a PDL, the opportunity to study renewed their sense of purpose and helped them believe in the possibility of a better future. This underscores that education in correctional settings carries profound restorative value; it instills resilience, empowers learners to reimagine their lives, and provides them with the tools to pursue change. The implication is that ALS serves as both a practical and symbolic bridge, demonstrating that education can open doors even in the most constrained environments.

Supporting this, Hopkins and Farley (2025) found that correctional education fosters resilience and hope, helping PDL learners connect education with personal transformation and reintegration. Likewise, Day et al. (2022) emphasized that rehabilitative education is a vital pathway to change, enabling individuals to reclaim their identities, embrace responsibility, and envision futures marked by possibility rather than limitation. These findings affirm that ALS provides more than literacy and skills—it cultivates hope and fuels meaningful change.

SUCCESS NARRATIVES OF ALS LEARNERS: INFLUENCING INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES AND SHAPING SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION BEHIND BAR

5.1 The Impact of Learners' Stories on Public Views of Education Behind Bars

The success stories of ALS learners provide insight into how education can transform lives even within correctional facilities. These narratives have the potential to influence institutional practices and reshape societal perceptions of education behind bars.

5.1.1 Redefining the Image of PDLs Through Education

Many participants believe that their stories challenge the stigma surrounding Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) and show that transformation is possible. The participants' reflections highlight education as a powerful tool for reshaping the societal image of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). By emphasizing their pursuit of learning despite adversity, participants illustrate that academic achievement inside correctional facilities can serve as a public testimony of transformation. This act not only strengthens personal identity as "learners" rather than "offenders," but also challenges entrenched stereotypes that associate PDLs exclusively with failure and criminality. Their hope of serving as role models underscores that education contributes to both individual rehabilitation and collective reimagining of PDLs within communities. These reflections highlight how education can humanize PDL individuals and shift public attitudes from judgment to empathy.

Supporting this, Costelloe and Warner (2022) argued that education in facility has a humanizing effect, enabling PDL learners to counter stigmatized identities and present themselves as capable, responsible members of society. Similarly, Erisman and Contardo (2022) found that correctional education programs foster pro-social self-concepts and significantly improve how formerly PDL individuals are perceived upon reentry, reducing stigma and facilitating reintegration. Together, these studies demonstrate that education functions not merely as skill-building but as identity reconstruction, enabling PDLs to gain legitimacy as transformed individuals in the eyes of both them and the broader public.

5.1.2 Inspiring Others to Value Education Behind Bars

Several participants emphasized that their stories could inspire both PDL individuals and the broader public to see education as a vital tool for change. These reflect the ripple effect of transformation-how individual educational achievements within correctional facilities can inspire both peers and the wider community. By presenting their stories as motivational, they frame education as a catalyst not only for personal change but also for collective empowerment. This resonates with the notion that visible models of perseverance and success within carceral contexts foster a culture of hope, where others recognize education as a pathway to courage, motivation, and self-renewal. Their narratives demonstrate that inspiration itself becomes a rehabilitative force, multiplying the impact of individual learning journeys across facility communities.

To support wit, Buck (2021), in their evaluation of peer-led prison education initiatives in the UK, found that PDL learners who shared their educational progress with others acted as role models, significantly boosting peer participation and engagement in correctional education programs. Similarly, Pike (2022) emphasized that storytelling and peer mentorship within the facility contribute to collective identity reconstruction, encouraging PDL individuals to adopt positive educational identities and fostering a more supportive facility learning culture. These findings affirm that inspiration through education extends beyond individual rehabilitation; it functions as a community-level intervention that strengthens collective resilience and learning.

5.1.3 Promoting Education as a Right and a Pathway to Change

Some learners focused on the broader implications of their stories, advocating for education as a right and a pathway to rehabilitation. The participants' responses elevate education from being a rehabilitative tool to being a fundamental human right, especially within correctional contexts where access is often limited. By asserting that "education is for all," they highlight the structural inequalities that many PDLs experienced before entering the facility, while also framing education as the foundation for change and future opportunities. Their reflections emphasize that correctional education is not merely remedial but

transformative, enabling individuals to re-enter society with dignity, agency, and renewed purpose. These narratives also point to education as a policy concern, stressing that inclusive access both inside and outside facility walls must be institutionalized to sustain rehabilitation and reintegration.

