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## Empowering Trainers, Transforming Lives: An Impact Study of the BPSU Hope Behind Bars Train the Trainers Program

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### ABSTRACT

The Bataan Peninsula State University's HOPE Behind Bars project, a 14-year-old initiative, has had a profound impact on the lives of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PsDL) in Bataan. As the project expanded to the entire Region 3, there was a growing need for additional trainers to ensure the program's sustainability. To address this, the university's HOPE Behind Bars team implemented a Train the Trainers (TOT) program, equipping Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) personnel in charge of the welfare and development of PsDL with essential skills in various vocational areas, including Housekeeping, Food Processing, Bread and Pastry, Tile Setting, and Masonry. The TOT program not only helped the BJMP sustain the training and assist PsDL in passing national assessments but also empowered the personnel themselves. Many of the trained trainers were able to start their own businesses, receive promotions, and gain recognition for their contributions. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of the BPSU HOPE Behind Bars TOT program, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. Structured questionnaires were employed for the quantitative analysis, while interview guides were used to gather in-depth insights from the participants. The findings of the study highlighted the project's success in equipping trainers with essential skills, fostering a supportive learning environment, and promoting effective PDL rehabilitation. The results will serve as a foundation for an enhancement program, further empowering Persons Deprived of Liberty in terms of their welfare and development.

### INTRODUCTION

Livelihood programs have evolved as a vital extension of formal education, creating numerous job opportunities for individuals, even those without a college degree. These initiatives serve as essential tools for socioeconomic empowerment, enabling individuals across various countries to acquire practical skills and secure sustainable employment. By addressing educational disparities, these programs empower participants to access economic opportunities despite lacking formal qualifications. On a global scale, the importance of these initiatives extends beyond personal empowerment; they also contribute significantly to community development and poverty alleviation.

Over the years, numerous colleges and universities have implemented livelihood programs, alongside government agencies, labor departments,

and non-governmental organizations that offer free skills development programs for individuals seeking local and international employment. These programs encompass a wide range of fields, including hospitality management, tourism, tailoring, creative design, and computer technology.

Research conducted by Wokadala, Ssesanga, and Akampwera (2020) explored the effectiveness of public livelihood programs in Uganda, particularly their impact on education, health, and water services. The study highlighted the community's high poverty levels and their detrimental effects on the local economy. In response, the researchers established the Sustainable Livelihood Pilot, primarily targeting women to enhance demand financing through empowerment strategies. Their findings indicated that the program effectively improved welfare among impoverished

households and created enhanced initiatives to boost the demand for social services at the household level. Similarly, Hunt, Saran, Banks, White, and Kuper (2022) emphasized that livelihood programs align with globalization goals, addressing widespread issues such as poverty, labor shortages, rising unemployment, and limited access to quality education. These programs play a crucial role in mitigating these challenges and ensuring that marginalized groups, including Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and Persons Deprived of Liberty (PsDL), benefit from free livelihood and skills development opportunities.

In the Philippines, the education system underwent a 'trifocalization' process under Republic Acts 7722 and 7796 in 1994, leading to the establishment of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). CHED oversees tertiary education programs, requiring students to complete a minimum of two years (certificate to diploma programs) to five years (bachelor's degree programs) at accredited institutions. Conversely, TESDA provides individuals the chance to study specific skills for three months or longer, culminating in a National Certification after passing assessments. TESDA's programs are categorized into School-Based, Center-Based, Community-Based, and Enterprise-Based initiatives.

Additionally, TESDA collaborates with secondary schools to offer a Technical, Vocational, and Livelihood Track in Senior High School under Republic Act 10533, facilitating formal assessments for students to earn National Certifications in various fields, including Electrical Installation and Maintenance, Food and Beverage Services, Cookery, Bartending, Housekeeping, Food Processing, Tiles Setting, Bread and Pastry, Masonry, and Shielded Metal Arc Welding. This approach ensures that many Filipinos gain access to quality education, enabling them to pursue careers that align with their personal and professional aspirations. Importantly, opportunities for skill development are not limited to the youth; even Persons Deprived of Liberty (PsDL) are afforded chances to grow professionally.

