

Exploring the Personal Experiences of Gay Men in the Five Pillars of the Philippine Criminal Justice System: Basis for Sustainable Extension Program

Jason B. Capundan, ^{MSCJ}¹, Verna R. Belarmino, ^{PhD}²

¹Capiz State University - Dayao Satellite College, Capiz, Philippines

Email: capundanjason08@gmail.com

²Capiz State University - Dayao Satellite College, Capiz, Philippines

Email: verna.belarmino@gmail.com

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Abstract— This study examines the experiences of individuals within the Philippine Criminal Justice System (CJS), focusing on the Law Enforcement, Prosecution, Court, and Correctional Pillars, as well as challenges in reintegration. Participants reported mixed experiences with law enforcement, from humane treatment to dissatisfaction over unclear arrest procedures and alleged coercion. In the prosecution stage, accessibility and quality of legal representation varied, with some expressing appreciation for dedicated defense counsel, while others faced frustrations over prolonged periods without representation, contributing to disillusionment with the judicial process. The Court Pillar highlighted the issue of “justice delayed, justice denied,” as lengthy adjudication processes eroded trust in the judiciary. Within the Correctional Pillar, participants found conditions in the Capiz Rehabilitation Center to be more positive than anticipated, emphasizing the disciplined and respectful environment, strict anti-discrimination policies, and opportunities for personal growth through Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) training and business ventures. However, overcrowding remained a significant concern. Reintegration into the community posed complex challenges, particularly for marginalized groups like the LGBTQ community, as societal stigma, limited employment opportunities, and the lasting impact of criminal records created systemic barriers to rebuilding their lives. Familial acceptance varied, further complicating transitions back into society. The study underscores the urgent need for reforms in arrest protocols, judicial efficiency, and correctional facility management. Additionally, fostering inclusive reintegration programs is crucial to addressing societal stigmas and supporting the successful transition of former Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) into their communities.

Keywords— *Court Pillar, Correction Pillar, Law Enforcement Pillar, Philippine Criminal Justice System, Prosecution and Defense, Reintegration and Stigma*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines, a multi-cultural country dominated by Christianity and Islam, faces significant challenges in fully accepting diverse

gender identities, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+). While the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) opposes the SOGIE Bill, questioning it as a

form of cultural “colonization,” it has also acknowledged that discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community contradicts Church teachings (Carino, 2020). The Philippine Criminal Justice System, composed of five interconnected pillars— Law Enforcement, Prosecution, Court, Correction, and Community—has faced controversies regarding its role in protecting LGBTQ+ rights. This system aims to maintain societal order, with the actions of each pillar influencing the others, from apprehending suspects to court rulings and correctional practices, which impact reintegration and recidivism rates (Collantes, 2019). Globally, LGBTQ+ individuals encounter systemic barriers, including discrimination in employment (Sears & Mallory, 2011), healthcare (Winter, 2012), housing (Grant, Mottet & Tanis, 2011), and education (Burns, 2011). They also face violent crimes, such as “corrective rapes” (Brown, 2012) and homicides, with Transgender Europe reporting 1,083 murders of transgender individuals between 2008 and 2012. Despite growing calls for equality, the persistence of such challenges highlights the need for systemic reforms and greater protections for LGBTQ+ individuals in the Philippines and worldwide.

The Law Enforcement Pillar and the Gay Community

The law enforcement pillar, comprising various government agencies, is tasked with enforcing the law, promoting public safety, and protecting citizens' rights. As the first point of contact for suspects, respondents, accused individuals, persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), and ex-convicts, it is responsible for arrests and filing criminal charges against those suspected of crimes. This section explores studies and accounts detailing the personal experiences and perceptions of the gay community toward law enforcement, both locally and internationally.

