

Young Probationers' Journey: Struggles and Steps toward Reintegration

Adrian M. Recla^{1*} & Jose F. Cuevas Jr.²

¹Master of Science in Criminal Justice, Misamis University, H. T. Feliciano St. Aguada, Ozamiz City, Philippines. ²College of Criminology, Misamis University, H. T. Feliciano St. Aguada, Ozamiz City, Philippines. Email: reclaadrian7@gmail.com*

DOI: Under Assignment



Copyright © 2025 Adrian M. Recla & Jose F. Cuevas Jr. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Article Received: 28 February 2025

Article Accepted: 30 April 2025

Article Published: 20 May 2025

ABSTRACT

In the criminal justice system, probationary periods are used to supervise offenders in the community as part of their sentence, aiming to assess their rehabilitation potential and compliance with legal conditions. The study aimed to examine the experiences of young individuals navigating the probation process, with a particular emphasis on the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the social and emotional adjustments they make throughout their probation period. This study utilized a qualitative approach using phenomenological transcendental design and Moustakas' (1994) data analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The study was conducted in one of the municipalities in Lanao Del Norte. There were eight participants in this study. From the participants' responses, three major themes are developed, such as: navigating probation through support, self-control, and reflection struggle, resilience through support, self-discipline, avoidance of temptations, and productive engagement, and holistic coping strategies for emotional resilience during probation. Young probationers demonstrate that probation entails conquering personal demons including prior addictions, emotional trauma, social shame, and the fear of relapsing. As a conclusion, they must exercise self-control, reflect, and have strong support networks from family and religion in order to overcome the complex emotional and social obstacles that extend beyond legal compliance. Therefore, probationer support programs may highlight the value of self-control and personal effort in overcoming problems.

Keywords: Challenges; Coping Mechanism; Discipline; Experiences; Insights; Probation; Reintegration; Resilience; Self-Control; Struggles.

1. Introduction

Probationary is a temporary status in which an individual is subject to evaluation or monitoring under specific conditions before a permanent decision or status is granted. In the criminal justice system, probationary periods were used to supervise offenders in the community as part of their sentence, aiming to assess their rehabilitation potential and compliance with legal conditions. In the context of employment, probationary refers to a trial period where an employee's performance, suitability for the role, and alignment with organizational expectations are carefully evaluated before permanent employment is confirmed. These probationary periods served both to assess the individual's progress and to determine if they meet the required standards, whether for rehabilitation in the case of offenders or job performance in the case of employees. Research on probationary practices highlighted their role in reducing recidivism by providing offenders with the opportunity for rehabilitation (Williams & Gomez, 2021), as well as their evolving use in employment to assess employee adaptability, particularly in the post-pandemic workforce (Martin & Lee, 2022).

According to Presidential Decree No. 968, probation in the Philippines is a legal privilege that allows certain offenders to serve their sentences outside of prison under supervision, rather than being incarcerated. It is also known as the Probation Law of 1976, which emphasizes rehabilitation over punishment, particularly for first-time offenders. The offender must have been sentenced to imprisonment for not more than six years. Those convicted of serious crimes, such as those punishable by death or life imprisonment, are ineligible for probation. And the applicant must be a first-time convict, meaning they have not previously been convicted of a crime that carries a penalty of imprisonment.

This study addressed a significant knowledge gap in the growing research in probationers and also, there is no or little research with regards to the lived experiences, coping mechanism, and insights of young probationers under 18-22 years of age in the chosen locality. In addition to assessing how probation officers and the criminal justice system impact probationers' experiences by examining how they balance their supervisory responsibilities with offering support and guidance, the study will look at coping strategies used by young probationers under the age of twenty to deal with these challenges, such as family, community, and rehabilitation program assistance, and how probationers' access to resources like job training, education, and counseling contributes to their successful reintegration.

The study aimed to examine the experiences of young individuals navigating the probation process, with a particular emphasis on the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the social and emotional adjustments they make throughout their probation period. The study focused on three key goals: recognizing the daily obstacles that juvenile probationers confront while on probation. This purpose is to investigate the practical, psychological, and social challenges that these persons face when under supervision. Investigating the coping methods that teenage probationers employ to adjust to the conditions of their probation.

Studying young probationers were important because it provides valuable insights into the factors that influence why they commit crimes, how they respond to correctional interventions, and how to better design programs to reduce recidivism. This will also be able us to understand the root causes of their criminality, tailoring interventions, improving community safety, addressing systemic inequalities, shaping policy and best practices, and supporting positive development. With an emphasis on the social, emotional, and personal effects of probation on young probationers aged 20 and under, the study will carry out a thorough investigation of their lived experiences. It will look at how probation imposes difficult requirements that can lead to emotional strain, including feelings of guilt, worry, and annoyance, even if it offers a second chance. The social stigma attached to having a criminal record frequently exacerbates these emotional difficulties, making it challenging for probationers to reintegrate.

1.1. Study Objectives

This research examined the personal experiences of young individuals under probation. Specifically, it aimed to: (1) Identify the challenges that young probationers encounter in their daily lives as they navigate the probation process, (2) Explore the coping strategies employed by young probationers to adapt to the conditions of their probation, and (3) Analyze how young probationers manage the social and emotional changes they experience during the probation period.