At Bataan Peninsula State University, the HOPE Behind Bars program stands out as a long-term extension initiative initiated by Professor

Bernadeth B. Gabor, PhD, the current Director of Extension and Training Services. Launched in 2010 at the Bataan District Jail, this program aims to instill hope in PsDL while empowering them to develop essential skills during incarceration and after their release. Initially offering Community-based extension program certified by TESDA-accredited courses such as Bread and Pastry Production, Food and Beverage Services, and Housekeeping, the program has expanded over the years through collaborations with various professionals. A study by Gabor (2019) revealed that over 50% of former detainees who participated in these programs secured formal employment, mainly in tourism and related sectors.

The BJMP recognized the opportunity to expand its training programs in Central Luzon. However, due to a shortage of qualified trainers, the BPSU faced challenges in meeting the high demand for training. This led to the innovative decision to recruit and train personnel from within the BJMP itself, ensuring a sustainable supply of qualified trainers for the region.

Over a decade later, this initiative has proven successful, continuing to provide valuable opportunities for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). The establishment of a dedicated training program for future trainers has significantly enhanced the capacity of BJMP to deliver essential skills and education to PDLs, fostering their development and reintegration into society.

This research aims to evaluate the HOPE Behind Bars training program for trainers. The evaluation results will inform an enhancement strategy to further empower Persons Deprived of Liberty regarding their welfare and development. This study aligns with the United Nations Development Programme's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), which seeks to provide beneficiaries with income-generating opportunities; Goal 4 (Quality Education), promoting professional growth for both trainers and PsDL; Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), enabling ex-inmates to seek employment related to the skills they acquired; and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), addressing societal biases against ex-detainees in the job market. Through this program, hope is not only offered to PsDL but also embraced by them, fostering a

transformative journey toward reintegration and empowerment.

Moreover, the study's findings will contribute to the broader discourse on the role of livelihood programs in addressing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and reducing recidivism rates among ex-detainees. By sharing best practices and lessons learned, this research can inform the development of similar programs in other institutions and contribute to the overall improvement of correctional and rehabilitation systems.

The primary objectives of this research are: (1) To evaluate the impact of the Train the Trainers training program on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the trainers, (2) To assess the effectiveness of the training program in preparing the trainers to deliver skills training to PsDL, (3) To identify the challenges and barriers faced by the trainers in implementing the program and develop strategies to overcome them, (4) To determine the level of satisfaction and engagement of the PsDL participating in the skills training programs facilitated by the trainers, (5) To propose an enhancement plan for the HOPE Behind Bars training program based on the evaluation findings, aimed at improving the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the program, (6) To align the program with the United Nations Development Programme's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

By addressing these objectives, the research will provide valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement within the HOPE Behind Bars training program, ultimately contributing to the empowerment and rehabilitation of PsDL through skills development and livelihood opportunities.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Approach**

The HOPE Behind Bars' Train the Trainers Program employs a Mixed-Methods Research approach, specifically utilizing a Sequential-Explanatory Design. This methodology combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection to provide a comprehensive exploration of the research questions. By integrating these data types, the study enhances the validity and reliability of its findings,

as noted by Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010). This approach is particularly effective in evaluating the program's impact, as it allows for measurable indicators of effectiveness alongside rich insights into trainers' experiences.

The research begins with quantitative data collection through a structured 4-point Likert Scale Survey Questionnaire, designed to capture a comprehensive demographic profile of respondents. This includes factors such as age, educational background, professional experience, and perceived competencies related to livelihood programs. Additionally, qualitative data is gathered through open-ended interview questions, providing context for the quantitative findings. This dual approach ensures a robust examination of the data, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the trainers' experiences and contributions to the program.

Following expert validation of the research instruments, quantitative data undergo statistical analysis while qualitative data is analyzed thematically using MAXQDA software. The anticipated outcome of this research is the "EmpowerED PsDL: Pathway to Rehabilitation and Reintegration" Enhancement Program, which aims to improve training frameworks for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PsDL). By systematically addressing each component of the study, actionable insights are generated that can inform policy and practice within correctional education programs.

The analysis reveals that participation in the HOPE Behind Bars project has led to significant positive contributions for both trainers and their communities. Emerging themes from participant feedback indicate enhanced skills and knowledge transfer, increased confidence, and improved communication skills. Furthermore, collaboration with Bataan Peninsula State University (BPSU) and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) has strengthened professional interactions among participants, facilitating knowledge exchange that benefits both trainers and PDL individuals.

