

## The Lived Experiences of Incarcerated Fathers: The Case of Malolos Bulacan Provincial Jail in the Philippines

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### Abstract

The research area on lived experiences of an incarcerated father has given different impacts on children's social life and development. This research explored the parent-child relationships of incarcerated fathers, institutional barriers, and family barriers. This qualitative study delves into the experiences of incarcerated fathers with children, in terms of communication, including the effects on their children's relationships and fatherhood. Ten incarcerated fathers were the participants of the study. Data collected from the interviews yields three major domains: (1) Experiences of an incarcerated father. (2) Effects of incarceration on children's relationships. (3) Effects on fatherhood. The experiences of incarcerated fathers involved communication; they expressed excitement, unexplained feelings, mixed emotion, and felt a glimpse of hope. In giving advice, they have limited time and feel inadequate to give advice. For a special occasion, fathers feel blessed, exultant, and relieved of their sadness. For financial support, they cannot offer anything, which brought shame to the fathers. It is also reported that being incarcerated fathers can affect their relationship with their children; children feel sulky, are involved in early marriage, and look for a father figure. Incarcerated fathers are concerned with their responsibilities, they have limited time, and their guidance is rarely done in the aspect of modeling being fathers have no voice of authority; and they can express that they are a good model through their words only.

**Keywords:** Fathers; incarcerated fathers; in-depth interviews

### INTRODUCTION

The research area on the lived experiences of an incarcerated father has had various effects on the social life and development of children. According to some, studies on incarcerated fathers focus more on the effect of incarceration, father identity, and the emotional impact of incarceration on their children. Some people think that the estimated impacts of paternal imprisonment are more severe than the underlying assumptions of other types of father absence, which suggests that children whose fathers are in prison may need more care and assistance from family members, educators, and public service workers (Geller et al., 2012). However, there is little empirical study on the visits; family ties experienced by male prisoners (Pierce, 2015). The impact of incarceration on families, especially children, has attracted fresh attention. The findings suggest that efforts to improve parent-child relationships among male inmates should concentrate on overcoming organizational and familial barriers (Swanson et al., 2013). There is a lack of available information regarding being a father to their children and family while detained in impoverished countries like the Philippines. There has been little study on the role of parents from the standpoint of fathers (Doucet, 2012). Children's interactions with nonresidential fathers change qualitatively from those with nonresidential mothers (Kielty, 2006), and male imprisonment is much more prevalent than maternal incarceration (Wildeman & Western, 2010).

#### A. *Fatherhood*

How a man should behave as a father has evolved significantly throughout time, and the idea of fatherhood is evolving (Frank, 1998; Griswold, 1993; Lamb, 2000). The way a man sees himself must change after becoming a

father. Academics have become interested in how a father role identity incorporates the father function (Marsiglio, 1995; Rane & McBride, 2000). The current role of the enjoyment, caring father (Griswold, 1993; LaRossa, 1997) helps his male offspring develop a feeling of self and a sense of masculinity (Griswold, 1993; LaRossa, 1997), and the social context of fatherhood, which continues to define as a spiritual leader in the home, are examples of these ((Christiansen & Palkovitz, 2001; Griswold, 1993). The term "father" describes someone's degree of parental involvement and relationship with their child. Biological ties are a crucial aspect of fatherhood, but they are not the only thing that makes someone a father. For more information, see Ferguson & Hogan (2004) and Marsiglio & Pleck (2005). Although there could be biological links, a father's role entails emotional, psychological, and behavioral aspects of a male adult's relationship with a child. Providing for necessities, spending time with children, setting an example, and being a provider are all very similar notions of fatherhood that have developed in previous years (Wilkinson et al., 2009; Paschal et al., 2011). Current study evidence shows that parental confinement has effects on children's mental health, social status, and the strength of their parent-child relationships. Many studies have shown that children of incarcerated parents frequently have behavioral issues, academic difficulties, and psychological distress (Galardi et al., 2015; Murray et al., 2012).

### *B. Incarcerated fathers*

Discussions concerning parents who are in prison typically bring up mothers. The difficulties that jailed fathers with their children have not received much attention (Alexander, 2005). Physical and behavioral health problems have become frequent results for children of incarcerated fathers (Lee et al., 2013; Murray et al., 2012). The detention of the father: is linked to some of these results (Arditti, 2012); however, economic and social disadvantages in these families might have a significant role (Johnston, 2006). In addition, stigmatized fathers are more inclined to re-offend (Maruschak et al. 2010) and experience recidivism (Arditti, 2003), which could affect their children. There has been some discussion of losing family and children connection; nevertheless, there has not been any empirical study examining how male prisoners have experienced visitation and family contact (Pierce, 2015).