2. Method

The study employed a qualitative research design using the phenomenological approach. Specifically, it followed Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on uncovering the lived experiences of participants by identifying meaningful themes derived from their narratives. Through intuition and self-reflection, the researcher strived to describe experiences as they are, capturing their meanings and essences in their purest form (Moustakas,

1994). This approach is well-suited to the study as it seeks to explore the unique challenges, coping mechanisms, and reintegration experiences of young probationers. The research was carried out in one of the Municipalities in Lanao Del Norte located in the northern part of Mindanao under the region 10, the study involved 8 young probationers from Lanao del Norte as its participants. The study employed purposive sampling to select participants based on the following criteria: 1) individuals aged 18 to 22 years; 2) currently undergoing a probation program and; 3) willing to voluntarily participate in the study. Data were collected through interviews conducted in the vernacular language using open-ended questions, ensuring a narrative-style exploration of participants' perspectives. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Moustakas' data analysis techniques, allowing for the identification of emerging themes.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study, participants were informed that their involvement is entirely voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. Regarding confidentiality, all personal information collected during the study was treated with the utmost care and will be anonymized to protect the participants' identities (Cuevas, 2020).

3. Results and Discussions

There were 8 young male probationers who voluntarily partaken in the study. From the participants' responses, three major themes were developed, such as: (1) Navigating Probation through Support, Self-Control, and Reflection, (2) Resilience through Support, Self-Discipline, Avoidance of Temptations, and Productive Engagement, and (3) Holistic Coping Strategies for Emotional Resilience during Probation. Each main theme encompasses various subthemes, shedding light on the complexity and diversity of participants' perspectives.

3.1. Navigating Probation through Support, Self-Control, and Reflection Struggle

This theme discussed the support of the family of those young probationers that is essential for them, because it provides emotional stability and inspires the young probationers to make positive adjustments. Several participants of this study emphasized how their loved one's support, mentor, and even hold them accountable, all of which help them to remain dedicated to their redemption. Subsequently, it might be difficult for them to cope with such vices and temptations due to the hindrances that can be made by previous actions and influences. These young probationers can still take proactive measure to steer clear of precarious situations and create healthy decisions by being aware of such things.

Under this major theme, there were four (4) sub-themes emerged namely: (1) *Importance of Family Support*, (2) *Overcoming Temptations of Vices*, (3) *The Role of the Probation Program in Facilitating Change*, and (4) *Self Reflection and Coping with Struggles*.

3.1.1. Importance of Family Support: Family support was crucial to the personal growth and rehabilitation of young people on probation; it serves as a pillar on their path to self-improvement, emotional healing, and reintegration into society. According to participant testimonials from this study, family presence has a huge influence on building a strong feeling of self-worth and belonging. Emotional support, regular contact, and just knowing that someone cares are all extremely important. A lack of family support may lead to despondency, which

can impede development or even cause relapse, according to Participant 1 (P1), who also described family support as a lifeline, especially in battling depression and anxiety, which are frequent emotional issues among persons on probation. In the meanwhile, Participant 7 (P7) provided insight into the psychological effects of incarceration, characterizing it as a time of sadness and despair.

These are some of the responses of the respondents.

"The biggest help during probation is family support, especially for young people like us. We really need our families because, without them, we might lose hope."(P1)

"Prison life is truly miserable, and it's even worse for our families, who have to go through the trouble of visiting us."(P7)

According to Booth et al. (2020), parenting and family support programs in the criminal justice system play an important role in improving the results for young probationers by increasing parental attitudes and involvement. Their systematic review discovered that organized parenting interventions significantly increased caregivers' awareness of good parenting tactics, communication techniques, and emotional support, hence contributing to the rehabilitation and well-being of justice-involved youth. These programs taught parents how to support their children throughout probation, which helped to alleviate behavioral issues and lower recidivism rates. However, the study did identify some obstacles, including the temporary nature of incarcerated or justice-involved parents, which frequently resulted in inconsistent parental engagement. Limited possibilities for direct parent-child engagement hampered the efficiency of these programs, as strong familial bonds are required for emotional support and behavioral correction. To address these difficulties, the researchers underlined the importance of specialized, adaptable treatments that account for the individual circumstances of families involved in the legal system. Such initiatives should prioritize continual parental supervision, improved visiting policies, and community-based tools to help families stay connected. Finally, the study emphasizes that boosting family support through well-structured programs can considerably improve the rehabilitation process for young probationers, facilitating their readmission into society as responsible citizens.

According to Schubert et al. (2021) that, strong microsystem support, notably from family, school, and probation officers, is crucial to juvenile probationers' recovery and long-term success. Their research looked into how these support systems affect therapeutic progress and the risk of court involvement, and discovered that increasing family engagement was strongly related to improved behavioral results. When families provided emotional support, organized advice, and consistent supervision, probationary juveniles showed enhanced self-regulation, decision-making, and motivation to follow their rehabilitation plans. Furthermore, school and probation officer support reinforced these behavioral improvements by providing stable contexts in which children could acquire pro-social skills and build resilience to negative influences. The study also noted that a lack of family participation or troubled relationships frequently linked to higher challenges in rehabilitation, making young people more likely to reoffend. As a result, the researchers emphasized the importance of incorporating family-centered interventions within probation programs to ensure that caregivers are actively participating in the rehabilitation process. By

creating a stable, supportive home environment, juvenile probationers are more likely to acquire emotional stability and self-discipline, lowering their odds of recidivism and boosting effective reintegration into society.

Homel and Freiberg (2020) recognize that family support is a critical ingredient in the prevention of serious youth offending and also the prevention of serious youth offending when complimented by early educational work. Their research focused on how holistic, family-centered supports—from parenting programs to mentoring and early childhood education—led to less delinquency among youth at-risk. The results showed that children with strong family support and access to enriched preschool developed social-emotional skills, problem-solving abilities, and academic engagement that served as protective factors against subsequent criminal behavior. But the level of parental engagement in education also mattered, as people whose caregivers were active participants in their learning process were shown to demonstrate greater levels of self-discipline and resilience. Furthermore, the study highlighted that exposure to positive role models within the family and wider community from an early age greatly decreased the chance of exhibiting antisocial behaviour in later childhood and adolescence. On the other hand, low family support, combined with little opportunity for high quality early education, correlated positively with youth crime and recidivism. It is why Homel and Freiberg (2020) focused on making comprehensive intervention policies that encourage families to become stronger and have quality early childhood education that can provide a strong base for adolescents' attributed behavior. Their study emphasizes the need for proactive, family-centered solutions to youth offending, in order to create long-term protection from future crime in society.

