

Caring Behind Bars: A Phenomenological Study on the Caring Roles of Mothers in Prison

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ABSTRACT

This research study aimed to identify the caring role experiences of mother inmates in Ilocos Sur Provincial Jail (ISPJ). The study used a phenomenological design. Purposive sampling was used to choose the 7 participants.

The specific techniques utilized were individual interviews, focus group discussions, and narrative data analysis. The unstructured interviews and focus group discussions were guided by the following question: What are your experiences in caring for your children while you are inside the jail? An unstructured individual interview was conducted to explore more data collected from the focus group discussions. The themes that were identified are reminiscing, letting go, communicating, providing, savoring the moment, getting hurt, and powerlessness.

The central theme that emerged from the findings is that the mother caring role experiences of inmates is unique. Although behind bars, inmate mothers make ways to fulfill their mother caring role in their own ways.

Based on the results of the study, the researchers have the following recommendations in order to assist and strengthen the mother caring role of inmates:

1. Self-awareness programs for inmate mothers.
2. Counseling activities for the mother inmates.
3. More programs and activities to promote bonding between the mother inmate and her children.
4. The conduct of the same study to father inmates. In addition, the conduct of quantitative research studies on the same topic.

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Background:

Motherhood is a very important aspect of a woman's life. After nine months of carrying in her womb, a mother is given the chance and opportunity to give birth to her child. From the very start of conception, the mother and her child have always been connected together. This connection between them is beyond words to describe.

The mother and her child should therefore, need to spend quality time together to promote emotional bonding. This is the process by which a mother forms an emotional relationship with her child over time (Hogan & Glazerbrook, 2003). Consequently, it is also expected that a mother should provide the primary care giving to her child and act on her mother caring role.

However, there are instances that a mother cannot fulfill the role as a primary caregiver to her child. There are moments when a mother must be separated from her child or the mother must take care of her child in an 'unusual' environment. For example, those mothers who are in jail are not given the opportunity to raise and provide care for their children compared to the mothers in the 'free world'. Imprisoned mothers are left with the options to be separated from their children or to take care of them inside the jail which is not an ideal place for children to grow. Either of the options is dangerous for the child and disturbs the connection between the child and the mother.

Incarceration of a mother disrupts the mother-child relationship and the child's emotional development (Thompson & Harm, 2000). The mother is being separated from her child who will be raised and taken care of her family and relatives outside the prison. In other instances, a child is cared by her mother inside the prison which may be unacceptable by the society. The relationship of the mother and her child is greatly affected and the child's development is compromised under these situations.

The significant increase in the number of incarcerated women ensures that many children must live without their mothers for some period of time (Mignon & Ransford, 2012). As of September 2012, there are 6, 528 female inmates out of 72, 934 total convicted and detained prisoners in the Philippines (www.bjmp.gov.ph). According to the Quaker United Nations Office Publication (2006), most women in prison are mothers. Nurses have pledged to look after the health of the community which includes mother and her child. Unfortunately, mothers in prison are often neglected and are not given much attention much as their caring roles as mothers for their children.

As pointed out by Slead, Baradon and Fonagy (2013), mothers in prison represents a high-risk parenting population. Their needs are not given much consideration and their necessities are often taken for granted. Their needs and rights are frequently not fulfilled by prison regimes that are designed predominantly for male prisoners (The Quaker United Nations Office Publication, 2006).

Probably for these reasons, the former Senate President Manuel Villar proposed the Senate Bill No. 2287 which seeks to establish the Correctional Nursery Program that shall provide prison nurseries with child care facilities for infants less than one (1) year of age in all Correctional Institutions for Women and provincial, city and municipal jails. Its main purpose is to promote the bonding of mother and child even when the mother is inside the prison cell, thus, enhance the reformation and rehabilitation of female inmates as various counseling activities are integrated in the Program (www.senate.gov.ph). However, as of this moment, this bill has not yet been approved and implemented.

I believe that mothers in prison are dealing with a hard situation of their life. For me, they are continuously struggling as they think of their children every day. They cannot perform their mother caring role since they are separated from their family. The physical connection between the mother and child no longer exist and there is a possibility that the emotional connection will be lost afterwards. Their responsibility as mothers may not be fulfilled and their children may grow without the mother care that they need.

With the above scenario, I have to venture into this research work to look into the lived experiences of mothers in prison. As once stated by the Special Rapporteur on Prisons and Conditions of Detention in Africa:

"Prisons are not a safe place for pregnant women, babies and young children and it is not advisable to separate babies and young children from their mother."