McCrudden et al. (2014) found that inmates who maintain family connections are less likely to engage in re-offense. This finding was supported by a study on fathers in incarcerated prisons who had regular communication and visitation. The study aimed to understand the importance of the justice system acknowledging and supporting parents in jail in retaining their parenting duties. A study on father-child contact in prison found that fathers with childhood risk factors had less frequent contact with their children. Parenting programs may help develop prosocial skills but prevent family ties development and maintenance. Factors influencing father-child interaction include risk factors, prisoner traits, and family ties (Galardi, 2015). On the one hand, communication with jailed fathers is restricted and often depends on their legal status with their mother (Roy and Dyson, 2005).

According to Mazza (2002), most of the children of incarcerated fathers are traumatized; they are psychologically, financially, and socially wounded because of their father's incarceration. Without help, children of incarcerated fathers are five times higher than other children to end up incarcerated themselves. Likewise, research shows a blunted stress response in children who view arrests and experience high behavioral stress symptoms, similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder studies. Long-term stress can harm brain growth and increase the risk of developing psychopathology. This has implications for criminal justice approaches protecting children during parental arrest (Muentner et al., 2021). Furthermore, Kelly-Trombley et al. (2014) found that recently incarcerated fathers' perceptions of their daughters' relationships after birth changed. Fathers reconsidered their relationships, considered themselves protectors, and experienced optimism and apprehension about reestablishing contact. It highlights the need for more research and clinical practice on father-daughter relationships. A study of young children with incarcerated fathers found that they experienced physiological stress and witnessed paternal arrest, with higher stress hormone levels observed when their father's arrest occurred.

Geller et al. (2012) found that children with fathers in prison exhibit aggressive tendencies and higher concentration issues. These children require more care and attention from family members, teachers, and social workers due to the severe impacts of paternal imprisonment. The effects are heavier for children who lived with

their fathers before incarceration and substantial for nonresident fathers. Research shows fathers' incarceration negatively impacts financial support and parental participation, leading to lower economic outcomes and less parental involvement. Fathers with prison time also have worse behavioral issues in their children compared to those without (Perry & Bright, 2012). Similarly, Schwartz-Soicher et al. (2011) found that paternal imprisonment leads to a decline in fathers' earnings and financial pressures, emphasizing the need for collaboration between criminal justice organizations and social service providers to reduce harm.

Furthermore, research on parental imprisonment and child support in disadvantaged homes reveals that jail negatively impacts fathers' ability to provide for their families. Fathers are more likely to live apart from their children and pay less in formal or informal support, suggesting exaggerated disruptions in child support (Geller et al., 2011). Arditti et al. (2005) studied fathers serving jail sentences, revealing their feelings of helplessness and challenges as "good parents." They found that men viewed prison as a dormant stage of fatherhood while being released as a chance to start afresh with their children. Father involvement decreased, and males were reliant on non-incarcerated mothers or caretakers for contact with their children. One of the primary sources for this study is Swanson et al. (2013) study of fathers serving time in prison, focusing on the impact of incarceration on families, particularly children. The study focuses on father-child relationships and potential barriers to their upkeep and growth. The results suggest that measures to enhance parent-child connections in male prison populations should consider organizational and familial obstacles.

The primary goal of the study was to learn more about how incarcerated fathers lived their lives, their relationships, and fatherhood with their children, and how incarceration affects the father-child relationship. The study specifically seeks answers to the following questions. What are the experiences of incarcerated fathers with their children? What effect does incarceration have on their relationship with their children? And, in terms of responsibilities and modeling, how does incarceration affect fatherhood with their children?

The study aims to investigate the lived experiences and perceptions of male prisoners who are also fathers concerning communication, advising, special occasions, financial support, responsibilities, and modeling. It also looks into the impact of incarceration on fathers' relationships with their children.

## **METHOD**

### *C. Research design*

This qualitative approach was an exploratory study to discover the topic's deep meaning. It also has the opportunity to expressively explore a topic in which male prisoners who are fathers, their roles and responsibilities of fatherhood, and their involvement as fathers are invited. To accomplish this goal, a qualitative design was used to collect data and synthesize the experiences of a sample of fathers imprisoned in the Malolos, Bulacan provincial jail. The researchers utilized a phenomenological approach to explore fathers' experiences and perceptions of communication, advice, and financial support, as well as the impact of incarceration on their relationships, responsibilities, and roles. The study aimed to understand fathers' experiences and perceptions of these phenomena from a hypothesis-free perspective.