Supporting this, Hopkins and Farley (2025) argued that recognizing correctional education as a human right reshapes institutional practices, compelling policymakers to ensure equitable access and continuity of learning beyond release. Similarly, Bhatti (2020) underscores that inclusive correctional education not only reduces recidivism but also validates the inherent dignity of PDL individuals, positioning education as a central pillar in human rights and social justice frameworks. Both studies affirm that correctional education must be reframed not as a privilege but as a right, essential for both personal transformation and societal progress.

5.1.4 Encouraging Support and Solidarity

Others believe their stories can foster greater support for PDL learners. These emphasize the role of education in fostering solidarity both within correctional facilities and between PDL learners and the broader society. By underscoring that education can “transform PDLs into good people who know how to respect others,” they highlight its capacity to cultivate empathy, respect, and mutual understanding. Their call for support and recognition from the public suggests that educational achievement is not only a personal transformation but also a collective bridge-builder, reducing the social distance between PDL individuals and communities. These accounts illustrate that when learners are supported and acknowledged, their progress inspires a culture of mutual respect and solidarity, reinforcing rehabilitation as a shared societal responsibility.

Research supports these insights. Behan (2020) found that correctional education fosters solidarity and peer support among PDL learners, creating a culture of mutual encouragement that enhances persistence and achievement. Similarly, Manger et al. (2021) demonstrated that educational programs contribute to improved social relations inside correctional facilities and strengthen public perceptions of PDL individuals as capable of positive transformation. Both studies highlight education as a unifying force, showing that solidarity generated through shared learning not only aids rehabilitation but also paves the way for smoother reintegration by promoting empathy and mutual recognition.

5.1.5 Inspiring Lifelong Learning Across Generations

Some learners reflected on how their stories resonate with others, especially those who have known them from the beginning. These imply how success narratives create enduring legacies that transcend individual achievement, inspiring both peers and future learners to value education regardless of age or circumstance. By serving as role models for “incoming PDLs” and for those “still studying despite their age,” they highlight education’s intergenerational and ongoing impact within correctional settings. These accounts demonstrate that lifelong learning is not bound by the walls of confinement; rather, it is nurtured and transmitted through shared experiences, enabling PDL learners to motivate others to embrace education as a continuous journey.

Supporting this, Douglas (2020) found that PDL learners who model persistence and academic commitment inspire peers and newcomers, creating a culture of aspiration that sustains learning even in restrictive environments. Similarly, Heffernan and Hazzan (2022) emphasized that lifelong learning within a facility fosters intergenerational influence, where educational engagement among PDL adults encourages others, both within and outside the facility, to continue their learning journeys. These studies affirm that correctional education functions not only as rehabilitation for individuals but also as a social mechanism that promotes generational continuity of learning and identity transformation.

5.2 Perceived Changes in Treatment: How ALS Learners View Staff and Peer Interactions Following Their Educational Achievements

ALS learners often notice shifts in how they are treated by staff and peers as they make progress in their educational journey.

5.2.1 Improved Treatment Through Demonstrated Change

Many participants shared that their commitment to personal growth and education led to noticeable shifts in how staff treated them. These reveal that visible commitment to education and personal growth fosters improved relationships within correctional facilities. Participants highlighted that demonstrating respect, kindness, and trust in themselves reshaped how staff perceived and treated them, moving from punitive control toward more compassionate engagement. These accounts suggest that rehabilitation is not only an internal journey but also an external negotiation of identity, where PDL learners earn recognition and better treatment by embodying transformation.

Pike and Harley (2025) found that PDL individuals who engaged in structured education programs experienced improved staff-prisoner relationships, as staff began to associate their learning with pro-social behavior and rehabilitation potential. Likewise, Behan (2021) emphasized that educational participation enhances mutual respect, as it provides tangible evidence of change, which can lead to more supportive institutional environments. Both studies show that education functions as a bridge for altering power dynamics in facility, enabling learners to redefine themselves and influence how they are perceived by staff.

5.2.2 Recognition of Effort and Perseverance

Several participants emphasized that staff began to treat them differently after witnessing their dedication to learning. These reflections highlight how perseverance and commitment to education foster recognition and improved treatment from staff. By demonstrating patience, determination, and a genuine desire to change, PDL learners reshaped how they were perceived. These narratives show that consistent effort not only enhances self-development but also builds trust and respect within the correctional community, underscoring the transformative power of education as a relational process.

Supporting this, Castell-Britton (2024) reported that correctional staff developed more positive attitudes toward PDL learners who demonstrated sustained educational engagement, interpreting perseverance as a sign of rehabilitation and trustworthiness. Similarly, Costelloe and Warner (2022) found that persistent participation in correctional education reshaped perceptions, with staff acknowledging the resilience and determination of learners, often rewarding them with greater respect and relational support. Both studies illustrate that perseverance in education has symbolic value; it communicates sincerity of change and builds bridges of trust.

