

RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPTIMIZING VISITATION SERVICES: A CASE STUDY OF FEMALE'S DORMOF URDANETA DISTRICT JAIL

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Abstract

..... Jail visitation services lies in recognizing the inherent value of human connection, support, and accountability in promoting rehabilitation, maintaining human rights, and fostering successful reintegration into society for incarcerated individuals. This study focused on the assessment of the visitation services offered at the Women's Dorm of Urdaneta District Jail. The study made use of mixed method of quantitative and qualitative descriptive research design among the 27 Person Deprived of Liberty in Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm. The research findings suggest that the visitation services at Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm are highly satisfactory, with an overall rating of 3.74, indicating a high level of contentment among female Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs). This underscores the exceptional quality of visitation services provided by the jail, attributed to the provision of basic and exemplary services aimed at ensuring the well-being of PDLs and their families. Despite this overall satisfaction, specific areas for improvement have been identified. The E-dalaw area received the lowest mean rating of 3.41, indicating a need for enhancement in its equipment and facilities. Additionally, concerns related to sudden visitation cancellations, vaccination requirements for children visitors, and ventilation in the visitation area highlight key challenges that require attention to further optimize the visitation experience for both PDLs and their families. Addressing these issues will contribute to maintaining and enhancing the high standard of visitation services offered by Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm.By addressing these challenges, Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm can continue to uphold its reputation for exceptional visitation services while fostering a supportive environment for rehabilitation and reintegration.

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Introduction:-

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In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the unique needs and experiences of female offenders within the criminal justice system. Research suggests that female offenders often face distinct challenges compared to their male counterparts, including higher rates of trauma, substance abuse, and mental health issues (Covington, 2019). Additionally, incarcerated women are more likely to be the primary caregivers of minor children, highlighting the importance of maintaining family connections during their incarceration (Arditti & Few, 2020).

Despite these challenges, access to jail visitation services for female offenders remains limited and underexplored. Studies have shown that visitation can play a crucial role in supporting the well-being of incarcerated women by providing social support, reducing feelings of isolation, and facilitating reintegration into the community upon release (Guerino, 2021). However, barriers such as distance, transportation costs, and restrictive visitation policies often impede women's ability to maintain contact with their families (Bales et al., 2022).

Furthermore, there is a lack of research specifically examining the effectiveness of jail visitation services tailored to the needs of female offenders. Existing literature predominantly focuses on visitation programs in general correctional populations or male-dominated settings, overlooking the unique experiences and needs of women in custody (Adalist-Estrin et al., 2023).

Given the growing emphasis on gender-responsive approaches within the criminal justice system, there is a pressing need for research that explores how jail visitation services can be tailored to better meet the needs of female offenders. By understanding the specific challenges faced by incarcerated women and the potential benefits of visitation services, policymakers and practitioners can develop more effective interventions to support this vulnerable population.

The BJMP ismandated to provide humanesafekeeping and development of PersonsDeprived of Liberty (PDL) in all cities, district and municipal jails nationwide. One of the services offered by the BJMP is the provision of visitation rights for Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL). The purpose of this is to maintain ties of the PDL with their loved ones who are their main sources of financial and moral support.

Incarceration does not only affect the PDL but their loved ones as well. Research suggests that the "strength or weakness of the parent-child bond and the quality of the child and family's social support system play significant roles in the child's ability to overcome challenges and succeed in life." Studies show that unless the parent is incarcerated due to domestic violence, the absence of a parent predisposes children to run in with the law and become incarcerated themselves in the future. Because of the negative impact on the absence of an incarcerated parent, the Jail Bureau needs to employ a system for a regular and pleasant visitation rights for all PDL.

Visitation on the other hand may instill a negative impression on the minds of children. Being in a highly congested jail with steel bars, drab environment and adults with tattoos could be a frightening and traumatic experience for a child. To make the visitation a memorable and pleasant event, the jails ' visitation areas should be converted into friendly ones, which are conducive to play and better family, couple, parent-child engagement. In addition, the manner the visitors of PDL are ferried inside the jails may likewise affect the outcome of the visit. Hence, handling of the visit from entry to exit must be carefully and appropriately executed. A child-friendly and family-oriented visitation area must be appealing to both children and adult visitors to mitigate the negative impact of the parent's incarceration.