Effective policing hinges on legitimacy, which, at its core, means people obey the law because they perceive its benefits outweigh the costs. Police legitimacy is defined as the public’s willingness to recognize police authority (National Institute of Justice, 2016). Tyler (2014) expands on this, emphasizing that legitimacy involves public trust and confidence, reflecting residents’ willingness to defer to the law and police authority, alongside the

belief that police actions are morally justified and appropriate.

Lawyering for the Gay Community

Lawyers play a critical role in defending individuals accused of crimes, including members of the LGBTQ+ community. When working with LGBTQ+ clients, attorneys must not only rely on anti-discrimination laws and ethical codes but also gain an understanding of their clients’ legal goals and personal perspectives. To minimize unnecessary courtroom confrontations, attorneys should address relevant issues—such as the use of gender identity pronouns—prior to legal proceedings. Hon. Lewis A. Silverman emphasized during the 2022 NYSBA Annual Meeting program, *LGBTQ Lawyering: Representing Our Communities*, the importance of attorneys discussing with their clients how to handle gender discrimination during hearings. “You need to have a good conversation with your client beforehand. Some are focused solely on the lawsuit, while others may want to raise awareness of gender identity issues,” Silverman advised (NYSBA, 2022).

Silverman also recommended that lawyers send a letter defining the client’s pronouns to the judge and opposing counsel to preempt public confrontations. However, attorneys must be prepared to address bias from judges, as not all are well-versed in gender identity rules. Erin Harrist of the Legal Aid Society highlighted discriminatory remarks from court officers, such as referring to cases as “the he/she case,” and advised addressing such issues proactively through conversations with clients and staff training (NYSBA, 2022).

Respecting a client’s gender identity is crucial, particularly for detained individuals. Misclassification based on birth gender in facilities like Rikers Island poses significant risks to clients' safety. Sarah M. Telson of the LGBTQ Anti-Violence Project urged law firms to create inclusive practices, including clear procedures for name changes, addressing slurs, and fostering a welcoming environment through hiring practices and mission statements. Practical guidance for ethical considerations was further outlined during discussions led by legal experts, including Samuel W. Buchbauer and Christopher R. Riano, underscoring

the need for inclusive and informed representation for LGBTQ+ clients.

The Correctional System and the Gay Community

The Philippine correctional system comprises institutions managed by various agencies under the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and local governments. The DOJ oversees national penitentiaries through the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) and supervises parole, probation, and clemency via the Board of Pardons and Parole (BPP) and the Parole and Probation Administration (PPA). The DILG, through the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP), manages district, city, and municipal jails. Youth offenders are rehabilitated by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), while provincial jails are under the jurisdiction of provincial governments. The community also plays a role in corrections, offering rehabilitation services and reintegration support.

While corrections have evolved to focus on rehabilitation, conditions in many Philippine prisons remain dire. Overcrowding, inadequate provisions, and abuses by prison staff are common, as documented by the U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2013). For LGBT prisoners, these issues are compounded by discrimination, victimization, and neglect of their specific needs. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2009), LGBT inmates face sexual violence, extortion, and prejudice, often receiving little to no protection from prison staff. Social stigma contributes to their vulnerability, with misconceptions labeling them as complicit in sexual violence (Eigenberg, 2000).

LGBT prisoners also encounter limited family support and often turn to other LGBT inmates for solidarity (Pintobtang & Bualar, 2012). However, forming such communities is discouraged, as authorities associate them with health risks, including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), exacerbated by the lack of medical resources and preventive measures (Harawa et al., 2010; WHO, 2007). Mental health challenges, stemming from discrimination and abuse, are further neglected (APT, 2015; UNODC, 2009).

Despite the adversities, resilience among LGBT prisoners provides a narrative of hope. Highlighting their stories of perseverance can empower this marginalized group, as Ofreneo (2013) suggests reframing them from victims to agents. However, literature on Filipino LGBT prisoners remains scarce, necessitating more research to shed light on their lived experiences and promote equitable reforms.