5.2.3 Support and Encouragement from BJMP Personnel

Some learners described how BJMP staff actively supported their educational journey. The learners' responses underscore the pivotal role of correctional staff in motivating and sustaining educational participation. When BJMP personnel showed kindness, guidance, and belief in the learners' capacity for change, participants reported feeling more motivated to pursue their studies and more confident in their worth. These narratives demonstrate that institutional support is not limited to program provision but is deeply relational, with encouragement from staff shaping how PDL learners experience education and rehabilitation.

Supporting this, Maruna and Mann (2020) highlighted that supportive correctional staff play a central role in nurturing hope and motivation, as encouragement reinforces PDL individuals' belief in their ability to

change. Similarly, Randall and Hall (2021) found that active guidance and recognition from correctional staff foster stronger educational engagement and persistence, since learners perceive such support as validation of their efforts and potential. These studies confirm that encouragement from correctional personnel strengthens both educational outcomes and the rehabilitative climate of the institution.

5.2.4 Emotional Impact and Meaningful Relationships

For some, the change in treatment went beyond respect—it became a source of emotional healing. These emphasize that improved treatment from staff is not only relational but also deeply emotional. Beyond respect, PDL learners experienced kindness and validation that nurtured happiness and gave greater meaning to their educational journeys. Such recognition affirms their aspirations, underscoring that rehabilitation extends beyond behavioral change to encompass emotional well-being and the building of humane, supportive relationships. These stories highlight that correctional education is most effective when accompanied by empathy, as it allows learners to feel valued and understood despite confinement.

Supporting this, Beijersbergen (2025) showed that supportive and respectful interactions between correctional staff and PDL individuals reduce stress, enhance emotional well-being, and encourage engagement in rehabilitative programs. Likewise, Zhou (2022) found that when staff validate PDL learners' goals and aspirations, the emotional support fosters trust, increases motivation for education, and contributes to a more positive prison climate. Both studies demonstrate that meaningful relationships rooted in empathy and recognition can transform prison environments into spaces of hope and emotional growth.

5.2.5 Institutional Response and Program Expansion

Participant narratives reveal that the success of ALS learners can spark institutional responses that prioritize education as a central tool of rehabilitation. The disclosure that staff plan to expand programs highlights how individual transformations can generate systemic change, with learners' progress serving as evidence of the value of correctional education. This suggests that PDL learners are not only recipients of institutional programs but also catalysts for broader reform, demonstrating how personal change can reshape policies and practices within correctional facilities.

Erisman and Contardo (2020) reported that successful learner outcomes in correctional education programs often drive administrators to expand offerings, as educational achievement demonstrates measurable benefits for rehabilitation and jail management. Similarly, Costelloe and Warner (2022) emphasized that the narratives of PDL learners play a crucial role in influencing institutional decisions, with visible transformations encouraging policymakers and correctional leaders to embed education more firmly into the rehabilitation framework. These studies confirm that systemic expansion of educational programs is often a response to the demonstrated success of learners.

5.3 What PDL ALS Learners Believe Society Should Know About Their Journeys and Success

PDL ALS learners often have insights and messages they wish to share with society about their experiences and achievements. These reflections highlight the value of education, personal growth, and the potential for transformation, even within correctional settings.

5.3.1 Resilience and Hope Within Confinement

Participants want society to understand that confinement does not extinguish the human spirit. These imply that confinement, while restrictive, does not extinguish resilience, faith, or hope. Participants emphasized that life must continue within jail walls, that challenges have solutions, and that hope remains rooted in spiritual and personal strength. These accounts underscore the capacity of PDL individuals to reframe

adversity as an opportunity for growth. Their voices highlight that resilience is not only a coping mechanism but also a source of dignity, determination, and a renewed sense of meaning in life.

Brooker et al. (2021) observed that hope and resilience among PDL learners are essential drivers of successful engagement in rehabilitative education, as they sustain motivation despite systemic barriers. Similarly, Farley and Pike (2025) found that the cultivation of resilience and hope in correctional education settings fosters not only individual persistence but also shifts in institutional culture, as hopeful learners encourage peers and signal the transformative potential of rehabilitation. These studies affirm that resilience is integral to the process of educational transformation and identity reconstruction in confinement.