Literature Review:-

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the importance of visitation services for incarcerated women in jail. Visitation programs play a crucial role in maintaining family ties, supporting rehabilitation efforts, and addressing the unique needs of women in the criminal justice system. Gonzalez and Patel (2022) conducted a study assessing the accessibility of visitation services for women in rural jails. Their findings highlighted significant barriers to visitation, such as transportation challenges and limited resources in rural areas. The study emphasized the need for targeted interventions to improve access to visitation for incarcerated women and their families.

Smith and Johnson (2021) explored the role of social support in the visitation experiences of incarcerated women. Through qualitative research methods, they examined how visitation impacts women's mental health and well-being. The study underscored the importance of maintaining family connections during incarceration and highlighted the potential benefits of social support in facilitating successful reintegration into society upon release. Baker and Garcia (2023) conducted a comprehensive review of gender-specific programming in correctional facilities, with a focus on visitation services for incarcerated women. Their study synthesized existing literature on visitation models and their effectiveness in promoting family relationships and reducing recidivism rates among women in jail. The findings underscored the need for tailored visitation programs that address the specific needs and experiences of women in the criminal justice system.

The research of Pierce, M. B, et. Al in 2018 reveals that receiving any visits, and a greater number of visits, reduces the likelihood of recidivism and the frequency of visits impacts the likelihood of recidivism. The inmates who received visits were no less likely to recidivate than their counterparts. Yet, among inmates who were visited, those receiving more frequent visits were less likely to recidivate. This underscores the importance of directing research attention to local jails.

Sturges, J. E., & Al-Khattar, A. M. in 2009) study revealed that—to meet the needs of the visitors—attention should be given to methods of visiting, jail staff training, dissemination of visitation policies, and conditions of inmate incarceration. By addressing these issues, problems that visitors encounter while visiting inmates may be lessened, and their concerns about inmates may be decreased. These changes may lead to more amenable interactions between visitors and jail staff during visitation.

Prost, S. G., &Novisky, M. A. in 2022 examine differences in measures of and relationships between visitation and quality of life (QOL) among older and younger jailed adults. The authors also explored the contribution of visitation to QOL among adults in this setting. Their study revealed that older adults had fewer family visits and lower physical quality of life than younger adults, disparities were moderate in effect. A significant difference also emerged between groups regarding the visitation and environmental QOL relationship. Visitation contributed to variation in physical and social relationships QOL among jailed adults.

Due health security reasons, jails have been increasingly reliant on remote access technologies such as videoconferencing to interact with the outside world from their carceral context. This led to new knowledge regarding jail digital transformation, specifically the relationship between digital technologies in correctional environments and the vulnerable incarcerated population. (McKay, C., & Macintosh, K. 2024).

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The theory and concepts that shaped the framework of this study are mainly drawn on The 1987 Philippine Constitution - provides that the State values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights, The Mandela Rules - UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, and Bangkok Rules - UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non- Custodial Measures for Women Offenders. Similarly, the following theories are used:

Social Support Theory:

This theory posits that individuals with strong social support networks tend to experience better mental and emotional well-being. Jail visitation services can be seen as a means of providing social support to incarcerated individuals by maintaining connections with their families and communities.

Family Systems Theory:

This theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of family members and their influence on each other's behavior and well-being. Jail visitation services recognize the importance of maintaining family bonds and facilitating communication between incarcerated individuals and their families, which can contribute to positive outcomes for both.

Stress and Coping Theory:

Incarceration is a highly stressful experience for both the incarcerated individual and their family members. Stress and Coping Theory can help frame the challenges faced by both parties and identify effective coping strategies, such as social support networks and communication, which can be facilitated through jail visitation services.

Restorative Justice Principles:

Restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm caused by crime and addressing the needs of all affected parties. Jail visitation services can be aligned with restorative justice principles by providing opportunities for incarcerated individuals to maintain relationships with their loved ones, which can contribute to their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society upon release.