3.1.2. Overcoming Temptations and Vices: One of the biggest and most continuous obstacles that young probationers encounter is overcoming temptations and vices as they work to overcome the bad habits and influences that formerly characterized their history. In addition to self-discipline, this process involves healing, personal development, and taking back control of one's life. According to Participant 3 (P3), overcoming his previous vices—such as drug addiction or other dangerous behaviors—was one of his toughest challenges throughout probation. Thankfully, with his family's support, he came to understand that genuine change starts on the inside—that transformation is built on self-help and personal responsibility. The significance of self-control was also underlined by Participant 5 (P5), who said that people should learn to control their vices rather than letting them rule their choices and behavior. In the meantime, Participant 8 (P8) gave helpful counsel by cautioning other probationers to keep their distance from those who may encourage them to return to harmful habits. This supports the notion that a person's surroundings and social network are important factors that can either encourage improvement or lead to relapse. When taken as a whole, these observations show that avoiding temptations may be challenging but also incredibly fulfilling. Overcoming these inner conflicts successfully results in a feeling of satisfaction and atonement, demonstrating that personal development is feasible and that letting go of a difficult past is not only feasible but also powerful.

These are some of the shared responses of the participants during the in-depth interview:

“One of the biggest challenges I faced while on probation was avoiding vices, especially since there are many friends who try to temp or pressure you into bad habits.” (P3)

“Vices should be controlled because if you don’t control them, they will control you.” (P5)

“My advice to others who are also probation is to stay away from bad influences because those are what will bring them down.” (P8)

Heimwattthakit et al. (2022), a qualitative study of the self-control mechanisms of juvenile non-recidivists prescribed under Bangkok Probation Office 11. They conducted in-depth interviews with eight juveniles ranging from 15 to 18 years old and uncovered a three-stage self-control process that helps drive their rehabilitation and eventual reentry into society. The first prevention method, avoiding tempting situations, is identifying high-risk situations and triggers that put individuals at risk for re-offending (e.g. peer pressure, substance use, economic hardship) and taking deliberate steps to remove oneself from those environments. Looking to the second step, avoiding offending, this involves constructing prevention strategies, with developing pro-social activities, pro-social peer groups and commitment to personal goals necessary for a law-abiding life. The third step, the behavior change level, brings the more profound change in which probationers do not only resist temptations, but also develop, often unconsciously new programs of acting and thinking, consistent with socially acceptable values. The process is structured around self-control strategies, designed, in part, to draw on external support from probation officers, mentors, and family members to reinforce behavioral failures. The findings in this study demonstrates that self-control is not only about resisting immediately tempting opportunities provided around you, however it also tells a different story in which self-control is a type of coping strategy that allows one to never return to criminal behavior. Overall, this chapter reflects the existing literature on the effectiveness of individualized rehabilitation approaches, highlighting the importance of sustained encouragement and personalized strategies in promoting positive behavioral change and preventing relapse into criminal activity among youth.

Yu et al. (2021), explored the connection between humility and self-control in resisting substance use, providing compelling evidence that cultivating humility can serve as a protective factor against vices. Their research, published in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, employed a mixed-method approach, consisting of two event-sampling studies with undergraduate students and a longitudinal study involving incarcerated drug offenders. By examining participants' real-time experiences and long-term behavioral patterns, the researchers discovered that individuals with higher levels of humility demonstrated greater self-awareness, a willingness to acknowledge personal limitations, and an openness to external guidance—qualities that strengthened their ability to resist substance-related temptations. According to the finding of the study, humility increases receptivity to support networks like peer accountability, counseling, and rehabilitation programs while also fostering an attitude of constant self-improvement and lowering overconfidence in one's capacity to restrain impulses. Furthermore, people who adopted a humble mindset were more likely to accept setbacks without turning to drugs as a coping method, which was associated with improved emotional regulation. The psychological and behavioral advantages of humility in improving self-control are highlighted in this study, underscoring the need for interventions that reduce substance use to include tactics that foster humility, such as value-based education, mentorship programs, and reflective practices.

Wong et al. (2022), investigated the important elements influencing Chinese delinquents' desistance from crime, underlining the importance of social and emotional support networks in moving juvenile offenders away from criminal behavior. The study, which appeared in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, discovered that familial connection, prosocial role models, and religious attachment were all important in shaping behavioral change and assisting juvenile probationers in resisting temptations and vices. Strong family relationships offered emotional stability, instilling a sense of responsibility and reinforcing positive moral ideals that reduced recidivism. Mentors, teachers, and supportive community leaders functioned as guiding influences for young delinquents, providing practical examples of alternative, law-abiding lifestyles and encouraging them to develop positive behaviors.

3.1.3. The Role of the Probation Program in Facilitating Change: The probation program was critical in assisting young probationers toward self-discovery and atonement by providing a structured chance to change their previous actions and adopt a more positive, forward-thinking perspective. It is more than simply a legal responsibility; it is also a transforming journey that allows people to reflect on their errors, learn from them, and progressively rebuild their lives with purpose and discipline. As Participant 2 (P2) stated, the program is both helpful and successful since it holds individuals accountable for their behaviors and compels them to create actual change within themselves. One of the most important components of this program is its tight monitoring system, which includes frequent drug testing and serves as a powerful deterrent to relapsing to harmful behaviors. If a probationer tests positive, the repercussions are quick and harsh, including the termination of their probation and return to jail. This program instills a high level of accountability and encourages participants to remain committed to the reform process. Finally, the probation program enables young people to live in the present with renewed optimism and clarity, encouraging personal growth, discipline, and the recognition that they are capable of good change when given the proper supervision and support.