Social Attitudes towards the Gay Community in the Philippines

The Philippines has been a pioneer in the Asia-Pacific region for LGBTQ+ advocacy, with the formation of the first gay and lesbian groups in the late 20th century. These groups evolved from social organizations into politically active entities by the 1990s. Notably, the Philippines hosted Asia's first gay pride parade in 1994, a tradition that has continued annually. While politicians have shown reluctant support for pride marches, many still avoid publicly participating due to lingering stigmas. In 2008, the first signs of public dissent against the pride parade appeared when protesters displayed anti-LGBTQ+ placards.

The Philippines made significant progress in 2009, lifting a ban on LGBTQ+ individuals serving in the military, with officials asserting that gay soldiers would receive the same treatment as their heterosexual counterparts. The police force similarly indicated non-discrimination towards LGBTQ+ applicants for service. However, incidents of harassment and abuse persist. The Lesbian, Gay, Legislative Advocacy Network (LAGABLAB) reports that gay men are often targeted under anti-vagrancy and anti-public scandal laws, with police exploiting these to extort bribes or break apart same-sex relationships through anti-kidnapping laws.

Despite legal progress, LGBTQ+ individuals in the Philippines still face widespread discrimination in various sectors, including education and employment. Reports from the Philippine Daily Inquirer and other sources highlight instances of violence, abuse, and ridicule, particularly towards gay men and lesbians. The societal view of homosexuality is often one of tolerance, with a focus on "knowing one's place," such as working in beauty salons or supporting political campaigns. Many politicians, including church leaders, maintain a

patronizing stance, acknowledging the presence of LGBTQ+ individuals but condemning same-sex relationships.

The Philippine Human Rights Commission (CHR) has committed to promoting LGBTQ+ rights, with its chairperson encouraging individuals to report discrimination or abuse. Numerous NGOs, such as the Rainbow Rights Project and Project Equality, are actively working to safeguard LGBTQ+ rights, push for anti-discrimination legislation, and provide legal support to those facing oppression. While social attitudes are gradually evolving, there is still a long road ahead for true acceptance and equal treatment for LGBTQ+ individuals in the Philippines.

Statement of the Problem

This study is aimed at determining the lived experiences of the members of the gay community in the Capiz Rehabilitation Center in their immersion to the five pillars of the Philippine Criminal Justice System. Specifically it sought to answer the following questions.

1. What are the group's experiences during their first contact with the law enforcement pillar?
2. What are the group's experiences during their legal talks with their legal counsel?
3. What are the group's experiences during court trial?
4. What are the group's experiences inside the Capiz Rehabilitation Center?
5. Is there such a thing such as social stigma to gay in the community?

II. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a **Phenomenological Research Design**, a qualitative approach that focuses on understanding the shared experiences of a specific group. Phenomenology aims to describe the essence of a particular phenomenon by examining how individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). Interviews are typically conducted with participants who have direct knowledge of the event or experience being studied, with the intent of answering two key questions (Moustakas, 1994): 1) What have you experienced in relation to the phenomenon? 2) What contexts or situations have influenced your experiences of the

phenomenon? Additional data sources such as documents, observations, and art may also be utilized. The collected data is then carefully analyzed by reading it multiple times to identify recurring phrases and themes, which are grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Through this process, the researcher aims to uncover the universal meaning of the experience and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

With its roots in philosophy, psychology, and education, phenomenology seeks to capture the most authentic, unfiltered data. In some interpretations of the approach, the researcher practices **bracketing**—a technique used to acknowledge and set aside personal biases or preconceptions to ensure objectivity during the research process. One common method of bracketing is **memoing**, where the researcher documents their personal reflections to distance themselves from the data (Maxwell, 2013).