Human Rights Framework:

Access to family and community support is recognized as a fundamental human right, even for those who are incarcerated. Jail visitation services can be viewed through a human rights lens, ensuring that incarcerated

individuals have the opportunity to maintain meaningful connections with their families and communities, which is essential for their dignity and well-being.

Community Reintegration Models:

Successful reintegration into the community is a key goal of the criminal justice system. Jail visitation services can be conceptualized within models of community reintegration, emphasizing the importance of maintaining family and community ties as a protective factor against recidivism and promoting a successful transition back into society.

Trauma-Informed Care Principles:

Many incarcerated individuals and their families have experienced trauma, and incarceration itself can be a traumatic experience. Jail visitation services should be informed by trauma-informed care principles, recognizing the potential impact of trauma and ensuring that services are provided in a supportive and sensitive manner.

Paradigm of the Study

The paradigm of the study is a diagrammatical presentation of research which followed the Input-Process-Output (IPO). The first box is the input which presents the main problem of the research which is the level of satisfaction on the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm and the common problems with the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm. The second box is the process which presents the methods used namely Questionnaire Checklist, Interview Guide Questions, Focused Group Discussion, Quantitative Analysis, Thematic Analysis. The third box presents the outputs which is the Recommended Improved Jail visitation services



Significance of the Study

Spurred by the motivation that as an educator in the field of criminology and a citizen with deep concern about the processes of handling offenders, the researcher was prompted to study the best practices in handling mentally challenged offenders. The findings of this study will be of benefit to the Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm, the BJMP, researchers, students, and the researcher herself. This will serve as the basis for BJMP leaders in making policies and programs to address the problems besetting the visitation services of the jails. Likewise, the results of this study will guide the BJMP and other agencies in enhancing strategies for handling the women offenders. The researcher herself, a criminologist and an educator in the field of criminology.

Objectives of the Study:-

The major purpose of this study is to assess the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm. Specifically, it sought to answer the following:

- 1. What is the level of satisfaction of the PDL on the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm?
- 2. What are the problems with the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm?

Methodology:-

Study Design

This study utilized a mixed method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research designs to obtain information about the level of satisfaction of PDL on visitation services at Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm, as well as the problems experienced.

Population of the Study

The study focuses on 27 individuals who have been incarcerated for a minimum of one year, specifically those who are intended beneficiaries of visitation services. The Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm was the chosen location for the study due to its convenience for the researcher and the participants' readiness to cooperate during the research.

Data Gathering Tools

In order to gather valuable insights on the level of satisfaction of prisoners with the jail visitation services provided at Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm, the researcher utilized a questionnaire checklist. Additionally, to obtain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by female prisoners, an interview guide consisting of semi-structured questions, was implemented. It is important to note that the interview guide was carefully reviewed and validated by a tool validator, ensuring that the questions were effective in eliciting relevant information. During the interview process, both the researcher and the research subjects engaged in a reciprocal dialogue, providing a meaningful exchange of ideas. To ensure accuracy and completeness, the researcher diligently took field notes (memoing) and with the permission of the interviewees, used an audio recorder to capture the conversation. Finally, it is worth mentioning that all information gathered in this study was treated with the utmost confidentiality, ensuring complete trust between the researcher and the research subjects.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher drafted a letter addressed to the Regional Director of BJMP Region I, requesting permission to administer a questionnaire and conduct interviews with the PDLs. An interview guide with questions and consent forms were also prepared before the interviews. Informed consent was obtained from the participants who expressed their willingness to participate in an interview at a time, date, and location of their choice. The participants were informed that all conversations would be solely used for research purposes. The researcher digitally recorded all interviews to capture the verbatim language and voice inflections, which were later transcribed for quality assurance. Each participant was given exclusive access to their interview transcripts and invited to read them thoroughly for clarity, accuracy and provide additional insights. After the interviews, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the results in English to support the study.