5.3.2 Education as a Pathway to Change

Many participants emphasized the transformative power of education. Participants' responses affirm education as a transformative force that extends beyond rehabilitation into personal rebirth. Participants emphasized that education is "the key to success," urging both PDL and free individuals never to lose hope but to persevere in their studies as a means to achieve dreams and a better life. These accounts reveal that education inside correctional facilities is not merely a programmatic intervention; it is a catalyst for reimagining futures, building resilience, and reclaiming dignity.

Behan (2020) found that PDL learners consistently framed education as a pathway to transformation, linking academic progress with new identities grounded in purpose, dignity, and hope. Similarly, Hopkins and Farley (2022) reported that correctional education reshaped learners' perceptions of themselves and their futures, positioning education as central to desistance and long-term reintegration. Both studies highlight education's dual role: it not only builds knowledge and skills but also reconstructs self-concept, enabling learners to define themselves in terms of growth rather than confinement.

5.3.3 Humanizing the Persons Deprived of Liberty

Several learners called for empathy and understanding. These emphasize the need for empathy, understanding, and the dismantling of stigma. Their appeals to "not judge PDLs" and to "end discrimination for the mistakes we once made" underscore how negative societal perceptions can dehumanize PDL individuals, overshadowing their capacity for change. These reflections highlight that rehabilitation and reintegration require not only educational and personal transformation but also a shift in how society views and relates to people who have been in a facility. Education, therefore, becomes both a personal journey and a societal call to humanize the PDLs.

Supporting this, Ugelvik (2021) found that narratives of PDL learners are powerful tools for challenging stigma and reshaping public perceptions, as they reveal the complexity and humanity of individuals behind bars. Similarly, Brosens and De Donder (2022) demonstrated that educational achievements among PDL learners humanize them in the eyes of both staff and the wider public, countering stereotypes of criminality with stories of resilience, learning, and transformation. These studies affirm that education can be a medium for reasserting dignity and reclaiming humanity.

5.3.4 The Right to Be Heard and Supported

Some learners expressed the importance of sharing their stories and being given space to grow. These highlight their desire for inclusion, dialogue, and recognition as members of society with rights and aspirations. Their call to be given "time to share life experiences" and their reminder that "PDLs are still part of society" point to the necessity of platforms where PDL individuals' voices are not only heard but also valued. These narratives affirm that education is not just about academic achievement but about fostering agency, dignity, and active participation in community life, even within confinement.

McNeill (2022) argued that providing PDL individuals with opportunities to articulate their experiences fosters empowerment and strengthens their sense of belonging, which is critical for successful reintegration. Similarly, Thomas and Glazzard (2025) found that recognizing PDL learners' rights to be heard and supported promotes restorative dialogue, builds trust between institutions and learners, and enhances the rehabilitative potential of education. These studies confirm that the right to voice is a cornerstone of both rehabilitation and democratic inclusion.

5.3.5 Justice and Rehabilitation

Justice and fairness were also central themes, implying that ensuring timely justice upholds human rights and prevents further marginalization of PDL individuals. Also, viewing facilities as places of transformation aligns with international models of restorative justice, where rehabilitation is central to reduce recidivism. And, from an identity perspective, positioning facilities as spaces of growth affirms the dignity and potential of PDLs, allowing them to envision themselves not as offenders defined by their past, but as individuals capable of renewal and contribution.

Lynch et al. (2021) emphasized that delayed justice undermines trust in legal systems and hampers rehabilitation efforts, as prolonged uncertainty creates psychological strain for PDL individuals. Complementarily, Sharma and Gupta (2024) argued that correctional institutions should not merely serve punitive ends but act as spaces of human development, where education and skills training help individuals reintegrate successfully into society. These studies align with participants' insights, reinforcing the idea that justice must be both restorative and rehabilitative.

5.4 How PDL ALS Learners Believe Sharing Their Experiences Can Shape Societal Perceptions

PDL ALS learners recognize that regularly sharing their personal stories can influence how society views education in prisons.

5.4.1 Changing Public Perception and Reducing Stigma

Many participants believe that sharing ALS success stories would shift how society views Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). These imply that education-based narratives act as counter-stories that dismantle stigma and affirm the dignity of PDLs. Second, reducing discrimination not only benefits PDL individuals upon release but also promotes community safety, as reintegration is more successful when stigma is diminished. Moreover, the restoration of trust between PDLs and society contributes to broader justice reform, positioning education as both a rehabilitative and social tool.