In this study, phenomenology was used to explore the lived experiences of **Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs)** at the Capiz Rehabilitation Center who identify as part of the **Gay Community**. Data was gathered through a **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**. A focus group involves interviewing multiple individuals in a group setting, which, while not a replacement for individual interviews, offers a dynamic environment for information exchange (Given, 2008). This method is commonly used in marketing and political research, among other fields. During the FGD, the researcher directs the conversation and inquiry, which can be either structured (e.g., pretesting a questionnaire) or unstructured (e.g., brainstorming). Regardless of the format, the researcher-interviewer must adhere to established guidelines for conducting effective interviews (Dantzer, 2018).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the research manuscript will explore the personal and lived experiences of four (4) Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) at the Capiz Rehabilitation Center who openly identify as members of the gay community, focusing on their experiences within the context of the Five Pillars of the Philippine Criminal Justice System.

Personal Experiences in the Law Enforcement Pillar

Several subjects reported negative interactions with law enforcement during their arrests, revealing feelings of mistreatment and disrespect. Subject no. 1 expressed dissatisfaction with her arrest, describing how she was allegedly invited to accompany officers without clear communication about the reason, leading to confusion and mistrust. Similarly, Subject no. 2 shared a troubling account of being threatened with physical harm (being shot in the leg) when attempting to flee. This theme reflects a broader sense of injustice and powerlessness experienced by the PDLs at the hands of law enforcement, highlighting the abuse of authority and lack of transparency.

- **Differing Experiences of Arrest Based on Circumstances** The subjects presented varied perceptions of their arrests, suggesting that the circumstances surrounding each arrest influenced their experiences. Subject no. 3 differentiated between two separate arrests. In her first arrest, she accepted responsibility for her actions as a drug dealer, leading to a more neutral view of the police's conduct. However, during her second arrest, she insisted on her innocence and described the officers' actions as forceful and unjust, showcasing how arrest circumstances (e.g., actual guilt vs. mistaken identity) shaped her interactions with law enforcement. Subject no. 4, on the other hand, emphasized being in the "wrong place at the wrong time," suggesting that her arrest was a result of her association with others rather than personal involvement in criminal activity.
- **Separation and Special Treatment of Female PDLs** Subject no. 1 highlighted the importance of gender-sensitive treatment, noting that she was separated from male detainees and given special attention by officers during her time in lock-up. She expressed that the officers were generally respectful, providing food and attending to her needs. This theme underscores the significance of gender-specific considerations within the Law Enforcement Pillar, suggesting that female PDLs may receive differentiated treatment based on their gender. However, this positive experience contrasts with the negative encounters described by other

subjects, indicating that such treatment is not universal.

- **Sense of Injustice and Lack of Accountability** The experiences shared by the PDLs also conveyed a sense of injustice, with several subjects feeling wronged by law enforcement practices. For instance, Subject no. 3's repeated insistence on her innocence and mistreatment by police officers during her second arrest reflects a lack of accountability and fairness. Similarly, Subject no. 4's insistence on her innocence and being wrongfully associated with a drug bust further highlights how law enforcement can perpetuate feelings of injustice and misidentification.

The participants revealed a complex relationship between Persons Deprived of Liberty and the Law Enforcement Pillar of the Philippine Criminal Justice System. While there were instances of positive treatment, especially with regard to gender-specific considerations, the overarching themes reflect experiences of mistreatment, injustice, and a lack of accountability. The diverse perspectives of the subjects emphasize how the circumstances surrounding each arrest, as well as the behavior of the law enforcement officers, shape the PDLs' perceptions of the criminal justice system.