### *D. Participants*

The Malolos Bulacan Provincial Jail was previously known as the LEX Provincial Jail. It is in Malolos City, Bulacan, at the Provincial Capitol Building. The Bulacan Provincial Jail was chosen as the study's research site. Ten fathers with children took part in the study. The fathers have ongoing court proceedings, live in Bulacan, and are still involved with and communicating with their families. The primary criteria, (a) The prisoner had fatherhood involvement, includes biological fathers, adoptive fathers, and stepfathers as long as they have fatherhood involvement. (b) The second criterion concerns the prisoner's suitability for an in-depth interview. Participants needed to be open and comfortable discussing their experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. The psychological stability of the interviewees was also an important consideration. The researcher presented the study to the

administration and explained the method that would be used for the participants and discussing it with the institution's authority. The researcher obtained participants for the study with the help of a friend who is connected to the Malolos Bulacan provincial jail.

**Table 1.** Background Information of Incarcerated Fathers

<b>Ages</b>	<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Ages of children</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>Last time you see your children</b>			
31-35	3	1-2	8	5-10	1	2009-2010	1
36-40	5	3-4	2	11-15	2	2011-2013	2
41-45	2	4-5		16-20	7	2014-2019	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>10</b>		<b>10</b>		<b>10</b>

Incarcerated fathers in Bulacan Provincial Jail range in age from 31 to 45, with children aged between one and four and five to twenty. Their personal and family details provide background information about their lives. A participant visited between 2009 and 2010, two between 2013 and 2014, and seven between 2014 and 2019.

*E. Data collection*

Qualitative research involves flexible data collection methods and close contact with participants (Snape and Spencer, 2003). In-depth interviews have been used to gather participants' perspectives on the research topic, allowing exploration, sharing, and refinement in one-on-one or group settings (Finch and Lewis, 2003). The study involved individual or one-on-one interviews with participants, beginning with a study purpose presentation. The interviewer acted neutrally, maintaining a consistent tone; and using prompts and probes (Sarantakos, 2005). The researcher interacted with participants by posing neutral questions, attentively listening, and asking follow-up questions based on responses. Participants were asked for consent and confidentiality was discussed, ensuring their names would not be included in the transcript and only identified by pseudonyms. Researchers were not allowed to use recorders or electronic devices. The interview room was heavily guarded for safety, and participants, jail security, and the interviewer were present. The interview was limited to one hour per participant and two days for the entire study. The in-depth interview utilized semi-structured questions and an interview guide, allowing researchers to explore topics that may deviate from the guided interview. This approach allowed for new perspectives on the subject.

*F. Instruments*

The researchers used an interview guide to conduct interviews with participants. The questions directly asked to the participants are the content of the interview guides. The three psychologist's experts validated interview guides composed of 16 questions. The 16 questions were first tested on a previously incarcerated father who was already free. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and an hour.

*G. Data analysis*

Giorgi's (1989) existential-phenomenological research method was employed to analyze interviews. Materials were labeled and categorized in a folder, with field notes coding participant responses and prominent themes. The researcher divided experiences into parts, discussing abstract concepts without meaning, and read the entire protocol to understand the transcript.

In Giorgi's existential phenomenological research method, bracketing is the initial step in analyzing data. The researcher carefully reads and rereads transcripts to highlight participants' experiences with the phenomenon under investigation. They focus on the individual's natural units and empathize with the repeated information.

Giorgi's analysis method involves three stages: intuitive understanding of raw data, creating a constituent profile with Natural Meaning Units and Central Themes, forming a Thematic Index, searching the index, interpreting the themes, and synthesizing extended descriptions. This existential-phenomenological research method aims to understand the human experience from the consciousness and standpoint of the subject, moving from a concrete description to an interpretation of their experience (Whiting, 2001).

*H. Trustworthiness*

The study used credibility, transferability, and consistency criteria to ensure data trustworthiness. Primary codes were formed, and member checks were conducted. Participants (10 fathers) were asked to verify the extracted codes matched their perspectives and experiences. The codes were checked against participants' comments for accuracy, and if they contradicted, they were corrected accordingly. Reflexivity was maintained by reviewing interview transcripts, comparing codes with raw data, and double-checking findings with participants' perspectives. Peer review was used for conformability, and code categories were assigned to a qualitative researcher with experience and competency for external validation.

**II. RESULTS**

This section discusses fathers' experiences and their impact on their children. Seven themes are identified: communication, advice, special occasions, financial support, relationships, responsibilities, and modeling. These themes help fathers navigate the challenges of raising children and provide support for their families.