This study aims to explore and understand the way in which women prisoners experience motherhood in prison. Decision makers may use the result of this study to improve the situation of mothers behind bars.

Methods and Procedures

The study used the phenomenological research design and was conducted in Ilocos Sur Provincial Jail (ISPJ). Data were collected from May 1-8, 2013 from 7 mother inmates. Their ages range from 21-65 years and they have been inside the jail for one month to four years. They are mother of one to four children with ages ranging from 10 months to 40 years.

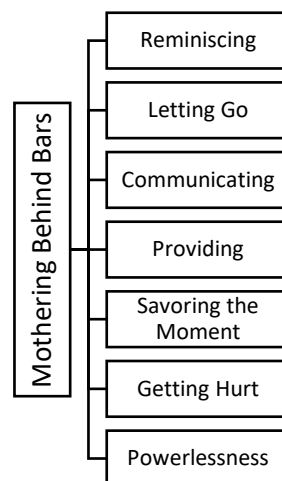
The specific techniques utilized were unstructured individual interviews, focus group discussions, and written data collection. The unstructured interviews and focus group discussions were guided by the following question: What are your experiences in caring for your children while you are inside the jail?

I conducted a focus group discussion composed of 6 mother inmates. Audio recording and note-taking were done to collect the data. One participant asked if she could write her experiences as a mother on a piece of paper. I gave her the materials she can use to write and the written data was submitted during the follow-up focus group discussion.

An unstructured individual interview was conducted to explore more data collected from the focus group discussions. Another mother inmate decided to join the other participants and became the seventh participant. Data was collected from her through an unstructured individual interview

Results and Discussions

The themes that emerged from the data are presented in the conceptual map below.



The conceptual map shows seven broad themes: Reminiscing, Letting Go, Communicating, Providing, Savoring the Moment, Getting Hurt, and Powerlessness. These themes are felt and experienced by inmate mother in taking care of their children.

Experiences of Inmates in their Mother Caring Role

Reminiscing. Although there are many difficult moments of the mothers while in jail, there are instances that they think of their happy moments together with their child. A mother is full of memories with moments that she has spent with her child. When asked on the things that make the mothers in prison smile, Participant 4 says, “Siyempre, dagidiay makadennam ti annak yo ti rabii, dagijay lambing-lambing yo, diay panangpadigos mo...” (Of course, those times when nights are spend with the children, nestling each other, and giving them a bath...) which was immediately responded by Participant 5 telling, “Isu daydiay ti umuna nga mapanunot mo... mapaisem kami no kwa...” (That’s what comes first into our mind. We smile when we remember those moments).

The participants are also happy when they hear good news from their children. Participant 1 reminisced, “Adda latta diay parte nga mapaisem ka. Kasla diay anak ko neh, umay neh.. ‘Mang, nangabak nak ti sack race ken arena.’

Mapan kamin to kano agswiming pool inton bigat.” (There are times when we get to smile. Like my child, here he comes (child comes to visit), “Mom, we won the sack race and the flour game. We will go to the swimming pool tomorrow.”) Participant 3 also shared one event, “Idi rabii kunana, ‘Ma, ag-enrol nakon’. Ay, ‘Praise the Lord’, kunak met nga siguden ah. Kasla nak lang nabunutan ti siiten nga kwan... nga ibaga na nga agenrol diay anak kon. Isu nga happy nak attan. Haan nak nga agpanpanunot.” (Last night he told me, “Mom, I am going to enroll now.” I immediately said, “Praise the Lord!” It seems like a thorn was taken from me when he said that he is going to enroll. That is why I am happy now. I am no longer bothered.)

When away, a mother reminisces and longs for her children eagerly. Separation from the children leaves the mother to feel empty which will lead her in much willingness to be with her child the soonest possible time. During the night before sleeping, an inmate mother recollects events together with her child. Participant 7 shared, “No aginana nakon a ket malagip ko. Daydiay to panagidda kon a ket isun to ti pannakalagip ko kanyada. Agsangsangit nakton... agsangsangit nak lattan a sir. No sumro nak ah ket agdiretso nak nga agsangsangit.” (I remember them during rest periods. I remember them when I go to bed. And then I cry... I cry for no reason, sir. Sometimes, I cry continuously.)