The Prosecution Pillar and the Defense Counsel in the Philippine Criminal Justice System

- **Dissatisfaction and Distance with the Prosecution and Defense Counsel** Subject no. 1's account of her last meeting with her defense counsel, which occurred more than four years ago when they filed a demurrer to evidence, reveals a sense of neglect and distance from legal representation. The lack of frequent communication and follow-up meetings suggests a disengagement from her lawyer, which may contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction or lack of support. This theme highlights potential gaps in legal representation, particularly in terms of regular communication and involvement in the case progression.
- **Satisfaction with Legal Representation** In contrast to Subject no. 1, Subjects no. 2, 3, and 4 shared positive experiences with their

respective defense counsels, emphasizing professionalism and effective handling of their cases. Subject no. 2 expressed high satisfaction with her lawyer's professional conduct, feeling confident in their ability to handle her case. Similarly, both Subjects no. 3 and 4 praised their defense counsels, specifically noting that the lawyer's professionalism was integral to their satisfaction. Notably, Subject no. 3 added an additional layer of connection by highlighting that her lawyer is a member of the LGBTQ community, which may have contributed to a deeper sense of understanding and trust.

- **The Role of Shared Identity in Legal Representation** Subject no. 3's specific mention of her lawyer's membership in the LGBTQ community introduces the theme of shared identity between the defense counsel and the client. This alignment may foster greater empathy, understanding, and communication, enhancing the overall experience for the PDL. The relationship between the defense counsel's identity and the client's sense of representation suggests that shared background or experiences could positively influence the legal process for marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQ community.
- **Consistency and Trust in Legal Counsel** Subjects no. 3 and 4, who share the same lawyer, both expressed strong satisfaction with the performance and professionalism of their counsel. This consistent positive feedback indicates a reliable and effective relationship between the lawyer and their clients. The sense of trust in their defense counsel, coupled with a shared positive experience, highlights the importance of consistent and dependable legal representation in fostering confidence in the criminal justice system.

The group discussion reveals a stark contrast in the experiences of PDLs with the Prosecution Pillar and their defense counsel. While some PDLs, like Subject no. 1, reported dissatisfaction and a sense of distance from their defense counsel, others,

particularly Subjects no. 2, 3, and 4, expressed satisfaction and trust in their legal representatives. The positive experiences of the latter group emphasize the significance of professionalism, communication, and even shared identity between the client and defense counsel. These elements contribute to a more supportive and effective legal experience, while the lack of engagement noted by Subject no. 1 underscores the challenges in ensuring consistent and adequate legal support in the criminal justice process.

The Court Pillar in the Philippine Criminal Justice System

- **Dissatisfaction with Court Delays** A prominent theme across all subjects is their shared frustration with the prolonged delays in the legal process. The phrase "Justice Delayed, Justice Denied" was repeatedly expressed, underscoring a common sentiment of disillusionment with the court system. This dissatisfaction stems from the extended periods of time that individuals have spent incarcerated in the Rehabilitation Center while their cases remain unresolved. The delay in case resolution is perceived not just as a procedural issue but as a denial of justice, contributing to the emotional and psychological toll on those involved in the criminal justice system.
- **Extended Incarceration Due to Court Delays** Subject no. 1's specific mention of waiting for the court's decision on the "Demurrer to Evidence" for more than four years exemplifies the extended periods of incarceration that result from delayed court proceedings. This delay highlights the disconnect between the speed at which cases are processed and the prolonged physical and mental confinement of the accused. The subjects' prolonged detention without resolution of their cases illustrates the detrimental effect of delayed judicial processes, potentially violating their right to a fair and timely trial.
- **The Psychological and Emotional Impact of Delayed Justice** The repeated reference to "Justice Delayed, Justice Denied" also

suggests the psychological and emotional strain experienced by the PDLs as they wait for the resolution of their cases. The uncertainty and the inability to move forward with their lives as a result of court delays can create feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and frustration. This emotional toll further compounds the already challenging experience of being incarcerated, and suggests a need for reform to address timely case adjudication and the mental health impact on detainees.

The thematic analysis reveals that the subjects' dissatisfaction with the Court Pillar is primarily driven by the prolonged delays in their cases, contributing to a sense of injustice and emotional distress. The repeated use of the phrase "Justice Delayed, Justice Denied" captures the essence of their frustrations and the detrimental effects of these delays on their well-being. The themes suggest a significant need for reform in the judicial process to address case backlogs, ensure timely resolutions, and minimize the impact of these delays on the lives of individuals awaiting justice.