**Table 2.** Experiences of Incarcerated Fathers

Domains	Themes	Subthemes
	Communication	(1) Excitement; (2) Unexplained feeling; (3) Mix Emotion; (4) Felt glimpse of hope; (5) Longing for personal touch; (6) Intermittent lack of fare.
<i>The Experiences of Incarcerated Father's Relating to their Children</i>	Giving Advice	(1) Limited time; (2) Through visitation; (3) Encouragement; (4) Listening with respect; (5) Warn their children not to follow their paths; (6) Fear in giving advice; (7) Feels inadequate to give advice; (8) Heavy advice; (9) Good advice.
		(1) Feel blessed; (2) Exultant; (3) Getting rid of sadness; (4) Enjoyment
		(1) Nothing to offer; (2) Shame.

	Special occasion	
	Financial support	
<b><i>Effects of incarceration in children's relationship</i></b>	Effects of incarceration in children's relationship	(1) Shame; (2) Sulky; (3) Digression; (4) Early marriage; (5) Feeling of loss; (6) No bonding moment with their children; (7) No visits from children; (8) Looking for a father figure.
<b><i>The Effect of Incarceration on Fatherhood to their Children</i></b>	Responsibilities	(1) Limited time; (2) The guidance is rarely done; (3) Unable to support their need; (4) Don't see the growth of their children; (5) No to be guided; (5) Unable to protect; (6) Being a father cannot be fulfilled
	Modeling	(1) No voice authority; (2) Just in word; (3) Cannot tell; (4) Giving advice; (5) Father presence

#### *A. Incarcerated Fathers Experiences Related to their Children*

This section organizes the fathers' experiences with their children into themes and sub-themes. There are four themes and twenty-one subthemes in this section of the results.

##### *Experiences of the Fathers*

Incarcerated fathers, like normal fathers, feel mixed emotions and experiences despite not seeing their children most of the time. Their experiences in communication with their children gave them lots of feelings that may either be good or bad for them.

##### *Communication*

***Excitement.*** One of the emotions reported by fathers in their communication with their children, particularly during visitation, was excitement. They elaborated on how excited they are when their children visit them. They believed their families found it difficult to visit them, so when their children visited them, they experienced an unexplainable feeling. Participant B said, "*You're so excited you can't explain it; perhaps you know you won't see each other for a long time, so every time you see, I miss it so much.*"

***Unexplained Feeling.*** Participants experienced unexplained feelings when their children visited incarcerated fathers, expressing joy and joy at seeing their children's growth and development. They claim they cannot explain these feelings due to their limited access to their children's lives. Participant C said, "*I can't express how I feel. The joy and sweetness you have with them. When they visit, I still cry, especially when I see my children and my wife; you know, you're far away.*" *At this point, they are all almost teenagers; there is joy in seeing them grow up; I feel pity that I haven't seen them.*"

*Mixed Emotions.* Fathers reported experiencing mixed emotions, including happiness and loneliness, during visits from their children and families. They wished they could stay for a single day, as their children would no longer live with them; the fathers wished they could stay longer, but these events were temporary. Participant E said, "*But there's a mix of sadness and joy; because, you know, they won't be here long, that they'll also go home. Happy because they're here with me now. What you want, if only they wouldn't leave. Even if they're only here for a day, they sleep here. It's sad here, even though many of you are here together. It's different when it's your children and your family.*"

*Felt a Glimpse of Hope.* Fathers experienced hope after visiting their children, which increased motivation and urged them to improve their status within the prison. They avoided risky actions to improve their situation. Another participant explained, "*It's heartwarming to see them because they represent hope. 'You seem to want to be free. You will believe that you will succeed here. You will not harm yourself to maintain your good standing here.'*"

*Longing for a Personal Touch.* The father preferred physical contact with his children, allowing them to touch and converse, fostering a normal conversation and communication experience, unlike texting and mailing. Participant A explained, "*It's better because they see you, and then I see them: so we can talk personally. It's like you're normally at home, not like a letter or a text. It's harder; you hear or read, unlike when you meet. But not always, sometimes because there is a lack of financial budget. My children are also studying, so when they can't visit, I know they did something more important.*"

*Intermittent.* Some of the fathers were experiencing a gradual decline in family visitation. According to them, they visited at the end of each month, at first, then once every two months until this was discontinued. One respondent observed, "*They visit me at the end of every second month. But that gradually decreased; until one day, the once in-two months disappeared*".