Letting Go. When a mother gets into prison, she has to leave her children outside. This situation is hard for both the mother and the child because they have to be separated from each other. The child then would be taken care by the father or relatives of the mother. Participant 3 told, “Siak met brother ket kwa... nasakit met ti riknak tatta. Numona ta diay anak ko maymaysa na diay ‘yan ni lolang na, nga mang-ay-aywan kanyana.” (It feels hurt for me, brother. Especially my child is alone with his grandmother who takes care of him.)

Also, in the absence of the mother, the child has no one to ask for guidance and advice. Participant 1 told, “...awan ti ina da nga mangtarabay kanyada, mang-guide... kasla koma awan mangbagbaga kanyada ken no anya aramiden da nga nasayaat.” (They do not have a mother who will look after them, guide them... seems like no one will advise them on what is the right thing to do.) Moreover, when the mother is away, she could not take care and serve her child. “No ditoy ka, haan mo kasango ‘suda. Haan mo ma-serve’n. Se-serve’am, ‘han mo kabkabagyan.”, (If you are here, you are not with them. You cannot serve them. You serve those who are not your relatives.), Participant 1 indicated.

When the child’s father has passed away and there are no relatives who are willing to take care, the neighbors will look after the child. Participant 4 told, “Ti pakarigatak la unay ken pagsakitan nakem ko, ‘diay maysa nga anak ko, 6 years old. Awan man lang ti permanente nga pagtalinaedan na... diay la kumporme ti padyadyanan na. No sino ti mayat mangaywan kanyana isu ti papanan na diay anak ko.” (What hurts a lot and is hard for me is about my 6 years old child. He has no permanent residence... he stays wherever. He goes to whoever wants to take care of him.) Since she cannot give her presence, the mother may also want to decide to have the children adopted by someone else whom she knows can take care of them. The mother believes that it is better for her children to be adopted by somebody who can look after her children. “Kaspangarigan diay anak ko, inpaampon ko pay diay anak ko nga maysan ti rigat nan... ti rigat min. Ta rigat met ti adda nga panagbiag. Alangan met nga buybuyaem dita nga haan nga agdede kada kuan. Seven months na idi. Siyempre napanunotak nga ipaamponen.”, (Just like my child, I have him adopted because of poverty... our poverty. We have a poor life. I cannot just watch my baby not to be fed. He was seven months then. So, I decided to have him adopted.), as Participant 4 claimed. However, if there is no one to take care of the child outside, the government takes the responsibility. The Department of Social Welfare and Development takes these children and looks after them. Participant 4 said, “Dakami nga awan asawa na ket awan kabagian mi dita ruar nga mangkita koma. Isu garud nga alaen ti DSWD ta kasla koma ‘garud kanyakon. Example, awan ti kabkabagiak ‘ta ruar. Awan ti mangaywan diay anak ko isu nga alaen ti DSWD.” (For us who do not have a husband, we do not have any relatives outside the jail to look for them. That is why DSWD will have them, just like on my case. For example, I do not have relatives outside. No one will look after my child so, the DSWD will take him.)

Without her presence, the child will also wonder why her mother must be living away from them. Young children who are not yet fully aware of their mother’s situation often wonder why their mother is not living with them. Participant 6 said, “Idi adda nak diay BJMP ket umay nak daldalawen. Itugtugot na diay anak ko ket... ket siyempre ag-6 years old’n. Medyo ag-kwa diay panunot nan. ‘Apy mamy, anya dagita? Tapos apay haan ka met sumursurot nga agaw-awid kanyami?’ kunaan. Agques-question mark diay panunot nan.” (They visit me while I was still in BJMP. She brings my son with her who was about 6 years old then. He begins to ask questions, “Mommy, what are they? Why are you not going home with us?” Questions are being raised in his mind.)

Communicating. Communication is a very important way to maintain a good relationship between two or more individuals. For this reason, although away from their family, the mothers always find ways to maintain communication with their children outside the prison. Since mothers behind bars are not allowed to have any

communicating devices inside jail, they make phone calls by using the lady guard's phone. However, they have to pay the lady guard in order for them to make calls. One peso is equivalent to one minute call. "Makitawag kami diay lady guard. Makitawag kami ngem agbayad kami. 5 minutes, singko pesos." (We make phone calls from our lady guard. We make calls but we have to pay. 5 minutes is equivalent to 5 pesos.), Participant 1 stated. Although they usually make calls which last for 5 minutes, the participants claimed that this duration of time is already enough for them to talk and communicate with their children. Participant 5 said, "Napaut daydiayen ah." (That time is long enough.)