Overall, the program has significantly contributed to professional growth and career advancement for participants. Many reported tangible benefits, such as promotions and expanded professional networks due to the skills acquired through training. The emphasis on continuous

professional development ensures that trainers remain adaptable in their roles within correctional facilities, ultimately enhancing their capacity to support PDL reintegration into society. By investing in such initiatives, the HOPE Behind Bars project fosters ongoing growth among correctional officers, reinforcing their vital role in facilitating positive change within the criminal justice system.

### **Population and Sampling**

The study utilizes total enumeration sampling and sequential sampling, both of which fall under non-probability sampling techniques. Total enumeration involves including the entire population of trainers participating in the HOPE Behind Bars program, which is feasible due to the small size of this group. This method ensures comprehensive data collection, as the experiences and perceptions of all trainers are considered crucial for evaluating program effectiveness. Sequential sampling is used to select participants for the qualitative phase from those who completed the quantitative phase. Participants responded to open-ended questions via Google Forms, accommodating logistical challenges that prevented in-person interviews.

### **Research Instruments**

Three research instruments were developed to gather data relevant to the study's objectives:

1. 4-point Likert Scale Survey Questionnaire: This instrument assesses the skills and competencies trainers acquired through the program, alongside demographic information. It aims to quantify perceptions of how these skills contribute to the welfare and development of PsDL.
2. Evaluation Sheet: A self-created tool validated by experts, this sheet evaluates various aspects of the training program, including content, engagement, learning outcomes, and sustainability.
3. Open-ended Interview Questions: Conducted via Google Forms, these questions solicit qualitative insights into the program's impact on trainers' lives, the PsDL, and the broader community.

The instruments were crafted with careful consideration to ensure clarity and relevance, and underwent a validation process to enhance their effectiveness in measuring the intended variables.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Following the proposal defense, the research instruments were refined based on feedback. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring ethical standards were upheld. The quantitative data collected through the Likert Scale survey were statistically analyzed, while qualitative data from interviews were coded using MAXQDA software. This software facilitates the organization and analysis of qualitative data, allowing for the identification of themes and patterns that support the quantitative findings.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study adheres to ethical principles outlined by Beauchamp and Childress (2019), emphasizing informed consent and confidentiality, particularly given the sensitive nature of working with PsDL. The principle of beneficence, as discussed by Emanuel et al. (2018), underscores the commitment to transparently communicate the research's potential benefits. Ethical guidance from Liebling and Arnold (2012) ensures compliance with institutional policies while maintaining high ethical standards throughout the research process.

In summary, this provides a comprehensive overview of the research design, methodologies, population sampling, instrument development, data collection, and ethical considerations for the study on the HOPE Behind Bars' Training of Trainers program. This structured approach aims to yield meaningful insights that can inform future enhancements to the training program.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This research explores the competencies and profiles of trainers involved in livelihood programs, particularly focusing on their roles in training Persons Deprived of Liberty (PsDL). The findings are organized into distinct sections that provide a comprehensive overview of the trainers' demographic profiles, competencies, and experiences.

### **Respondent Profile**

The demographic profile of the trainers reveals a youthful workforce, with 46% aged 31 to 40 years and 28% between 21 to 30 years. A majority (74%) have between 1 to 10 years of professional experience, indicating that most trainers are relatively new to the field, while only a small percentage possess over 20 years of experience.

This suggests a need for ongoing professional development to enhance their skills and expertise.

In terms of specific skills for livelihood programs, housekeeping is the most common expertise among trainers, with 20% having this skill. Other prevalent skills include bread and pastry production and food processing (15% each), followed by food and beverage services (13%). While some trainers possess less common skills such as bartending and masonry, the overall distribution highlights a diverse range of competencies, particularly in housekeeping and food-related areas.