*Lack of Fare.* The fathers explained they are unable to sustain the financial budget for transportation. So, in this case, they were more considerate and concerned about their children's academic needs rather than the transportation fare to visit them. Participant G said, "*It's far away now. My son and my wife live in Manila. They used to live in Malolos, which is close enough that it's not difficult with money to visit me here, but now that they're in Manila, the fare is a bit of a consideration. My son is already studying, and my wife is the only one working.*"

#### *Giving Advice*

*Limited Time.* As incarcerated fathers, giving time to advise children is essential for their growth. However, due to time constraints, they struggle to do so. Instead of giving advice, they bond with their children and worry about their children's questions, highlighting the challenges they face in their current situation. Participant F explained, "*When time is limited, all you want to do is hug them and talk about what happened to them. You can't do the things a father should do. I want to advise, but I can't because I'm not well myself, because my son might ask why I'm here; Dad is advising, but he's in jail. It's hard to say, especially in my situation.*"

*Through Visitation.* Fathers can only advise their children during visitation time, as they can hear their children's school stories and experiences. They can only provide corrective advice after hearing the story, allowing them to support their children's learning and development. Participant A said: "*When they come here, you can fulfill your role as a father because you will know what is going on with them; they will tell you stories, they will report their stories to school, and you will know what is right and wrong.*"

*Encouragement.* The fathers can advise their children through encouragement, highlighting the challenges of being an incarcerated father. They struggled with complaints and needed to encourage their children to succeed, despite their hardships.

One of the participants described, "*But they have grievances that I can't address, so all I can do is encourage them with my advice; I advise them not to imitate Papa, even if it hurts me: because it is difficult and undesirable inside this place.*"

*Listening with Respect.* Despite their circumstances, fathers were grateful. Their children still held them in high regard. They claimed that they had never heard their children belittle their situation. Instead, they hoped they would be reunited and reunited as a family. "Yes, they are still listening; when I say something, they are still listening to me. They still have respect for me as their father. I have never heard them insult me, even though I have not been with them. Even if I can't give them what they want."

*Warn their Children not to Follow their Paths.* Incarcerated fathers: used their situation as an example to advise their children, discussing loneliness, the environment, and potential consequences. They hoped their children would avoid repeating their mistakes, even if it meant attempting anything dangerous. Participant D said: "I told them that if they wanted to come here, they should imitate Papa, but it will be difficult here," I tell them that it's sad here, that it's hot, and that you'll be hurt. I can explain to them how difficult my situation is here. So I tell them not to imitate Papa. Because it's so difficult, I told them, "Always do the right thing; don't be mischievous or do anything that could not put you in danger."

*Fear in Giving Advice.* When asked about fatherhood, fathers stated that their voices would no longer be functional. They would not be able to advise them, particularly in voice authority, because they feared they would use their situation against them. A sense of fear is bothering them in this case. Participant G explained, "I can say right now. My fatherhood took away from me. Not just in terms of financial and moral support. As a father, you lose your voice; you can't say that's wrong. I was afraid they'd return it to me. Why are you here; you're in jail. "It appears that being a father is becoming increasingly difficult."

*Feels Inadequate to Give Advice.* One of the burdens; fathers perceived was; their inability to assist their children: their lack of rights advising them. Their situation, they claimed, was extremely crucial. There is nothing a father can do for his children. It may be the most critical aspect of being a father. Participant explicated, "Right now, I see it as almost negative because I can't help myself." Because of my condition: I cannot be counseled. It's crucial to be a father and then be unable to do anything because you are incarcerated."

*Heavy Advice.* Fathers refined their parenting methods by listening to their children's stories and providing extensive advice. They believed this was the only way they could fulfill their duty, providing heartfelt and loving advice to their children. They listened to their children's stories and events, ensuring they provided the best possible guidance. One participants said, "I'll see what I can do." When they come here, we're having a conversation there. I'll listen to them and then give them advice. My advice is heavy because I can't always do that; unlike other fathers, they can do it because they are with their children every day; unlike me, my heart is sincerely there, and only in that way can I guide them; even in this way, I can fulfill my responsibilities as a father."

*Good Advice.* A father focused on the positive aspects of his children, avoiding correcting their mistakes, as he was in prison and only wanted positive advice. Participant A described, "It's just advice; when I see them, I give them a piece of advice; I can't scold them, so when they come here, I want to be as beautiful advice as possible; because we're in a difficult situation here, and what you hear isn't good."

#### *Special Occasion*

All the fathers had been anticipating this moment, paying them visits on all special occasions. These were the times when they could feel gratitude, love, and significance.

*Feel Blessed.* Some fathers regarded special occasions as blessings. They considered themselves fortunate, in contrast to those who were not visited by their families. The importance that their family placed on their birthdays demonstrated that they were more blessed than the other inmates. "So maybe, I'm not that sad. Unlike my other inmates, almost no one visits, I'm lucky because I have been given a good and caring family that always remembers my birthday".