When asked also on how they feel when they have the chance to talk to their children on the phone, Participant 2 reacted, "Ay, ket very good!" (That's very good!) Participant 1 also said, "Naragsak kami metten ah, ading ko." (We are happy.) They savor even the moment of talking to their children over the phone.

Through communication, the mothers feel that their children are open to them. They claimed that their children often tell their mothers about everything. These things may include their feelings and sentiments. Participant 5 said, "Ibaga na amin no dadduma." (Sometimes, he tells everything.) However, there are also moments that the children cannot express their feelings to their mothers. Since the mother and child do not live and spend time together, the child may not be open about his feelings and problems to her mother anymore. Participant 5 told, "Ngem no dadduma ket han na maibaga brother... hehe... mabain sa kanyak no dadduma." (But sometimes, he cannot tell everything... I think he is shy sometimes.) Participant 1 added, "Kas kadawyananen ta... nay... nay... nayadayo tayo metten kanyada. Maala da met lattan diay agbain. Haan da met maala nga ibaga diay kaririknaen da." (It is normal since we have been away from them. They feel shy. They cannot tell what they feel.)

Providing. Even though the mother is in prison, she sacrifices many things just to provide something for her child. Just like any mother, inmates make way to provide the needs of their children. Even behind bars, the mothers share what they have to their kids. Participant 4 shared, "Purwa-purwakak lattan a ti meryenda nan... kasdiay nan." (I throw him a snack, that's it.) Mother inmates have food supply from the government. This supply is usually composed of two salop of rice which is equivalent to five kilos and vegetables such as eggplants, camote, string beans and others. Their individual food supply is good for one week. Participant 4 further said, "No anya ti sidaek ditoy a ket isu met ti ited ko diay anak kon." (Whatever food I have here, I give it to my child.) Participant 1 added, "...agilako kami no dadduma ti bagas mi nga masobra. Diay maysa nga salop, isu ti para ti ubbing. Diay maysa nga salop, isu ti kanen mi ti 1 week." (Sometimes, we sell our excess rice. One salop of rice is intended for the child. The other salop will be consumed as our food for the week.) In other terms, the mother consumes 2.5 kilograms of rice a week which is equivalent to about 119 grams per meal. The other 2.5 kilograms of rice will be given to their children or will be sold so that the money will be used by their kids.

During the focus interview, I noticed that most of the participants are not eating the snack that I offered. When I asked why they are not eating, Participant 1 answered, "Ited kunto... ireserbak to para diay anak kon. Uray haan nak nga mangnan. No umay gamin... kasla koma no adda umay ag-interview, ited ko gamin ken diay anak ko nga dua." (I will give... I will reserve it for my child even if I will not eat. If ever he comes... just like when an interviewer comes, I will give it to my two kids.) She added, "Adda la ketdi kanyami, uray no isubo mi koman, ngem haan. Ibat mi para kadagidiay annak mi laengen." (As long as we have it, although we are about to eat it, we prefer not. We leave it for our kids.) They prefer not to eat the food that is being offered to them, instead they give it to their children.

While the child is sick, mother in prison also look for means to provide something for her child. For instance, she looks for remedies to provide the medications needed by her children. Participant 4 shared, "Agdawat nak ti aglalaoken ah... ti agasen. Aglalaok ti mapan ko babaonen'en nga mapan agdawat dita health center'n kada kadagiti kakabagyan ni lakay ko idin nga natayen." (I ask for anything... medicines. I ask anybody to go and ask from the health center and from the relatives of my deceased husband.)

Mothers in prison also make ways to help their children in their financial needs. Even though in prison, they make ways so that their kids will have their needs at school. "No adda ti problema na ti pinansyal nga inna panagbasa ket itawag na kanyak tapno ibagak ken katugangak." (If he has problems with school expenses, he makes a call to me so that I can relay it to my parent-in-law.), Participant 5 told.

Furthermore, during the times that they don't have anything to give for their children, they look for other means. They ask money from their fellow inmates and then repay it when they have received their food supplies. "Umutang kami ti cash... 'bente... kasdiay. Bayadan min to no panagbabagas." (We borrow money, like 20 pesos. We

then repay it when we receive our supply of rice.), Participant 1 shared. They sell some of their food supply so that they can repay the money that they have borrowed from their inmates.