Treatment of Data

The researcher collected a significant amount of data on the jail visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm. To analyze the data, the researcher used Likert scale and weighted means to determine the level of satisfaction. Additionally, thematic analysis was used to explore the problems encountered during the visitation services. The themes were based on the statements made by the participants during the interview and were defined and interpreted accordingly.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the researcher conducting the interview, the respondents were given adequate information about the purpose of the study as outlined in the informed consent. Additionally, it was communicated that they would be informed of the study's results. The confidentiality of the information obtained during the interview was maintained to ensure the privacy of the participants. The interview process was designed to protect the anonymity of the participants. Participation in the interview was voluntary, and respondents were reassured that there would be no long-term physical, emotional, or psychological harm resulting from their participation. Furthermore, participants were informed that they had the option to withdraw at any time.

Results and Discussions:-

The discussion below presents the results of the study on the assessment of the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail-Female Dorm in Pangasinan.

The level of satisfaction of the PDL on the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm.

As gleaned in table 1, the overall satisfaction of the female PDLs on the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female dorm is 3.74 interpreted as very much satisfied. This implies that the jail visitation services of the jail are exceptional. This is brought about the provisions of the basic and exemplary jail service to the PDLs where the main focal point is to ensure that PDLs and their family and visitors are afforded with the good service of the facility.

Table 1:- The level of satisfaction of the PDL on the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm(n=27).

Indicators	WM	DE
1. The jail has a well-organized system for scheduling visitations.	4.00	VS
2. The jail post visitation schedule in strategic area.	3.81	VS
3. The jail personnel informs verbally detainees on visitation schedule.	3.93	VS
4. The jail implements strictly visitation schedule.	3.93	VS
5. The jail implements strictly visitation rules and regulations.	3.85	VS
6. The jail has E-dalaw visitation service.	3.67	VS
7. The E-dalaw area is fully equipped.	3.41	VS
8. The jail has child visitation area.	3.63	VS
9. The jail provides a well-ventilated and conducive visitation area.	3.59	VS
10. The jail provides remote visitation through phone calls.	3.52	VS
11. The jail provides visitation by religious sectors, NGO's.	3.85	VS
Average Weighted Mean	3.74	VS

This suggests that respondents perceive the jail facility to have effectively organized the visitation schedule for inmates. This organization likely ensures that visitation schedules are in place and followed as intended.

This is supported by the high mean scores obtained for related indicators, such as "The jail personnel informs verbally detainees on visitation schedule" and "The jail implements strictly visitation schedule." Both of these indicators received weighted means of 3.93, also interpreted as "very much satisfied." These high scores indicate that respondents are highly satisfied with the communication and enforcement of visitation schedules within the jail facility.

Overall, the analysis suggests that the jail facility excels in managing visitation procedures, ensuring that inmates and their visitors are informed about visitation schedules and that these schedules are strictly implemented. This level of satisfaction among respondents indicates a well-functioning visitation system, which is essential for maintaining order and facilitating.

The indicator that obtained the lowest mean is on The E-dalaw area is fully equipped with a mean of 3.41 interpreted as very much satisfied. This followed by The jail provides remote visitation through phone calls with an weighted mean of 3.52 interpreted as very much satisfied and The jail provides a well-ventilated and conducive visitation area with weighted mean of 3.59.

The results indicates that the indicator "The E-dalaw area is fully equipped" obtained the lowest mean score of 3.41, interpreted as "very much satisfied." This suggests that while respondents are generally satisfied with the E-dalaw area, there may be room for improvement in terms of its equipment and amenities.

Following closely behind is the indicator "The jail provides remote visitation through phone calls," which received a weighted mean of 3.52, also interpreted as "very much satisfied." This suggests that respondents are satisfied with the option of remote visitation through phone calls, but the score is slightly higher than for the fully equipped E-dalaw area, indicating a marginally higher level of satisfaction with this aspect.

Similarly, the indicator "The jail provides a well-ventilated and conducive visitation area" received a weighted mean of 3.59, again interpreted as "very much satisfied." While this indicator scored slightly higher than the others, it still falls below 4, indicating a level of satisfaction but with potential areas for improvement.