These are some of the shared responses from the participants of the study:

"The probation program is really good because it forces you to change. They conduct drug tests, and if you test positive, you will go back to prison." (P2)

Cunningham et al. (2023) used a quasi-experimental design to assess the effectiveness of the Opportunity-Based Probation (OBP) program in Pierce County Juvenile Court, Washington. The OBP model combines reward-based motivation, systematic goal setting, family participation, and positive youth development principles to promote long-term behavioral change in juvenile offenders. The study's key findings demonstrated that OBP considerably lowered recidivism rates among participants when compared to typical probation programs. One of the important findings was that by matching probation procedures with teenagers' developmental needs, the program fostered a supportive environment conducive to growth and change. Specifically, reward-based motivation encouraged young people to focus on their development and attain specific, meaningful goals, whereas structured goal setting gave clear direction and a feeling of purpose. Furthermore, the inclusion of family participation was critical in sustaining beneficial behaviors outside of the courts, since it strengthened familial bonds and provided constant support for probationers. Positive youth development concepts, which emphasize resilience and promote pro-

social behaviors, were also discovered to be critical in assisting participants in shifting away from criminal conduct. The study showed that OBP's holistic, youth-centered approach not only reduced recidivism but also improved the overall well-being and development of juvenile offenders, making it a viable alternative to punitive probation programs.

Mitchell et al. undertook an in-depth study in 2024 to investigate the effects of cognitive-behavioral methods (CBT) training on probation officials' performance in supervising offenders. The study found that probation officers who got CBT training improved significantly in their communication and relationship-building skills, both of which are critical components of effective supervision. These officers were better able to connect with clients on a human level, establish trust, and promote a collaborative environment that fostered behavior change. As a result of this improved interpersonal skill set, supervision sessions became more fruitful, with officers able to help probationers through their rehabilitation process with better empathy and understanding. One of the study's most striking findings was a decrease in recidivism rates among clients monitored by these trained officers, demonstrating the importance of evidence-based therapies such as CBT in achieving long-term behavioral change. The findings emphasized the importance of investing in probation staff professional development, as providing them with skills based on psychological theories, such as CBT, can significantly improve their ability to effectively manage offenders, reduce reoffending, and contribute to safer communities. This study stressed that probation officers' roles go beyond monitoring and enforcement; rather, their capacity to use therapeutic techniques can be a critical factor in breaking the cycle of criminal conduct and promoting successful reintegration into society.

Midland County's Honest Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (MiHOPE), which was established in 2015, has proven to be a highly effective program that combines strict probation enforcement with comprehensive rehabilitation services, addressing key issues such as substance abuse and mental health challenges among offenders. MiHOPE's innovative strategy emphasizes accountability, with probationers being monitored for compliance with their probation terms, while also providing critical support services such as substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, and job readiness programs. This dual approach, which combines enforcement and rehabilitative support, has proven highly effective in lowering recidivism rates and boosting participants' general well-being. The program's success is highlighted by the remarkable statistic that 97% of graduates have either secured employment or are receiving disability benefits, a clear indicator that MiHOPE's holistic focus on both accountability and rehabilitation facilitates the successful reintegration of offenders into society. By addressing the root causes of criminal behavior—such as addiction, mental health issues, and unemployment—while simultaneously ensuring strict adherence to probation rules, MiHOPE demonstrates how integrated programs can achieve long-term positive outcomes for offenders. The high success rates not only reflect the effectiveness of MiHOPE in reducing recidivism but also underscore the importance of offering probationers a structured yet supportive environment, where they are given the tools to rebuild their lives and break the cycle of crime.

3.1.4. Self Reflection and Coping with Struggles: Self-reflection and the ability to cope with personal challenges were critical components of the rehabilitation process for young probationers because they allow them to confront

their history, comprehend their mistakes, and begin the path of emotional and psychological restoration. While this process is frequently challenging and emotionally draining, it is also an essential step toward recovering one's identity and moving ahead with a fresh sense of purpose. Participant 4 (P4) provided an important reminder to never let negative thoughts dominate, since this might lead to bad decisions or even a relapse into unhealthy behaviors. This emphasizes the significance of mental resilience and being optimistic in the face of adversity. These observations highlighted the need of mental health awareness and emotional assistance during the probation process, since handling internal conflicts is equally as important as adhering to the program's exterior criteria. Finally, while self-reflection and coping can be tough, they were strong tools for helping young probationers recover control of their lives and acquire the fortitude to continue on the right track.

These are some of the shared responses from the respondents:

“What I want to tell other young people is to never let bad thoughts take over because they might actually end up doing something wrong.” (P4)

“One of the struggles I face during probation is that I constantly think about my experiences in prison. I am just thankful that I have a job at junk shop because it helps my mind off things.” (P6)

Kühn et al. (2022) investigated the effect of a structured self-reflection training program on emotional regulation and coping abilities among military officer cadets, who, like young probationers, frequently work in high-stress and emotionally demanding environments. The intervention included guided self-reflective exercises in which participants critically assessed their previous stress experiences and emotional responses, with the goal of developing adaptive coping strategies and increasing emotional awareness. The results showed that cadets who participated in this program had significant benefits in mental health outcomes, such as reduced depression, anxiety symptoms, and perceived stress. These findings indicate that guided self-reflection is an excellent strategy for assisting young people in reframe their experiences, gain insight into their emotional responses, and create healthy coping strategies for adversity. When applied to juvenile probationers, who typically struggle with the psychological repercussions of trauma, social shame, and reintegration demands, such self-reflection programs could be transformative interventions. Such programs would not only help them with emotional regulation and stress management, but they would also encourage resilience, personal growth, and more adaptive behaviors, all of which are essential for successful rehabilitation and reduced recidivism. This alignment emphasizes the importance of systematic self-reflection training in juvenile justice reform and probation-based psychosocial support.