*Exultant.* One father expressed his delight at being visited by his children on a special occasion. He was delighted on that particular day, he said, when he was with his family. Respondent H said, "Yes, they sleep here every Christmas and my birthday." *Once you have just your family, wife, and child, I am elated."*

*Getting Rid of Sadness.* The fathers learned a lot from their visitation. One of these things was letting go of their sadness. Despite the difficulty of their situation, their family supported them and visited them on all significant occasions. In this case, a father felt a sense of worth from his family. Participant A described, "It's soothing; because they want me to be free and go home, and it's hard, but we try to get everything right, so my wife is the one who makes way so that when they visit here, something can give to me, and eventually I can be free."

*Enjoyment.* Fathers describe visitation as "enjoyment." Although not frequently visited by their families and children, they did not forget significant occasions. Visitation to special events was enjoyable for both fathers and their co-inmates, as they did not want their children to return home. It allowed them to be a family again, albeit for a limited time, but the joy it brought was priceless. One Participant said, "They take the time, not very often, but when there are important occasions; they can come here. My son, then, and my one grandson arrive on New Year's Day, and we are complete. My grandson is hyperactive, but I'm so happy; when I see them visiting here. The feeling that you don't want to let them go. When it's my birthday, they're always complete; those are the things that make me happy."

#### *Financial Support*

One of the most important roles of a father was supporting his family's needs. In the case of the incarcerated father, their inability to support the need of their children were an encumbrance to them.

*Nothing to Offer.* An incarcerated father's financial needs, including schooling and food, were significantly impacted. As the head of the family, the father should provide for all children's needs, causing pain for fathers. Participant B said, "Those who help with necessities like money and food." *Those are the main consequences because you are the head of the family and cannot give much. That's what bothers me as a father in my current situation."*

*Shame.* Another thing that brought shame to the fathers was their inability to support their children's and families' financial needs. They were instead the ones who were supported by their children. Because of their situation, they were now receiving this support from their family. Participant H said, "We should be the ones who give to our families, but the unfortunate fact is that we are the ones who receive; it's embarrassing, but we don't give anything to my family."

#### *Effect of Incarceration in Children's Relationship*

The researchers found out that an incarcerated father has an effect towards father-child relationship. Based on fathers' responses, eight sub themes have emerged regarding the father-child relationship.

*Shame.* Incarceration causes shame to children, causing embarrassment and guilt for both children and fathers. This shame is felt not only by the children but also by their fathers, who feel dishonored when they see their children. One participant said, "When they were young, I could see the sadness in them. But when they last visited, I saw the shame on their faces." Another respondent said, "Other things are gone because of your condition. So, when they last visited, I had the courage to face them. Because every time I see them, I am ashamed of myself."

*Sulky.* Fathers were aware of their children's dissatisfaction with them. They understood their children held grudges against them. They described their previous situation or normal routine as a father with their children. Right now, their children were of the appropriate age, and fathers hoped that their children would have a broad understanding of their situation. Participant C described, "I'm upset because I don't go home anymore." *Unlike in the past, when I return home at night, I have; something I brought for my children. They were always waiting for me to return home in the beginning. But now that my children are older, they both understand. That's why they're only doing a broad understanding.* " Another respondent said, "My children's feelings, it appears that they are holding a grudge against me; even if it is a hurtful word, my children are angry with me."

*Digression.* Incarceration significantly impacted children's feelings towards their fathers, leading to a recession that was acceptable to the fathers but still painful to the children. One of the respondents pronounced, " *they turn their heart away from me. it's unavoidable, especially, I'm away from them, even if it hurts. I've been here for five years, so I accept why they are like that to me now.* "

*Early Marriage.* Incarcerated fathers faced significant consequences, including the early marriage of their children, and were concerned about their children's future. They questioned how to ensure a good life for their children. Respondent I said, " *My son married young, which I can't quite accept because I immediately thought about my son's future, and in these difficult times, you know that his life will not be easy.* "

*Feeling of Loss.* Most fathers expressed regret. They believe that if they were still with their children, they could provide them with the support that children require in the presence of a father. It was a child's most basic need, and it was something that a father should provide. One of the participants stated, " *There is a deep regret that Papa is no longer here to assist us. That is where a child seeks the care of his father. You have to give that as a father.* "

*No Bonding Moments with their Children.* Leaving home can lead to a bad relationship, as fathers may spend time together and become familiar with their children. They can teach and advise on right and wrong, but the lack of bonding time is heartbreaking. Although fathers may maintain good relationships, the most distressing aspect is the lack of bonding time. One of the participants reiterated, " *My son and I have a good and tender relationship.* " *What we can no longer do is bond. Because you meet your son there and then tell him.* "

*No Visits from Children.* The substantiation of being an incarcerated father was too crucial and painful when they did not visit. They felt neglected by their families and were not good role models for their children. Participant B stated, " *I don't see it anymore. Because they don't visit me here. That means I am no longer a good example to them.* "