The Correction Pillar in the Philippine Criminal Justice System

- **Initial Fear and Misconceptions.** A dominant theme emerging from the focus group discussion is the initial fear and anxiety the subjects experienced upon learning they would be transferred to the Capiz Rehabilitation Center. Their fear was fueled by negative portrayals of correctional facilities in the media, particularly movies and news reports, which often depict overcrowded, violent, and abusive environments. This theme reflects the widespread public perception of jails and prisons in the Philippines as dangerous places, and the personal apprehensions of the subjects about potential mistreatment, abuse, and violence, particularly from other Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) due to the nature of their offenses.
- **The Reality of the Correctional Facility.** However, the subjects' experiences in the Capiz Rehabilitation Center contrasted

sharply with their initial fears. They found the facility to be well-organized, with disciplined, respectful, and courteous PDLs and Provincial Guards. This shift in perception highlights the theme of how personal experiences can challenge or subvert preconceived notions, particularly regarding the treatment of detainees. The implementation of strict anti-discrimination and anti-bullying rules within the facility helped ease the subjects' fears and contributed to a safer, more respectful environment. This theme emphasizes the importance of institutional policies that promote respect, safety, and equality within correctional settings.

- **Assigned Roles and Responsibility.** Another recurring theme is the subjects' involvement in assigned roles within the rehabilitation center. These roles, which include duties like preparing the chapel, cleaning cells and hallways, and assisting with technical training assessments, provide a sense of structure, responsibility, and purpose for the PDLs. This theme underscores the potential positive impact of providing incarcerated individuals with meaningful work and roles, which can help build self-esteem, reduce idle time, and contribute to personal development. The subjects' engagement in these tasks may also facilitate their reintegration into society upon release, as it encourages skill development and personal accountability.
- **Access to Education and Skill Development** .A key theme in the discussion is the availability of educational and vocational opportunities at the Capiz Rehabilitation Center, particularly through National Certification Trainings offered by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The subjects' involvement in earning National Certificates in skills such as massage therapy and tailoring reflects a rehabilitative aspect of the facility, aimed at equipping PDLs with practical skills that can improve their prospects upon release. This theme

highlights the importance of providing vocational training and education to PDLs, which not only benefits their personal growth but also supports their successful reintegration into society by increasing employability and self-sufficiency.

- **Overcrowding as a Persistent Issue** Despite the positive aspects of the correctional facility, all subjects expressed concern about overcrowding, which remains a significant challenge in the Philippine correctional system. This theme reveals that while certain reforms and improvements have been made, structural issues such as overcrowding continue to impact the overall conditions of the facility. Overcrowding can exacerbate tensions, reduce access to resources, and undermine the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs, highlighting the need for systemic reform to address this persistent issue.

The thematic analysis reveals a complex interplay of initial fear, personal growth, and systemic challenges within the correctional facility. The subjects' initial misconceptions about the Capiz Rehabilitation Center were dispelled by their positive experiences, particularly in relation to the respectful treatment by staff and fellow PDLs, assigned roles that foster responsibility, and access to skill-building opportunities. However, the theme of overcrowding remains a critical issue that undermines the overall conditions and effectiveness of the rehabilitation process. The analysis suggests that while improvements in the treatment of PDLs are evident, further reforms are necessary to address overcrowding and ensure more effective rehabilitation and reintegration.

The Community and Future Concerns for Incarcerated Gay Individuals

- **Family Awareness and Acceptance of Gender Identity** One notable theme in the subjects' narratives is the level of acceptance they experienced from their families regarding their gender identity. Most of the subjects indicated that their families had been aware of their sexual orientation since childhood, which suggests a relatively supportive and accepting environment. This

theme underscores the role that familial acceptance plays in the emotional well-being and identity development of LGBTQ+ individuals. For many, having their gender identity recognized and accepted by their families can provide a sense of stability and reduce the emotional strain associated with societal rejection or discrimination. This is contrasted by Subject no. 3, whose experience differed significantly, as she had concealed her true gender identity until later in life.