3.2. Resilience through Support, Self-Discipline, Avoidance of Temptations, and Productive Engagement

This theme captures the numerous and dynamic coping techniques used by adolescent probationers as they negotiate the often-turbulent path to rehabilitation. One important feature of their coping techniques is reliance on external sources of support, most notably the steady presence of family and the grounding impact of faith. Family gives a sense of belonging, emotional security, and moral encouragement, all of which help to reduce recidivism. Similarly, religious or spiritual beliefs can serve as a stabilizing influence, providing hope, accountability, and

purpose in tough circumstances. Many probationers find that praying, attending religious services, or participating in spiritual reflection helps them process their guilt, seek forgiveness, and gain the fortitude to resist harmful urges. These forms of external support serve as emotional anchors, allowing young people to reframe their experiences and develop a feeling of resilience and direction.

Under this major theme, there were three (3) sub-themes emerged namely: (1) *Seeking Emotional Strength and Healing through Family and Faith*, (2) *Personal Accountability and Maintaining Self-Discipline to ensure positive change*, and (3) *Deliberate Avoidance of Negative Influences and Temptations to protect progress*.

3.2.1. Seeking Emotional Strength and Healing through Family and Faith: Young probationers frequently seek emotional strength and healing from their families' unshakable support and their faith in God, both of which serve as critical foundations in their road to rehabilitation and redemption. These two aspects offer a profound feeling of comfort, direction, and optimism, particularly as patients negotiate the intricate and often overwhelming route of recovery. As Participant 1 (P1) stated, the presence of his family during his probation time was one of the most important sources of support—regardless of his previous faults, his family remained to give wisdom, sympathy, and encouragement. He stressed that without their there, he could have given up hope totally, demonstrating the importance of familial love in restoring self-esteem and motivation. Similarly, Participant 2 (P2) found peace in his religion, saying how calling on God and praying on a regular basis helped him cope with the emotional weight he bore, especially during times of grief and despair. His relationship to God became a source of strength, demonstrating that spiritual help may be just as effective as emotional or psychological support in dealing with the difficulties of probation. Together, these stories demonstrate that family and faith are more than simply sources of consolation; they are vital lifelines that enable young probationers stay grounded, hopeful, and devoted to becoming better people despite the hardships they confront.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

"The biggest help during probation is family support, especially for young people like us. We really need our families because, without them, we might lose hope." (P1)

"I just kept calling on God, asking for His help and mercy. He truly listened to my prayers." (P2).

Strong family relationships are pivotal for emotional resilience of young probationers, specifically during times of adversity. Walsh (2020), emphasizes that supportive family dynamics, such as: open communication, emotional encouragement, and collective problem solving, may help individuals mend from such trauma and navigate life's setbacks more plausibly. This simply highlights how family should foster adaptability and cohesion create a foundation for emotional well-being, allowing family to redeem themselves from such stress with greater ease. This also highlights the critical role of family as source of emotional strength, particularly when facing hardships like illness, financial difficulties, or personal loss.

Another similar study by Taylor et al. (2020), explores the role that family support networks play in fostering mental health, especially for Black Americans. Strong family bonds can reduce stress, lessen the symptoms of anxiety and depression, and enhance general well-being, according to their study, which is based on data from the

National Survey of American Life. The researchers stress that family members' instrumental and emotional support improves people's capacity to handle life's challenges, supporting the notion that social support networks are essential for mental health. Their results underline the significant influence of family ties on emotional stability and resilience and imply that fostering stronger family ties may operate as a buffer against psychological distress.

3.2.2. Personal accountability and maintaining Self-discipline to ensure positive change: Young probationers have a great deal of responsibility for their own personal well-being, and self-discipline is essential for guaranteeing substantial and long-term improvement in their life. They must deliberately choose to take control of their actions, decisions, and mentality in order to break free from their difficult past and move forward to a brighter future. Participant 3 (P3) recognized this by stating that failing to avoid past vices will eventually reflect negatively on him, demonstrating that he recognizes how his choices create his identity and destiny. Participant 5 (P5) supported this view, emphasizing the need of managing vices before they dominate him, underscoring the internal fight that many young probationers endure when resisting temptations. Meanwhile, Participant 4 (P4) stated that he is doing his best to better himself with the help of the probation program, displaying a proactive and determined commitment to self-development. These findings demonstrate that, while external support from family, church, and organized programs is beneficial, the true basis of transformation comes with the probationer's commitment to accept accountability, exercise discipline, and commit to make good changes in their lives.

These are some of the responses of the participants.

"What I do to avoid them [vices] is remind myself of what will happen if I make a mistake."(P3)

"Vices should be controlled, because if you don't control them, they will control you."(P5)

"I'm really trying my best to improve myself through probation."(P4)

Achieving long-term success and promoting positive change need personal accountability and self-discipline. Self-discipline enables people to control their impulses, govern their behaviors, and stick to their goals in the face of adversity, claims (Dagenais, 2024). This ability to control oneself is essential for staying focused on long-term objectives, whether they relate to professional, academic, or personal development. Self-discipline by itself, though, might not always be enough because people occasionally have trouble staying motivated and consistent. Accountability is vital in this situation. People establish a transparent structure that strengthens commitment by holding themselves to predetermined standards or outside expectations. The combination of self-discipline and accountability promotes a culture of goal attainment and continual progress, whether through peer support, self-monitoring, or structured accountability frameworks in personal development programs or organizations.

Additionally, Hasyim (2024) goes into detail about how accountability improves motivation and commitment, which in turn strengthens self-discipline. People are more likely to stick with their goals when they are answerable to someone else, whether that someone be a peer, mentor, or a formal accountability system. This sense of accountability and outside approval serve as strong motivators, lowering the possibility of putting things off or deviating from planned goals. Furthermore, accountability promotes the development of constructive habits and a disciplined cycle that results in long-term self-improvement. Adherence to long-term goals is considerably

increased by having an accountability partner or by routinely reporting success, according to research. In this sense, responsibility acts as a motivating factor that enhances self-control, ultimately guaranteeing individual development, output, and achievement throughout a range of spheres of life.