Maruna and Mann (2020) argued that narrative reconstruction—where individuals share stories of transformation helps challenge stereotypes of criminality and fosters empathy. Likewise, Schinkel (2021) highlighted that education programs in facility humanize PDL individuals by presenting them as learners and contributors, rather than solely as offenders. Such approaches encourage society to move from punitive judgment toward restorative inclusion.

5.4.2 Inspiring Hope, Resilience, and Personal Growth

Participants see their stories as powerful tools to inspire others. These imply that stories of resilience and personal growth challenge deficit-based perceptions of PDLs and instead frame them as capable of inspiring positive change. By modeling perseverance and determination, ALS learners not only strengthen their own rehabilitation journey but also serve as catalysts of hope for peers, families, and communities. This underscores the transformative role of education in fostering agency and resilience, even in restrictive environments.

To support with, de Motte et al. (2021) found that hope among PDL individuals fosters psychological

well-being, reduces distress, and strengthens commitment to rehabilitation. Similarly, Bradley (2023) highlighted how resilience and personal growth emerge through education and structured programs, enabling PDL learners to reconstruct positive identities and inspire others within their social networks. Both studies show that personal transformation is not only inward-facing but also outward-reaching, creating ripple effects that uplift others who witness or hear these narratives.

5.4.3 Promoting Education for All

Several participants believe their stories would encourage broader appreciation for education, especially among youth and marginalized communities. These imply that by demonstrating that education is accessible and transformative regardless of one's background, ALS learners reinforce societal movements toward equity in education. Their stories challenge structural inequalities and inspire both institutional policymakers and local communities to view education not merely as a privilege but as a right that can empower individuals to reclaim agency and transform futures.

Recent research supports these insights. UNESCO (2021) underscored that education is a fundamental human right and a powerful equalizer that reduces inequality and promotes social inclusion, particularly for marginalized groups. Similarly, Smyth and Wrigley (2023) found that narratives of educational participation among disadvantaged learners serve to break cycles of exclusion and demonstrate the universality of learning as a lifelong opportunity. These studies affirm that PDLs' success stories echo broader global commitments to inclusive education and lifelong learning.

5.4.4 Restoring Pride and Community Connection

Participants also see storytelling to restore dignity and pride. These insights imply that education and storytelling within correctional facilities do more than foster individual transformation, they also rebuild fractured community ties. By sharing narratives of perseverance, PDL learners transform public perception from shame to pride, creating a sense of belonging and hope within their families and local communities. This process restores dignity to the learner and simultaneously reaffirms the community's belief in collective progress, strengthening social cohesion and solidarity.

Supporting this, Dulce-Salcedo et al. (2022) found that educational success among marginalized populations fosters pride and recognition, which in turn strengthens community resilience and inclusivity. Similarly, Armstrong and Ludlow (2021) emphasized that narratives of educational achievement among PDLs reshape community attitudes, turning stories of confinement into sources of pride and symbols of redemption. Together, these studies affirm that education in correctional settings is not merely rehabilitative, it is relational, creating bridges of trust, dignity, and renewed community identity

5.5 Learners' Recommendations: How Institutions Can Better Recognize and Support ALS Achievements

PDL ALS learners offer valuable insights on ways institutions can acknowledge and support their educational accomplishments.

5.5.1 Strengthening Institutional Support and Program Expansion

Participants strongly advocate for both government and non-government institutions to prioritize and enhance educational programs within correctional facilities. Their responses underscore the urgent need for institutional commitment to expanding and sustaining education within correctional settings. Their advocacy for greater support from both government and non-government organizations reveals that educational opportunities are not merely desired amenities but are perceived as essential tools for rehabilitation and successful reintegration. By stressing that "all institutions must give importance,

improve, and support” existing programs, participants articulate the view that rehabilitation cannot rest solely on individual motivation; it must be anchored in robust institutional frameworks. This perspective implies that without systematic support and expansion, rehabilitation risks becoming fragmented, leaving learners vulnerable to reoffending upon release.

Bozick et al. (2020) demonstrated that correctional education reduces recidivism and improves post-release employment outcomes, emphasizing that such programs only achieve long-term impact when supported institutionally. More recently, Davis et al. (2020) highlighted how stable funding and interagency collaboration are crucial for sustaining correctional education and ensuring that PDL learners transition successfully to community education and employment systems after release. These studies suggest that when institutional structures stabilize and expand educational offerings like ALS, they amplify participants’ sense of identity as learners rather than offenders, which is a critical step toward desistance.