The positions held by trainers predominantly reflect roles within correctional facilities, with 36% serving as Jail Officers. Development Officers make up 12%, indicating a focus on developmental activities. Other roles, such as Administrative Aide/Staff and Government Employees, constitute smaller percentages, showcasing a variety of job

#### **Trainers' Competencies**

Indicator	Mean	SD	DE	Level
Knowledge of Training Methodologies and Techniques	3.67	0.60	Strongly Agree	Competent
Ability to Facilitate Interactive and Engaging Training Sessions	3.51	0.70	Strongly Agree	Competent
Competence in Assessing and Addressing the Learning Needs of Diverse Participants	3.56	0.60	Strongly Agree	Competent
Composite	3.58	0.63	Strongly Agree	Competent

The data from the Train the Trainers Program illustrates the high level of competency among trainers in various training methodologies and techniques. With a composite mean rating of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 0.60, trainers exhibit strong confidence in their understanding of active learning strategies and participatory approaches. They effectively design and structure training sessions, incorporating essential principles such as needs assessment and learning objectives, which are crucial for tailoring sessions to meet the needs of Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL).

In addition to their methodological knowledge, trainers demonstrate proficiency in facilitating interactive and engaging training sessions, achieving a mean rating of 3.51 (SD=0.70). They excel in creating supportive learning environments that foster trust and collaboration among participants. Their ability to engage PDL participants through brainstorming, role-plays, and

positions but emphasizing jail management and development functions.

Regarding training attendance, 70% of trainers have participated in 1 to 5 training sessions, while 20% have not attended any training at all. This indicates that while most have some training experience, there is potential for further professional development. In terms of promotions, 58% have not been promoted, suggesting a lack of available career advancement opportunities within the organization.

Lastly, recognition and awards received by trainers indicate a positive acknowledgment of their contributions; 66% have received awards, and 72% have received some form of recognition. However, the data also highlights areas for improvement in promotions and extensive training opportunities, suggesting that enhancing professional development could lead to better career advancement and job satisfaction among the trainers.

effective questioning techniques highlights their skill in stimulating critical thinking and promoting active participation.

Moreover, trainers show competence in assessing and addressing the diverse learning needs of PDL participants, with a mean rating of 3.56 (SD=0.60). They effectively conduct comprehensive assessments to identify gaps and strengths, utilizing trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches. This sensitivity to the unique challenges faced by PDL individuals ensures that trainers create safe learning environments that empower participants to take ownership of their educational journeys.

Overall, the composite analysis reveals an impressive overall competence among trainers, with a composite mean rating of 3.58 (SD=0.63). This indicates that trainers feel well-prepared and confident in their ability to deliver effective training sessions tailored to the specific needs of PDL

participants. The consistency across various training aspects underscores their capability to foster engaging and inclusive learning environments.

The results highlight the importance of ongoing professional development for trainers to enhance their skills further. While they exhibit strong competencies in training methodologies, facilitation skills, and assessing diverse needs, continuous improvement will ensure they remain effective in supporting PDL participants' educational goals and personal growth.

### **Evaluation of the Training Project**

The HOPE Behind Bars' Train the Trainers Program has made a remarkable impact on the competencies of trainers, particularly in their grasp of training methodologies and techniques. With a high mean rating of 3.70, trainers exhibit confidence in applying active learning strategies and participatory approaches. Their ability to design and structure training sessions effectively is equally impressive, reflecting their understanding of essential principles like needs assessment and learning objectives. Additionally, trainers have gained practical knowledge of adult learning theories, which they adeptly apply in sessions with Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL), enhancing the overall effectiveness of their teaching methods.

Trainers also excel in conducting training needs assessments and selecting instructional methods tailored to PDL participants' specific needs, achieving a mean rating of 3.67. Their proficiency in using innovative techniques such as storytelling and multimedia resources helps create engaging learning experiences. Furthermore, their understanding of evaluation methods for assessing training effectiveness is noteworthy, with a mean rating of 3.63. Collectively, these skills indicate that trainers feel well-prepared and confident in delivering impactful training sessions designed to meet the diverse needs of PDL participants.

Facilitating interactive training sessions is another area where trainers shine, maintaining a composite mean rating of 3.51. They are adept at creating supportive learning environments that foster trust and collaboration among participants. Their ability to engage PDL individuals through brainstorming and role-plays demonstrates their skill in promoting active participation. Moreover, trainers effectively manage group dynamics and provide constructive feedback, ensuring equitable

participation among diverse backgrounds, which is crucial for creating an inclusive atmosphere.

The program's positive contributions extend beyond individual trainers to the broader community. Feedback from participants highlights enhanced skills and knowledge transfer, increased confidence, and improved communication skills, all of which contribute to social impact initiatives. The collaboration with Bataan Peninsula State University (BPSU) and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) has strengthened professional interactions among participants, facilitating knowledge exchange that benefits both trainers and PDL individuals. This collaborative effort not only enhances the effectiveness of the training but also empowers participants to contribute positively to their communities.