- **The Emotional Strain of Concealing Identity** Subject no. 3's experience reveals a starkly different theme, one rooted in the emotional and psychological toll of concealing one's gender identity. At 32 years old, she shared the immense stress of hiding her feelings and identity, particularly within the context of her family's status in their municipality. This theme reflects the broader issue of societal pressures faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those from influential families or conservative communities. Subject no. 3's narrative highlights the difficulty of living a double life and the strain it causes on relationships, particularly in the context of a marriage and public life, such as her role as a Barangay Kagawad. The theme speaks to the ongoing conflict that many LGBTQ+ individuals experience between personal identity and the expectations of family, community, and society at large.
- **Fear of Future Stigma and Discrimination** The subjects expressed a pervasive concern about the stigma they would face in the community and their future employment prospects. This theme reflects the widespread fear of discrimination and marginalization that many LGBTQ+ individuals face, particularly those who have been incarcerated. Subject no. 1 and 2's concerns about their ability to use their National Certificates to secure employment once they are released from the facility highlight the intersection of criminal justice involvement and LGBTQ+ stigma. The fear of being labeled as "former PDLs" and facing

additional societal discrimination poses a significant barrier to reintegration, economic stability, and personal development for these individuals.

- **Social and Professional Reintegration Challenges** Closely linked to the theme of stigma, is the issue of reintegration into society. Both Subject no. 1 and 2 voiced apprehensions about their future due to the ongoing legal proceedings that have delayed their release. This prolonged uncertainty is compounded by the social stigma they fear will accompany their status as former prisoners. Their worry about applying for jobs and reintegrating into society is heightened by the possibility of being rejected or marginalized due to their criminal records, even with the qualifications they have earned through National Certification Training. This theme underscores the difficulty that many formerly incarcerated individuals face when trying to rebuild their lives, especially those who belong to marginalized communities such as the LGBTQ+ population.

The group discussion reveals the complex and multifaceted nature of the subjects' experiences as incarcerated members of the gay community. While family acceptance plays a crucial role in their emotional well-being, many still face significant challenges due to societal pressures, emotional strain from concealing their true identities, and fears about future stigma and discrimination. The ongoing stigma attached to being a former PDL exacerbates concerns about their ability to reintegrate into society and secure stable employment. The analysis emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems that address not only the legal and rehabilitative needs of incarcerated LGBTQ+ individuals but also the societal barriers to their reintegration and acceptance upon release.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the personal and lived experiences shared by the subjects in this research, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. **Negative Impressions of Law Enforcement:** All subjects expressed dissatisfaction with their interactions with law enforcement, particularly during their arrests. They consistently felt that their arrests were unjust and that they had been wrongly accused. Furthermore, they noted irregularities and misconduct on the part of the law enforcement officers, which likely contributed to their negative perceptions. These feelings of discontent may stem from the police being their initial point of contact within the Criminal Justice System.
2. **Court Delays and Backlog:** The subjects highlighted significant delays in the judicial process, with many cases remaining unresolved for extended periods. This suggests that the court system is burdened with a high volume of pending cases, contributing to frustrations and perceptions of "justice delayed, justice denied."
3. **Misconceptions About Prison Conditions:** The subjects revealed that, before their incarceration, they held negative perceptions of prison conditions largely shaped by exaggerated portrayals in movies and the media. These depictions often fueled fear and anxiety about the reality of life in correctional facilities. However, upon entering the Capiz Rehabilitation Center, the subjects found the actual conditions to be more manageable, with an organized structure, respect among inmates, and a focus on rehabilitation through skills development and work assignments.

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