*Looking for Father Figure.* Every child requires genuine affection and the presence of a true father. These were the kinds of things that every child should have in their lives as they grow up. According to fathers, their children were not the only ones looking for their presence. Inmates were also looking for their child's presence. Participant E stated, " *That's why I miss them so much when they come to visit; right now, there's a search for a child who is looking for a father and a father who is also looking for a child.* "

#### *Effect of Incarceration on Fatherhood to their Children*

##### *Responsibilities*

In terms of responsibilities, every father has the same viewpoint. They understood how difficult it was to be an incarcerated father. Every aspect of their lives is restricted. Because of time and support, their responsibilities became more hardening.

*Limited Time.* Because of their limited time, most fathers did not have the opportunity to guide their children, and the opportunities for them to be together will never happen. Participant F said, " *Right now, it's difficult, everything is limited, your time is the opportunity to be with them. and guide them.* "

The guidance was rarely done. This was the common problem about their fatherhood. Not able to guide their children most of the time and rarely guide and care for their children that a father should do. One participant said, " *Now I can't do it, it's rare. It's hard to say those things, guidance and care.* "

Due to their incarceration, fathers frequently struggle to meet the requirements of their families, particularly their children. They see this as a bad occurrence in their lives; they think they are uninformed of their children's predicament, leaving them unable to act. They feel that fathers face a considerable challenge when it comes to providing financial support. Participant B explained, " *I only see the negative. I can no longer meet all their requirements; even a small purchase of food is insufficient. It's incredibly crucial emotionally, and you have no idea what's going on with them outside because you're trapped inside. What you can't do as a father. It breaks your heart, especially if you are the expected father in financial matters. It's almost difficult to say, Those positive* "

*things, maybe you're okay." Because there are bible studies here: that will help you keep going. And, no matter what, trust God."*

*Don't See the Growth of their Children.* The fathers explained that everything had a time limit. Most importantly, they missed the most important aspect of fatherhood: watching their child grow as they entered the school and made friends. Participant G stated, *"It's big because everything has become limited, 'the time,' because 'that's the most important thing in the family:' the time. Can see 'their growth; when they go to school, 'their friends.' You will never see all that again."*

*Not to be Guided.* The fathers stated that they were no longer able to guide their children. They wanted to but were unable to due to their circumstances. These were the things that were difficult for an incarcerated person. One participant said, *"You can no longer guide, see, and touch them." Even if I wanted to guide, I couldn't. That's how things are when you're inside."*

*Unable to Protect.* Not only did fathers realize they couldn't guide, but they also realized they couldn't provide the protection father should provide. They thought that these were the things that a father should do. *"But now I see the negative, the one I don't have with my child to guide and protect them."*

*Being a father cannot be Fulfilled.* Fathers' conditions led them to realize they could not provide for their children's needs, leading to a loss of fatherhood as they could not guide and meet their children's needs. Participant J stated, *"Because, first and foremost, it's difficult to be a father when you're inside; because, as a father, you should be the one to guide and provide for their needs; but right now, even if it hurts me as a father, I can't do anything."*

#### *Modeling*

One of the fatherhood identities was good modeling to their children. The incarcerated fathers gave significant answers on how their incarceration influenced modeling.

*No Voice Authority.* Incarcerated fathers lose their relationships, authority, and voice in their families, as they cannot determine right and wrong due to their situation. One of the participants D said, *"After all, my status as a father is no longer there. Your voice, 'your advice, 'and your authority are no longer there. You can no longer say this is right; this is wrong."*

*Just in Words.* The incarcerated fathers realized: they could only be fathers by using the word father. It is the only way they can fulfill their role as fathers. They can tell their children to find an ally who understands their situation. The father would be able to be a good father, despite their circumstances. Participant B said, *"Being a model in words." I can only offer advice. I will tell him that is incorrect, especially at my son's age, because that is when they complain. I'm looking for a friend. I told myself; I could be a father even in this way."*

*Cannot Tell.* It was crucial to be a role model for the conditions of incarcerated fathers. They were contemplating their situation. Despite their positions, it was compelling to say that they were a good model. Participant C said, *"I have nothing to give; my wife even gives me." You don't have a job here. As a model, I can attest to how difficult it is. It is because of my condition. It's difficult to say I'm a good model, and then I am incarcerated. "*

*Giving Advice.* Their only example was to give their children correct and consistent advice. They set an example of their status that should not be imitated. One participant stated, *"All you can say is, 'Let them get better, don't do bad things.' I'm showing them my situation now, so don't be like Papa."*