But a mother does not always provide materials and financial matters for her children. Mothers make sure to give advice for their children even though they are inside jail. Participant 1 stated, “Ti maited mi met la kanyadan ket daydiay bagbagaan mi. Daydiay metla ti maited mi kanyadan. Awan met sabalin. Pinansyal man kada kwa... awan metten maited min.” (The only thing that we can give them is our advice. We can only give them that, no more. Whether it is financial matter or others, we cannot give anything.)

Moreover, the mother’s relationship with her husband is also sacrificed. Although their marital relationship is not working well anymore, they still decide to stay and continue with their relationship for the sake of their children. Participant 6 voiced, “Ngem diay relationship mi nga agassawan ket kasla malabo’n. Isu nga ipagpagapu mi laengen kadagiti mismo nga anak mi. Kasi nanipud idi naibalud nak, nagkaroon ti gap ti family mi ken family na. Isu nga ipagapu mi latta kadagijay ubbingen. Isu nga habang dumakdakkal da, ipakita mi lattan nga ok kami ngem deep inside kanyami nga dua kasla... kasla kami lang friends.” (But our marital relationship is not okay now. That is why we are just doing this thing for the sake of our children. It seems like since I was imprisoned, a gap between my husband’s family and I has been created. That is why we are just doing this thing for the sake of the children. As they grow old, we show that we are okay but deep inside, we are just like friends only.)

Savoring the Moment. The mothers in prison and their children are not living together. For this reason, the children visit their mother inside the jail. It is only their way of having a physical connection with their mother. Participant 4 said, “Umay nak metla ketdi kita-kitaen ditoy ah.” (He comes and visits me here.) Although it is hard to accept, the society often condemns the individuals who are in prison. However, the children are not ashamed of their mother’s situation, as claimed by the mother inmates. Participant 1 told, “Daydiay anak ko met ket haan nak met nga ibain nga adda nak ditoy uneg ading ta umay met.” (My child is not ashamed of me because he comes and visits me.) Sometimes, the children bring their friends and classmates with them when they visit their mother in jail. Participant 1 further added, “Ibagbaga na met nga adda nak ditoy... agitugot met ti gagayyem na.” (He tells that I am here... he brings his friends with him.) Participant 5 also voiced, “Haan da kami met nga ibain. Ta diay classmate na ditoy nga agbasbasa ket itugot na pay ditoy ading ko.” (They are not ashamed of us. He also brings his classmate here.)

Sometimes, the children are allowed to sleep in jail overnight to spend more time with their mothers. Participant 1 explained, “No weekdays ading, mabalin da met umyan. Mabalin da met umyan ti rabii ti Sabado, agawid da ti bigat ti Domingo.” (They can sleep here during weekdays (she might mean weekends)). They can stay here on Saturday nights and they go home on Sunday morning.)

For mothers who have children who are not able to verbally communicate, they savor the moments by physical attachment. There is a visiting hour in jail. Visitors are only allowed to stay in jail from Monday through Thursday at 2:00-5:00 PM. Participant 6 told, “...inub-ubbak diay baby’k. Ngem ti nagdakkal nga ragsak ko... idi immay da inpasyar idi pagarup ko... diak maubba nga anya. Ngem diay 3 hours nga nabatbati nga.. nga.. nga panangkalkalingak ken diay anak ko... daydiay... inar-arakup ko... inar-arakup ko. Haan koma pay nga agsardeng toy oras ta haan da pay agaw-awid kunak. Dakkal nga pagyamanak ta haan pulos nga agsangsangit diay anak ko ti sibay ko. Haan nga nagpapaidam. Ksla na-kwa’ak lattan nga siak latta metten ti ku-kwa’en na nga ina.” (I carried my baby. I was so happy since I have thought that I will not have the chance to carry him. But for the remaining three hours of their visit, I have cuddled him. I was hoping that the visiting hours will not end soon so that they will not go home yet. I was very thankful that he did not cry. He did not fear me. I felt that he recognized me as his mother.)

Getting Hurt. When a mother is in jail, she feels hurt and bad of the situation she is into. She is living away from her family, especially her children. Being inside the jail would mean that a mother should be away from her loved ones. Participant 1 told, “Narigat, ading. Narigat ti kasla koma maisina ti pamilya na.” (It is hard. It is hard to be separated from one’s family.) Participant 4 agreed by saying, “Sakit man lang ti nakem ko ta haan ko makadenna dagidiay anak ko.” (I just feel bad because I cannot be with my children.)