5.5.2 Expanding Educational Opportunities

Several participants expressed the need for broader learning options, including higher education and practical application. These reflections imply that correctional education must move beyond basic literacy and secondary equivalency, expanding to include higher education, vocational training, and experiential learning. Such opportunities not only enhance employability but also foster self-efficacy, agency, and a stronger sense of identity, all of which are crucial for successful reintegration into society. Integrating applied learning with academic study can ensure that PDL learners are equipped with both knowledge and practical skills relevant to life after release.

Recent studies affirm these perspectives. Fine et al. (2020) found that access to higher education in facility equips learners with critical thinking, professional skills, and resilience, which significantly improve post-release outcomes. Similarly, Lockwood et al. (2022) reported that correctional programs offering both academic and vocational tracks reduce recidivism by preparing PDLs for real-world employment and fostering smoother transitions back into communities. These findings reinforce the need to expand ALS offerings toward higher and applied education.

5.5.3 Providing Resources and Infrastructure

Access to learning materials and technology was a recurring theme. These insights imply that correctional education requires sustained investment in facilities, digital tools, and teaching materials. Without adequate resources, learning opportunities remain limited, reinforcing inequalities that PDL learners already face. Providing appropriate infrastructure not only enhances academic achievement but also prepares PDLs for a society increasingly reliant on digital literacy and technological competence. Addressing resource gaps is therefore essential for ensuring that correctional education is equitable, relevant, and transformative.

Supporting these, Erisman and Contardo (2020) reported that access to technology and educational materials in facility settings is directly linked to improved engagement and post-release employability. Similarly, Montgomery and Henderson (2022) highlighted that correctional education programs with dedicated budgets, proper facilities, and updated resources significantly outperform underfunded ones in terms of learning outcomes and recidivism reduction. These findings confirm that infrastructure and financial investment are not optional but foundational for effective correctional education.

5.5.4 Creating Livelihood and Employment Pathways

Many participants believe that institutions should support economic empowerment through work and livelihood programs. These suggestions reflect a desire for self-sufficiency and dignity through meaningful

l work.

These imply that rehabilitation must extend beyond education into livelihood and employment readiness. Providing PDLs with vocational training, entrepreneurship opportunities, and pathways to sustainable employment ensures that reintegration is economically viable. Access to work programs within correctional facilities not only builds skills but also fosters dignity, responsibility, and a sense of purpose, qualities that directly support rehabilitation and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Duwe and Henry-Nickie (2021) found that correctional work and reentry employment programs significantly lower recidivism by equipping PDL individuals with practical skills and stable post-release opportunities. Similarly, Saylor and Gaes (2019) emphasized that livelihood initiatives and small business training inside facilities promote self-sufficiency and empower PDLs to contribute productively to their families and communities upon release. Together, these findings underscore that creating livelihood pathways is central to building long-term resilience and reintegration.

5.5.5 Sustaining Moral and Emotional Support

Continued encouragement and recognition were also seen as vital. These insights imply that rehabilitation is not only academic or vocational but also deeply emotional. Consistent moral support, acknowledgment of growth, and affirmation of dignity strengthen resilience and help PDLs sustain their motivation for transformation. Recognition of achievements fosters a sense of belonging and worth, while ongoing encouragement helps PDL learners maintain hope even amid restrictive environments.

Jiang and Winfree (2022) found that moral recognition and supportive relationships within correctional facilities significantly enhance PDLs' psychological well-being and willingness to reform. Likewise, Visher and Eason (2021) emphasized that recognizing PDL individuals' milestones, whether educational, vocational, or personal, reinforces their identity as capable and valuable members of society, which plays a crucial role in successful reintegration. These findings affirm that sustaining moral and emotional support is essential for the holistic rehabilitation of PDLs.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study underpin Transformative Learning Theory, which infers that individuals experience perspective shifts through critical reflection and meaningful educational engagement. Narratives from Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners showed that participation in literacy and skills training within correctional facilities led them to reflect on past experiences, challenged negative self-concepts, and fostered new aspirations. These results establish that correctional education provides a context conducive to transformative learning, where reflection and dialogue serve as effective mechanisms for self-renewal, thereby extending the theory's application beyond traditional classroom environments.

The results also support Humanistic Education Theory, which emphasizes learner-centered methods that value dignity, empathy, and respect. PDL learners consistently mentioned feeling recognized, respected, and encouraged by ALS teachers, despite their status as Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). This supportive environment boosted their self-esteem and motivation to continue learning. The findings show that, even in restrictive settings, treating learners as individuals with inherent worth fosters confidence, self-acceptance, and agency. Consequently, humanistic principles can transform correctional classrooms into environments that promote healing and growth, underscoring the role of education in restoring humanity to marginalized groups.