*Father Presence.* Even though they did not meet every need of their children, the most important thing was their father's presence and advice, despite their condition as a convict. Participant D explained, *"I can't even meet their financial needs if I'm not there as a father, giving good advice that even if their father isn't here, there is still a good direction in life, and they can reach out to me if they need love or advice."*

## DISCUSSION

This qualitative study began to explore how ten (10) incarcerated fathers make meaning to their relationship with their children and fatherhood. By sharing their experiences, and using in-depth interviews, the researcher gathered data about their communication, advice, special occasion, financial support, the effect of incarceration, and the effect of fatherhood with their children, which revealed their significant meaning to a father's life. This study aimed to know the ten experiences of fathers in all aspects of life with their relationships with their children and how incarceration affects their fatherhood. Moreover, their stories revealed the effects of incarceration on their lives when it occurred. This current study on incarcerated fathers adds to the existing body of knowledge by emphasizing and focusing on fathers' relationships with their children and fatherhood. To achieve the objectives of the study, the data gathered by the researcher were analyzed using Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method.

First, in analyzing the incarcerated father's experiences relating to their children's communication. It shows that fathers felt excitement, unexplained feelings, mixed emotions, and longing for a personal touch when they see their children. However, they felt a glimpse of hope to communicate with their children. In giving advice, fathers have a limited time: and they can only warn their children not to follow their paths; with a slight encouragement. Furthermore, they fear giving advice and feel inadequate due to their situation. In this case, only heavy advice and good advice are mostly given to their children when they visit. Despite the situation of incarcerated fathers, most of them are not forgotten by their families. On special occasions: fathers feel blessed; exultant, getting rid of sadness; and enjoyment. The incarcerated fathers experienced all of the themes and sub-themes. In line with the literature, the fathers in this study shared various experiences with their children. While incarcerated, they had arduous experiences related to being a good father. The findings complement Norman and Enebrink's (2023) recent study, which discovered the value of parents' and children-centered intervention in jail, the obstacles and advantages of engaging in the intervention, and the need for more assistance and assets for parenthood in incarceration.

Second, consider the impact of incarceration on the father-child relationship. All fathers discussed the effect of incarceration on their children's financial needs. They all feel ashamed when they are unable to provide for or support their children's needs. They believed that as the head of the family, they should be the one who provides the majority of support to their family and children: but due to their circumstances, this resulted in economic disadvantage and shame for their children. Similarly to Prins et al. (2020), there is a demand for education in prisons to improve the quality of life of convicts and their loved ones.

Finally, how does incarceration affect the fatherhood of their children's responsibilities and modeling; All fathers addressed how they carried out their responsibilities and modeled behavior while in detention. They accomplish this by advising their children and partners. Because of the circumstances, they were all convinced that they couldn't do the things that a normal father did. They cannot trust their words. As a result, fathers advised and encouraged their children. They studied and continued with their life no matter what the situation was. Incarcerated fathers acted their modeling and responsibilities through words of advice and encouragement, which were the only way to express their modeling and responsibilities and put off their father's image in society's mind. The result is comparable to the approach adopted in recent research on jailed fathers, which promotes responsible fatherhood while also offering services such as vocational activities, guidance, and seminars (Jian et al., 2022).

Fathers believed that by doing so, they could, albeit in a small way, influence their children's behaviors and attitudes in life. Some believed and demonstrated their modeling in their presence but not in their actions. Fathers understood how important their guidance and care were to their children's future well-being.

## CONCLUSION

The Incarcerated fathers' communication with their children and family helps them persevere and continue their lives. Despite challenges, fathers focus on encouragement and sound guidance, despite time constraints. They feel hope for the future when they visit and are seen by their children, fostering a sense of hope for what lies ahead. The detrimental impacts of jail on their children influence fathers, leading to uneducated, stubborn, and humiliated fathers. Fathers are unhappy because of the negative repercussions; some give up fatherhood to care for their

children and spouses. They are looking for a new companion to be their children's stepfather to offer a brighter future for their family. Fathers used to oversee leading and disciplining their children, but owing to circumstances, this is no longer feasible. They continue to carry out their duties by counseling.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Study findings suggest recommendations for incarcerated fathers: The correctional system should support family connections and healthy relationships between fathers and children. Expanding communication methods like phone calls and letters can help maintain fathers' continuous contact with their children. The correctional system should promote fathering by offering programs for incarcerated fathers' weekly visitation and creating child-friendly rooms. It should also support families through case management, counseling, and support groups to sustain the relationship between incarcerated fathers and their spouses. Update parenting programs to better serve incarcerated fathers by improving their knowledge and skills in fulfilling roles and responsibilities. Additionally, grant prisoners the right to earn wages to support their families.

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