The mothers feel bad also because they cannot feel the essence of their mother caring role while in prison. Participant 6 said, “Kasla nga daydiay... daydiay panagalagak iti dua nga bulan idi kaadak diay ruar ket haan ko na-feel iti kaadlak ditoy.” (Just like that. I was not able to feel the same way I felt when I take care of my child for two months outside the prison.)

The hardest moment is when a child gets sick and the mother is not beside him. This situation puts much suffering on the part of the mother because she is not able to do anything for her children. “Kasakit na unay diay agsakit da nga awan ka nga ina da nga mangaywan diay denna da.” (The hardest thing is when they are sick and you are not beside them to take care of them.), Participant 4 expressed.

It also feels bad and hard if the mothers have no chance to attend any event or occasion of their children. While others are present when their children celebrate special days, mothers in prison can do nothing. Participant 1 shared, “Tattan ket adda kami ‘toy unegen, panpanunoten mi... sino ti mang-kwa... mang-asikaso ti birthday na, wenno anya man, no graduation na or kwa.... tapos haan kami pay makapanaw ket nagmadi diay rikna mi.” (Now, that we are in jail, we are troubled if who will take care of their birthday party, or of their graduation ceremony, or others. It feels bad since we cannot go out from jail.)

Likewise, the mothers want to give and provide the needs of their children. But due to their situation, they cannot meet all their children’s needs. Participant 3 uttered, “Tiisek pay lang a nga haan nga maikkan ti kwarta nga kunkunana. Madi met a diay riknak ta adda nak ditoy.” (I will just endure the idea that I cannot give him the money that he asks. I also feel bad since I am in here.) Participant 1 also stated, “Wen, madi ti rikna tayo ken maysa awan to metla ti kasla maited tayo ta awan met ti kwa tayo ditoy.” (Yes, we feel bad and besides, we cannot give them something since we do not have anything here.)

When thinking of the chances that they are not with their children, the mothers feel hurtful and consequently become regretful for what they have done. They know that there are precious times that they could have been with their children but those moments have just been lost. Participant 4 told, “Nagsakit nga talaga ti nakem ko ta haan ko man lang naiparikna no kasano ti pateg na kanyak. Haan ko man lang naiparikna ti ayat ko kanyana kas maysa nga ina.” (I feel hurt because I was not able to let him feel how much he means to me. I was not able to let him feel the love of a mother.) Participant 2 admitted, “Masayangan.” (Regretful) and Participant 1 added, “No maisubli lang koma ti napalabas.” (If one could just turn back the time.)

In addition, there are also moments when the mothers are being hurt by the child. They feel hurt for different reasons. One reason is when the child chooses to die instead because his parents are not with him. Participant 3 was hurt of what her child told her, “Ket di kalman, nagtinnawag kami ti cellphone, ‘Nasaysayaat lang nga matay nakon mama. Awan kayo met ken papa’, kunana.” (Yesterday, we talked over the phone. My child said, ‘It is better for me to die since dad and you are not with me.’) She further added, “Kasla nagtupak ti langit idi kalman kanyak brother. Agsakit ti riknak daydiay, sir kasdiay nga sao na.” (Yesterday, the heaven seemed to fell down on me. I feel hurt on what he said.)

The mothers also admitted that they are hurt if they found out that their children have vices such as smoking. Participant 3 recalled, “Ta nagbakasyon gamin diay tita na brother, ket nakita na nga agsigigarilyo diay baro’k.” (When her aunt had a vacation, she saw that my child is smoking cigarette.) She further told what she felt for this incident. “Ay, nagsakit met a ti riknak brother. Diak met makaangesen. Diak met makaturogen nga agpatnag.” (I feel hurt, brother. I cannot breathe. I cannot sleep for the whole night.) When they hear problems from their children, they are hurt also. “Ngem no problema ti ibaga da, Apo! Agsangsangit nak lattan nga diak ammu ti ubraek ditoy uneg.” (If they tell me problems, Lord! I am just crying and know not what to do here.), Participant 3 expressed.

Another thing that hurts a mother is when the child does not recognize her. Because the child grows without her mother’s presence, the child becomes unfamiliar with her. Participant 6 told, “Siyempre, para kanyak ta dumakdael diay baby’k nga haan nga siak ti kilkilalanen na nga mama na... nga ina na ket kasla dibdibdik daydiay inggana panagruar ko, ta no umay da ipasyar diay baby’k ket haan nak kayat.” (For me, my child is growing up and not recognizing me as her mother... I think of it until I go out from prison because when they come and visit me, he does not like me.)