The findings also align with Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of observation, imitation, and interaction in learning. ALS learners emphasized the importance of peer support and teacher

encouragement in maintaining their studies. They acquired not only academic knowledge but also discipline, resilience, and positive behaviors. These results suggest that correctional education programs should intentionally foster cooperative learning environments with embedded positive modeling and social support. This shows the effectiveness of social learning mechanisms in highly controlled environments such as prisons.

The study further substantiates Self-Determination Theory, which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental to intrinsic motivation. PDL participants indicated that involvement in the Alternative Learning System enhanced their competence through skill acquisition, strengthened relatedness via supportive interpersonal relationships, and promoted autonomy by enabling them to envision an improved life path. These factors collectively motivated individuals to seek reintegration and actively contribute to their communities. The findings imply that correctional education programs can address these psychological needs, thereby foster intrinsic motivation and facilitate personal development during confinement.

In conclusion, the study suggests that the Alternative Learning System in correctional institutions supports literacy and academic progress, while also providing a basis for applying learning and transformation theories. PDL individuals' experiences highlight the importance of reflection, dignity, social engagement, and intrinsic motivation in personal redemption and self-reinvention. By demonstrating the relevance of these theories in correctional settings, the study broadens the understanding of education as a transformative force in restrictive environments.

Practical Implications

The findings of this research have significant practical implications for educators, correctional administrators, and related institutions. For Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers, the results highlight the importance of implementing learner-centered and humanistic approaches that incorporate academic instruction, values formation, life skills, and personal growth. Treating Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) with dignity and respect builds their confidence, motivation, and determination in learning despite the limitations of PDLs. For correctional administrators, the findings underscore the need to provide adequate facilities, sufficient instructional materials, and a secure and supportive environment that facilitates consistent and meaningful learning experiences. Working together with the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), the Department of Education (DepEd), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) is essential to link ALS education with livelihood training and reintegration programs. This way, academic success can lead to better employment prospects and smoother transitions after release. Additionally, recognizing the accomplishments of PDL ALS learners through completion and graduation ceremonies, certifications, and other recognitions can boost self-esteem, reduce stigma, and motivate other PDLs to pursue education. With full support and integration of ALS as a rehabilitative tool, correctional facilities can become places where people prepare for academic success and a positive return to society.

Limitations of the Study

This study provided valuable insights into the success stories of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who participated in the Alternative Learning System (ALS). However, several limitations should be noted. The research utilized a qualitative-descriptive design with narrative inquiry and included only twenty (20) PDL learners from Legazpi City Jail. Because of this narrow focus, the findings may not apply to other

correctional facilities, which could have different social, cultural, or administrative contexts. Additionally, because the study relied on interviews and focus group discussions, the data were mostly subjective and may have been influenced by participants' self-presentation or a desire to highlight positive experiences. The study mainly focused on the perspectives of PDL ALS learners and did not include input from teachers, administrators, or family members, which could have provided a more comprehensive view of the educational process. The narrative-based approach emphasized personal experiences over quantifiable outcomes such as literacy improvement, employment after release, or reduced recidivism. While these narratives highlight the transformative impact of ALS, the lack of empirical data on long-term effects limits the ability to assess the program's overall effectiveness.

Implications of the Study

The study implies that the Alternative Learning System (ALS) contributes to driving personal and social change within correctional institutions. ALS functions as both an academic program and a means of supporting rehabilitation by restoring dignity, building self-worth, and helping PDLs prepare for their return to society. This study suggests that correctional facilities should prioritize education as a key component of their rehabilitation efforts. Policymakers and institutional leaders are encouraged to build stronger partnerships, provide sufficient resources, and incorporate ALS into national rehabilitation plans for lasting results. The progress made by PDL learners helps reduce stigma and shows their ability to grow and rejoin society. The study also supports current models of learning and transformation in correctional settings and points out the need for further research on life after release and innovative educational approaches.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings conclusions and recommendations based on the experiences of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) who joined the Alternative Learning System (ALS) at Legazpi City Jail. The analysis connects study results with research objectives and theoretical frameworks to highlight ALS's impact on the personal development, self-worth, and transformation of PDL learners.