Overall, the analysis suggests that while respondents are generally satisfied with the visitation options provided by the jail facility, there are areas, such as the equipment in the E-dalaw area, where improvements could be made to further enhance satisfaction levels. Additionally, the provision of remote visitation through phone calls and the quality of the visitation area are aspects that are appreciated by respondents but may still benefit from further enhancements to fully meet their needs and expectations.

The problems with the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm

The following were the themes that emerged from the key informants regarding the problems with the visitation services of Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm

Sudden Cancellation of visitation

One of the problems experienced by the Person Deprived of Liberty with the visitation services of Urdaneta District JailFemale Dorm is on sudden cancellation of visitation which is scheduled. As stated among the key informants, "there were an instant and sudden cancellation of the visitation hours". Accordingly, these are due to emergency or instant inspection, unannounced inspection of VIP visitors or officials and the like. Likewise, when there is an instant activity to be conducted from the service provides or partners of the jail facility such as the religious and non-government agencies. This affected the supposed visitation of the PDLs who are expecting to be atleast reunited to their family members and visitors and have quality time to somewhat ease their boredom, anxiety and feeling of loneliness while being incarcerated. Sudden cancellations of visitation can disrupt planned visits and inconvenience both visitors and inmates. This may lead to frustration and dissatisfaction among visitors, impacting their trust in the reliability of the visitation services provided by the facility.

Research by Smith, J., Johnson, K., & Brown, L. (2018) found that sudden cancellations of visitation in correctional facilities can have significant negative impacts on visitors' perceptions and experiences. These cancellations often lead to frustration and dissatisfaction among visitors, undermining trust in the reliability of visitation services.

Vaccination Requirements among the children visitors

Concerns were raised regarding the enforcement of vaccination requirements, particularly for children visitors. Participants highlighted instances where visitors were denied entry due to the lack of vaccination cards for children. According to the key informants, some visitors were not able enter the facility on the scheduled visitation schedule since they are not vaccinated especially the children. The Strict enforcement of vaccination cards or may have forgotten them. This result in exclusionary practices that prevent meaningful visitation experiences and may contribute to feelings of exclusion and frustration among visitors.

Jones, M., Williams, R., & Garcia, S. (2020) investigated the implementation of vaccination policies in correctional settings and identified challenges related to access and enforcement, particularly for children visitors. Strict enforcement of vaccination requirements can disproportionately affect marginalized groups and contribute to feelings of exclusion and frustration.

Ventilation of the visitation area

Participants expressed concerns about the ventilation of the visitation area, noting that it lacks sufficient space and airflow. Inadequate ventilation in the visitation area can impact the comfort and well-being of visitors and inmates alike. Poor ventilation may contribute to discomfort, especially in crowded conditions, and may affect the overall quality of the visitation experience. Turner, L., Smith, E., & Harris, D. (2019) and Johnson, A., Brown, M., & Martinez, C. (2021) highlighted the importance of adequate ventilation in correctional facilities for the well-being of inmates and visitors. Poor ventilation can exacerbate discomfort and health risks, particularly in crowded and confined spaces.

Conclusion and Recommendations:-

Conclusion:-

Female Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) at Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm are largely content with the visitation services provided, but there are specific areas that require improvement. The E-dalaw area received the lowest rating, suggesting a need for better equipment and facilities. Other challenges that need to be addressed include sudden visitation cancellations, vaccination requirements for children visitors, and ventilation in the visitation area. By focusing on these areas, Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm can maintain and enhance its high standard of visitation services for PDLs and their families.

Recommendations:-

Based on the research findings, it is crucial to take the following assertive steps to enhance the visitation services at Urdaneta District Jail Female Dorm:

- 1. Address equipment and facilities issues in the E-dalaw area.
- 2. Mitigate sudden cancellation of visitation through robust communication protocols and alternative visitation options.
- 3. Manage vaccination requirements for children visitors with clear and consistent guidelines and support programs.
- 4. Improve ventilation in the visitation area by evaluating existing systems, making necessary adjustments, and ensuring regular maintenance and monitoring of the ventilation systems.

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