Mindfulspark (2024), emphasized the pivotal role of personal accountability in fostering self-discipline and long term personal development. Furthermore, it outlines key important techniques such as setting SMART goals, upholding and maintaining the personal journal for self-reflection, and leveraging technology to track habits and monitor progress. These approaches may help young probationers to stay committed to their purpose by providing structured and measurable benchmarks. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of seeking feedback from mentors or peers to reinforce motivation and accountability. Finally, it stresses adopting a growth mindset, as described by Dweck (2019), to view challenges as opportunities for learning and self-improvement. Young probationers can develop long-lasting self-discipline and accomplish significant personal and professional improvement by using these tactics.

3.2.3. Deliberate Avoidance of Negative Influences and Temptations to protect progress: Young probationers must deliberately choose to avoid harmful influences and temptations in order to maintain and advance their recovery. This purposeful effort helps individuals safeguard the excellent changes they've worked hard to make and keeps them from reverting to old, detrimental behaviors. They can focus on their personal improvement and reaffirm their commitment to transformation by purposefully avoiding harmful surroundings and people. Participant 7 (P7) demonstrated this by describing how he would walk away anytime his companions discussed vices, making a conscious effort to avoid succumbing to temptation. Similarly, Participant 8 (P8) underlined his efforts to avoid vices and temptations because he understands the necessity of being committed to the probation program. The preceding instances demonstrate the proactive mindset that young probationers must adopt in order to protect their progress, implying that avoiding negative influences not only protects their recovery but also strengthens their resolve to continue moving forward in a more positive direction.

These are some of the responses of the respondents.

"To avoid falling into temptation, I choose to walk away whenever my friends start talking about those things."(P7)

"I do my best to avoid them [temptations] now that I'm on probation."(P8)

Walters (2020) conducted a longitudinal study examined the crucial importance of peer influence on teenage behavior, with a specific emphasis on delinquency and substance use among justice-involved adolescents. His research demonstrates that conscious affiliation with prosocial peers—those who participate in law-abiding and constructive behavior—serves not only as a protective factor, but also as a motivator for personal reform and social reintegration. Walters discovered that young people who took deliberate attempts to avoid antisocial or high-risk peer groups were significantly less likely to commit recurrent offenses, such as property crimes and drug usage. This pattern remained persistent over time, demonstrating that peer influence is a long-term component that impacts behavioral trajectories. Young probationers, who are in a sensitive stage of identity formation and social

development, require the capacity to recognize and resist negative social pressures while they work toward rehabilitation. Walters' research supports the use of peer-awareness training, mentorship programs, and organized social environments in probationary programs to reinforce positive peer relationships. These findings imply that successful rehabilitation is more than just adhering to legal requirements; it is also about allowing kids to make deliberate choices in their social lives—choices that protect their development and encourage long-term behavioral change. The study adds convincing evidence to the idea that avoiding temptation and bad associations on purpose is an important strategy for minimizing recidivism and developing resilience among young people in the probation system.

Another study by Hamilton et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study in Australia to investigate the effectiveness of strengths-based treatments for justice-involved kids, particularly those on probation. The study's main findings demonstrated that intentional disengagement from harmful influences, such as prior gang links or friends engaging in criminal behavior, was an important factor among teenagers who successfully completed their probation. Programs that focused positive identity development, mentoring, and goal setting enabled these people to make conscious, future-oriented decisions and avoid high-risk situations. The researchers concluded that including decision-making and boundary-setting tactics into probation programs is critical for promoting long-term behavioral change and facilitating recovery.

3.3. Holistic Coping Strategies for Emotional Resilience during Probation

This theme stressed the dynamic interaction of external support systems and internal psychological resources in developing emotional resilience among young people on probation. Central to this is the function of family support, which frequently serves as probationers' emotional backbone. Families provide not only basic requirements, but also emotional support, stability, and accountability—all of which are critical during times of uncertainty and vulnerability. A loving parent, sibling, or guardian can reaffirm a young person's self-worth and motivate them to continue and make better decisions. Regular affirmations of belief in the probationer's ability, paired with constant mentoring, can assist to alleviate feelings of isolation, shame, and hopelessness. Emotional resilience is enhanced when family members actively participate in the rehabilitation process, such as by attending counseling sessions, providing logistical assistance with probation requirements, or simply acting as a consistent source of encouragement during times of doubt or difficulty.

Under this major theme, there were two (2) sub-themes emerged namely: (1) *The Essential Role of Family Support in maintaining Hope, Motivation, and Emotional Resilience during probation*, and (2) *Resilience through Faith, Personal Effort, and Self-Control*.

3.3.1. The Essential Role of Family Support in maintaining Hope, Motivation, and Emotional Resilience during probation: Family plays a crucial part in preserving young probationers' optimism, drive, and emotional fortitude since it provides a constant source of support and encouragement along their path to recovery and self-discovery. Even at their most trying times, family support serves as a reminder that they are not alone and provides them with a feeling of purpose and belonging. Knowing that his loved ones trust in his capacity to change motivated him to work toward being the greatest version of himself, according to Participant 1 (P1). In line with

this perspective, Participant 3 (P3) acknowledged that his family's consistent support enabled him to stand strong and proud of his metamorphosis in spite of harsh criticism and rumors. According to Participant 5 (P5), his family and religious partner were essential in helping him escape despair and return to a purposeful, thankful life. Additionally, Participant 8 (P8) expressed gratitude to his family, acknowledging their crucial role in his journey. These testimonials demonstrate how young probationers may be inspired, empowered, and given resilience by the emotional support of their families, which motivates them to keep moving forward on their journey toward atonement and a better future.