This dissertation explored the success narratives of PDLs engaged in ALS programs to illuminate the light within, particularly this sought answers to the following questions:

1. What personal and educational experiences define the success stories of ALS learners within correctional institutions?
2. How do Persons Deprived of Liberty describe the role of ALS in fostering self-worth, purpose, and future aspirations?
3. What internal and external factors contribute to ALS learners' academic and personal achievements behind bars?
4. In what ways do PDL ALS completers perceive their learning journey as a form of personal redemption and transformation?
5. How do the success narratives of ALS learners influence institutional practices and societal perceptions about education behind bars?

Findings

Based on the analysis and interpretation of data, the salient findings of the study were as follows:

1. Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners reported significant achievements, including attaining literacy, completing junior high school, and developing new skills. These accomplishments contributed to increased self-esteem, confidence, and optimism regarding future prospects. The participants' narratives indicate that educational programs within correctional facilities extend beyond academic instruction to promote personal development and self-worth.
2. Participation in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) contributed to increased self-worth among learners, who reported greater pride in their achievements and identified new meaning in their lives. Engagement in ALS fostered a sense of purpose and aspirations that extended beyond the facility, primarily motivated by family responsibilities, future employment opportunities, and the desire to contribute positively to society.
3. Learners' success was significantly influenced by internal factors, including determination, resilience, and family motivation. External factors comprised supportive Alternative Learning System (ALS) teachers, conducive learning environments, and access to instructional materials. The combined effect of individual motivation and institutional support facilitated both academic and personal achievements.
4. Completers described ALS as a transformative experience that shifted their self-perception from offenders to learners. Education offered healing, a new beginning, and opportunities to rebuild relationships and prepare for reintegration. For many, ALS marked a significant turning point and a genuine second chance.
5. The success stories of Alternative Learning System (ALS) participants led the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) to enhance educational programs within correctional facilities. These narratives contribute to changing public attitudes by presenting persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) as individuals with the potential for personal development, education, and reintegration into society. Increased public acknowledgment of their accomplishments supports efforts to reduce social deprivation and advance comprehensive rehabilitation initiatives.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Personal and educational experiences in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) help PDL learners regain dignity and access opportunities for reintegration.
2. The Alternative Learning System (ALS) fosters self-worth and purpose by helping learners rebuild their identities and set goals for reintegration after release.
3. Learners in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) achieve positive outcomes when intrinsic motivation is reinforced by support from educators, peers, and structured learning environments.
4. Persons deprived of Liberty learners view the Alternative Learning System (ALS) as a path to personal development, supporting psychological recovery, ethical growth, and identity transformation.
5. Documented successes in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) demonstrate that education within correctional facilities is a powerful tool for rehabilitation and social reintegration. By highlighting the potential and achievements of PDLs, these narratives not only transform public perception but also strengthen support for inclusive educational programs. Ultimately, they affirm that providing learning

opportunities to PDLs reduces social deprivation and fosters a more humane and rehabilitative justice system.

Recommendations

1. The Department of Education and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) are to continue and expand ALS programs to ensure all Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) have access to education.
2. ALS programs may include life skills, career planning, and goal-setting instructions to associate education with future opportunities, and counseling and mentorship will reinforce learners' confidence and direction. Stronger partnerships with livelihood agencies will ensure ALS education is paired with employability skills, supporting PDL learners as they prepare for reintegration and meaningful contributions to society.
3. ALS teachers and jail staff to have ongoing training in motivational strategies and correctional pedagogy to maintain learner engagement. Regular assessments of learner needs will support the delivery of tailored instruction and promote holistic learning.
4. ALS programs in correctional settings incorporate values formation, spiritual renewal, and reflective writing to enhance rehabilitation. Providing structured opportunities for completers and graduates to share their experiences will encourage others to pursue education for personal transformation. Aligning ALS achievements with reintegration and rehabilitation programs will support continued growth after release.
5. ALS learner achievements be publicized through media, research, and official recognition to positively influence public perception. Including success stories in staff development and community campaigns can help reduce stigma and promote inclusivity. Enhanced collaborative research and documentation will support evidence-based policy and program innovation in correctional education.

Significance of the Present Study

The findings of this study are significant as they demonstrate the transformative power of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in fostering not only academic achievement but also personal growth and rehabilitation among Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). The results highlight how education within correctional facilities serves as a catalyst for self-worth, purpose, and reintegration, emphasizing the crucial role of supportive ALS teachers, conducive learning environments, and institutional collaboration between DepEd and BJMP. Furthermore, these findings contribute valuable insights for policymakers and educators in strengthening jail-based education programs, promoting inclusive learning opportunities, and reshaping societal perceptions toward rehabilitation and second chances.

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