Overall, the HOPE Behind Bars' Training of Trainers Project has significantly enhanced the professional growth and career advancement opportunities for participants. Many reported tangible benefits, such as promotions and expanded professional networks, due to the skills acquired through the program. The emphasis on continuous professional development ensures that trainers remain adaptable and effective in their roles within correctional facilities, ultimately enhancing their capacity to support PDL reintegration into society. This initiative underscores the importance of investing in professional development to foster ongoing growth among correctional officers as they play vital roles in facilitating positive change within the criminal justice system.

### **Proposed Enhancement Program**

Finally, the proposed enhancement program for trainers working with Persons Deprived of Liberty (PsDL) aims to build on the insights gained from the study, ensuring the training framework evolves to meet the needs of both trainers and PsDL. The program, titled "EmpowerED PsDL: Pathway to Rehabilitation and Reintegration", is a holistic training initiative designed to empower PsDL with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support for successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

### **Strategies**

1. Skills Training Workshops: Conduct workshops on essential vocational skills such as carpentry, sewing, culinary arts, and

horticulture, tailored to PsDL's interests and abilities.

2. Life Skills Development Sessions: Facilitate sessions on communication, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence to promote positive behavioral change and personal growth.
3. Educational Opportunities: Provide access to educational programs, literacy classes, and certification courses to support PsDL's academic and intellectual development.
4. Peer Support Groups: Establish peer support networks where PsDL can share experiences, provide mutual encouragement, and offer guidance to one another.
5. Community Engagement Activities: Organize community service projects, cultural events, and outreach initiatives to foster social inclusion and strengthen ties between PsDL and the community.
6. Mentoring and Counseling: Offer individualized mentoring and counseling sessions to address PsDL's specific needs, challenges, and aspirations.

#### **Significance of Outcomes**

The program transcends being merely an outline; it stands as a beacon of hope for incarcerated individuals striving for a second chance. By offering comprehensive education, vocational training, and psycho-social support, this initiative empowers Persons Deprived of Liberty (PsDL) with the essential skills and mindset needed for successful reintegration into society. Through personalized guidance, practical skill-building activities, and a nurturing learning environment, participants not only acquire tangible skills but also develop confidence, resilience, and a renewed sense of purpose. Ultimately, the program aims to break the cycle of recidivism, promote positive behavioral change, and pave the way for a brighter future for PsDL and their communities.

In essence, this research highlights the transformative potential of train-the-trainer programs, showcasing their role in skill development, confidence building, and generating positive outcomes for both trainers and PsDL. By investing in such initiatives, we can foster a more inclusive and supportive society, where individuals are given the tools and opportunities to rebuild their

lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

The research underscores the importance of both demographic factors and professional competencies in shaping effective training programs for PsDL participants. While there is a solid foundation in terms of skills and recognition among trainers, there remains an opportunity for enhancing ongoing professional development through additional training sessions. The emphasis on interactive methodologies and competencies highlights a commitment to fostering an inclusive learning environment that can significantly impact outcomes for those involved in livelihood programs within correctional settings.

#### *Recommendations*

1. Enhanced Professional Development: It is recommended that the organization implement regular professional development workshops for trainers to expand their skills and knowledge further. This could include advanced training on new methodologies or technologies relevant to teaching PsDL participants.
2. Mentorship Programs: Establishing mentorship programs where experienced trainers can guide newer staff would help bridge the gap between less experienced trainers and those with more substantial backgrounds in training.
3. Increased Recognition: To motivate trainers further, it is essential to develop a structured recognition program that acknowledges their efforts and achievements regularly.
4. Diverse Training Opportunities: Offering a wider variety of training sessions that cater to different interests among trainers can enhance their skill sets and keep them engaged in their professional development.
5. Feedback Mechanisms: Implementing robust feedback mechanisms from both trainers and PsDL participants can help identify areas for improvement in training delivery and content, ensuring that programs remain relevant and effective.

By addressing these recommendations, the organization can enhance the effectiveness of its livelihood programs significantly, leading to better

outcomes for PsDL participants while also supporting the professional growth of its trainers.

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