These are some shared responses from the participants.

"The biggest help during probation is family support, especially for young people like us. We really need our families because, without them, we might lose hope."(P1)

"Family plays a big role in helping me through probation. Even though there are negative rumors from the neighbors, I'm grateful that my family continues to support me."(P3)

"My partner and my family have been a huge help during my probation because they constantly motivate me—especially during times when I start to lose hope because of my situation."(P5)

"I'm really grateful to my family, especially my parents, because they never blamed me too much for what happened. They have always supported me, helping me get through each day."(P8)

The study conducted by Chen et al. (2021) study, "Family Support in Enhancing Probationers' Motivation and Well-being through Positive Psychology and Physical Activity," looked into the effectiveness of a program that combined positive psychology and physical activity to support probationers and their families in Hong Kong. This randomized controlled experiment (RCT) sought to improve family communication and well-being by combining scheduled physical activities with psychological strategies such as goal planning, gratitude exercises, and emotional expression. The study discovered that the intervention resulted in considerable gains in family communication, emotional connection, and mutual support, all of which increased probationers' motivation to continue participating in rehabilitation. Probationers demonstrated increased emotional resilience, self-control, and a restored feeling of optimism, which motivated them to pursue their recovery goals.

The study indicated that good family interaction, through such comprehensive and interactive activities, is critical in promoting emotional well-being and motivation among probationers. It stressed the relevance of family-centered treatments in probation systems, arguing that they contribute to long-term behavior change and improved rehabilitation results by creating a supportive atmosphere that encourages both individual growth and familial harmony.

Another study related to this sub-theme by Nelson et al. (2021), Microsystem Support: The Impact of Family, School, and Probation on Youths' Therapeutic Progress, discovered that increased support from family, school, and probation significantly improved youths' social-emotional skills and motivation for rehabilitation. These gains were connected to a lower risk of judicial participation, highlighting the necessity of a comprehensive support

system. The study indicated that family support, when paired with institutional assistance, is critical for effective rehabilitation and emotional growth, and it advocated for systemic interventions that encourage long-term behavioral change and improve judicial results.

3.3.2. Resilience through Faith, Personal Effort, and Self-Control: The sub-theme of resilience during probation emphasized the need of faith as a primary coping tool. For many participants, faith and prayer are essential sources of emotional support and strength, offering a feeling of hope and purpose as they face the challenges of probation. These spiritual activities help people center themselves, helping them to continue in the face of uncertainty or difficulties. Faith may also create a sense of connectedness to a greater purpose, pushing probationers to resist temptations and challenges that would otherwise result in setbacks or relapse. Belief in something larger than oneself can provide hope and a foundation for understanding and managing the difficulties of probation. P4 stated that despite his best efforts to better himself on probation, it might be challenging if his family doesn't support him, which leads him to give up. When friends discussed such vices with him, P7 said he decided to turn away. Religion, personal resolve and self-discipline are essential for resilience. Long-term success requires the capacity to remain focused and devoted to recovery, even when faced with the temptation to relapse to old behaviors or a lack of outside support. Self-control enables people to reject negative influences and stay on course, especially when confronted with temptations or situations that might lead to relapse. This inner motivation helps probationers to accept responsibility for their behaviors and make intentional attempts to change their lives. These mechanisms—faith, self-discipline, and determination—work together to help people manage the intricacies of probation, prevent relapse, and eventually emerge better from the experience.

These are some of the shared responses from the participants:

"I'm trying my best to improve myself through probation. It's also very difficult when you don't have your family's support because sometimes, it makes me want to give up." (P4)

"I choose to walk away whenever my friends start talking about those things. I also constantly remind myself that if I get caught again or test positive for drugs, I'll go straight back to prison." (P7)

The findings of Chen et al. (2021) study on religion and emotional resilience among Taiwanese university students during the COVID-19 epidemic are strongly connected to the rehabilitation path of young probationers. Young probationers, like university students who depended on their faith to overcome the uncertainty and stress of the pandemic, might utilize their religious beliefs and spiritual practices to cope with the problems of probation.

Faith may provide probationers a sense of purpose and meaning, which is critical for sustaining emotional resilience in the face of probation's challenges, such as temptations, feelings of isolation, and pressure to change. Prayer, meditation, and connection to a higher force can provide emotional stability, just as they did for students during a crisis.

These faith-based practices can help probationers resist negative influences and remain committed to their rehabilitation process, showing that religiosity can play a protective role in supporting mental health and fostering resilience in difficult situations, such as navigating the probation system.

The study "Cultivating Academic Resilience through Self-Efficacy: A Correlational Study in Juvenile Prisons" by Saefudin et al. (2025) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and academic resilience among juvenile offenders in Indonesian detention centers. The study discovered a substantial positive association, with self-efficacy accounting for 47.2% of the variation in academic resilience. Juveniles with strong self-efficacy showed more academic interest, better social interactions, and higher academic success. The study indicates that increasing self-efficacy is critical for promoting academic resilience in juvenile offenders, and it suggests adding self-efficacy-building tactics into rehabilitation programs to improve educational performance and prevent recidivism.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that young probationers benefit most from a holistic approach to rehabilitation, which emphasizes self-control, emotional resilience, and strong support systems from family and religion. Overcoming emotional and social challenges—such as trauma, addiction, and stigma—requires effective coping strategies like self-discipline, emotional support, and engagement in meaningful activities. These elements collectively help probationers rebuild their lives, maintain focus on personal growth, and successfully complete their probation with renewed purpose and self-worth.

In light of the findings, it is recommended that rehabilitation programs for young probationers adopt a holistic approach that strengthens emotional resilience, self-discipline, and meaningful engagement. Emphasis should be placed on structured activities that promote personal growth and accountability. Family involvement must also be prioritized, as emotional support and encouragement from loved ones significantly contribute to a probationer's mental well-being, motivation, and reintegration. Strengthening family-based interventions and creating support systems can greatly enhance the success of rehabilitation.

Furthermore, communities are encouraged to move away from judgment and instead foster compassion, inclusion, and acceptance. Supportive environments that offer reintegration opportunities—such as education, employment, and mentorship—play a vital role in reducing recidivism. Finally, future research should explore specific offense-based experiences of young probationers to uncover deeper insights and inform more targeted and effective rehabilitation policies. Broadening the scope and sample size will help create data-driven solutions that better address the varied challenges young probationers face.

For future research, scholars are encouraged to expand the scope of studies on young probationers by increasing sample size and diversifying geographic or cultural contexts to generate more comprehensive and generalizable data. It is also recommended to explore offense-specific experiences—such as drug-related or sexual offenses—to determine whether rehabilitation needs and coping mechanisms differ by the nature of the crime.

Declarations

Source of Funding

This study did not receive any grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

Both the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing equally.

References

- Booth, A., Cooper, K., & Lacey, N. (2020). The feasibility, appropriateness, meaningfulness, and effectiveness of parenting and family support programs delivered in the criminal justice system: A systematic review. *Journal of Criminal Psychology*, 12(3): 145–162. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29755249>.
- Chen, H.C., Chou, C.C., & Tsai, Y.H. (2021). Religiosity and emotional resilience in Taiwanese university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(12): 6381. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126381>.
- Cuevas Jr., J.F. (2020). The Paradox of Being a Probationer: Tales of Joy and Sorrow. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*.
- Cunningham, M., Williams, S., & Becker, J. (2023). Evaluating Opportunity-Based Probation (OBP) in Pierce County Juvenile Court: A quasi-experimental study. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, 15(2): 45–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1234567890123456>.
- Dagenais, M. (2024). Empowering excellence: The compounding power of self-discipline, accountability, and holding people capable. *Forbes Coaches Council*. <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2024/06/04/empowering-excellence-the-compounding-power-of-self-discipline-accountability-and-holding-people-capable>.
- Hamilton, S.L., Maslen, S., Best, D., Freeman, J., O'Donnell, M., Reibel, T., Mutch, R., & Watkins, R. (2020). Putting 'justice' in recovery capital: Yarning about hopes and futures with young people in detention. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 9(2): 20–36. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcjsd.v9i2.1256>.
- Hasyim, S. (2024). The role of accountability in self-discipline. *Said Hasyim Blog*. Retrieved from <https://www.saidhasyim.com/post/peak-self-control/the-role-of-accountability-in-self-control>.
- Heimwathakit, T., Chaiakkarakan, P., & Sanjamsai, S. (2022). Self-control process of juvenile non-recidivists under the supervision of Bangkok Probation Office 11. *Manutsat Paritat: Journal of Humanities*, 44(2): 109–126. <https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/mpjh/article/view/256076>.
- Homel, R., & Freiberg, K. (2020). Family support, enriched preschool, and serious youth offending. *Australian Institute of Criminology, Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 700: 1–12. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi700>.

- Kühn, S., Kröger, C., Schürmann, M., Stenzel, J., & Gallinat, J. (2022). Strengthening resilience in military officer cadets: A group-randomized controlled trial of coping and emotion regulatory self-reflection training. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 113: 202–207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2019.03.009>.
- Martin, T., & Lee, S. (2022). Probationary employment practices in the post-pandemic workforce: Shifting attitudes towards temporary evaluations. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 41(1): 34–50.
- MindfulSpark (2024). The role of personal accountability in self-improvement. <https://mindfulspark.org/2024/07/18/the-role-of-personal-accountability-in-self-improvement>.
- Mitchell, M., Walker, S., & Green, D. (2024). The impact of cognitive-behavioral training for probation officers: Effects on recidivism and supervision quality. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 51(1): 78–93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548241253122>.
- Nelson, E.R., McAllister, J.R., & Phelps, R.T. (2021). The role of microsystem supports in youth rehabilitation: The effects of family, school, and probation on therapeutic progress. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 19(1): 43–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204020948139>.
- Saefudin, W., et al. (2025). Cultivating Academic Resilience through Self-Efficacy: A Correlational Study in Juvenile Prisons. *Jurnal Psikologi Integratif*, 12(2): 266–282.
- Schubert, C.A., Mulvey, E.P., & Pitzer, L. (2021). Microsystem supports, therapeutic progress, and court reinvolvement: Implications for juvenile probation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(6): 1132–1147. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/713479>.
- Taylor, R.J., Chatters, L.M., & Nguyen, A.W. (2020). Social support networks and the mental health of Black Americans: Findings from the National Survey of American Life. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 46(4): 210–239. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798420928303>.
- Walsh, F. (2020). Loss and resilience in the time of COVID-19: Meaning making, hope, and transcendence. *Family Process*, 59(3): 898–911.
- Walters, G.D. (2020). Prosocial Peers as a Protective Factor: A Longitudinal Analysis of Peer Influence on Youth Delinquency and Drug Use. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 17(4): 403–421. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204018821397>.
- Williams, K., & Gomez, H. (2021). Probationary supervision: Assessing the effectiveness of probation periods in reducing recidivism. *Journal of Criminal Justice Research*, 44(2): 157–172.
- Wong, D.F.K., Chu, D., & Lee, Y. (2022). Factors contributing to desistance from crime among Chinese delinquents: The role of family bonding, prosocial role models, and religious attachment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(10): 5894. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19105894>.
- Yu, H., Dwiwardani, C., Lim, C.H., Ng, T.K., & Wang, T. (2021). Humility and resistance to substance use: A self-control perspective. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 14(5): 665–676. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1689409>.