Powerlessness. The mothers in prison always think about the condition of their children outside the jail. When a mother is away from her children, it is expected that she is always thinking about them. When asked on how much they miss their children, Participant 3 immediately answered, “Ay, lagpas pay langit!” (It is beyond heaven.) Participant 4 also said, “Sobra ah. Manipud kaadak ditoy pagbaludan idi.” (Very much. Since the time I have been in jail.) Participant 6 added, “Lalo diay inaudik la unay. Idi naminsan nga inpasyar lang ni mamang, ma-miss ko unayen ni (name of child) kunak.” (Mostly, my youngest. I told my mother that I miss (name of child) so much.) The idea that they are not with their children for a period of time makes them bothered and worried. They feel that if they are not on their side, children are vulnerable to untoward things and they cannot do anything about this situation. Participant 4 shared, “No dumteng ti rabii, daytan ta nakaro nga kunadan. Panpanunotek lattan diay anak ko. No nangan da met

laengen ti pangrabiin wenzo anya?” (As they say, it is worst at night. All I think of is my child if he had dinner already.) She further said, “Agpanpanunot kami, nakatugaw, dadduma makaluwa kami met.” (We think while sitting, sometimes we cry.)

If only the mothers are out of prison, they could have done more things for their children. They wish that they could have been with their child and could have spent moments together with them. But they cannot fulfill these things because they are imprisoned and their movements and actions are limited. “No adda kami koma met iti denna da, adu koma met ti naaramid mi para kanyada.” (If we could have been on their side, we could have done many things for them.), Participant 1 expressed.

It is hard for a mother to experience not being able to do something for herself and for her children. Although there is much desire of the mothers to reach out a hand for their children, there is nothing that can be done since they are held in prison. Participant 1 said, “Awan met ti mabalinan mi ta nagaramid kami ti maikaniwas ading. Isu nga anusan mi ti agyan ditoy.” (Since we have done something wrong, we cannot do anything. We have to suffer staying here.) Participant 4 also articulated, “Nagsakit man nga panunoten ti kastoy nga mapasasamak ti biag ko ngem awan mabalin ko ta nagbasol nak ngarud.” (It is hard to think that these things happen in my life but I can do nothing since I have sinned.)

When the children always ask for something, their mother will do everything in their power to give what their children needs. However, for mothers in prison, they do not have the means to give all the needs of their children. This situation will leave the child being helpless and the mother being powerless. Participant 4 said, “...madi garud diay rikna na no umay agdawat-dawat ta siyempre, awan met ti pangalaan mi nga sabali... awan met ti pagkamangan na kada aglalaok.” (He feels bad if he comes and asks because we have no resources. There is no one he can ask for help.) She further said, “Kas kadawyan ti ubing nga nalaing ti dawad da ti kwarta ken kankanen. No kasdiay nga awan ti maited ko, nagsakit ti nakem ko uray ko lang isangit. Ta uray no kasano ayat ko nga ikkan ti dawdawaten na, awan nga talaga. Rigat lang a panagbiag ti adda nga kasasaad ko ditoy uneg.” (Like any other child who is fond of asking food and money. If I cannot give anything, I feel hurt and I cry. Although how much I want to give him what he asks, there is really none that I can give. I live in all hardship inside the jail.)

Sometimes, they compare themselves with other mothers who are living away with their family. Mothers in jail are not only the parents who are away with their children. Mothers who work overseas share the same experience but are in a different situation. But mothers in prison are powerless when it comes to their mother caring role for their children. Participant 4 said, “Napipya pay koma dagita nag-abraod brother ta ammo da nga...” (Those who went abroad are better...) which was immediately responded by Participant 1 saying, “Ammo da nga sumangpet da ken adda pay maited da diay... kaysa kadakami nga dadtoy.” (They know that they will come and they have something to give... unlike us here.)

The mothers told that the one of the hardest times is when their children are sick. This is the time that they think of them the most. Since the mothers are not able to take care and check their sick children, they are bothered so much. They feel helpless and powerless about this situation. Participant 1 responded when asked on what is going in her mind if her children are sick, “No sino ti mangaywan, no sino ti mangpatumar, sino mapan manggatang ti agas na, sino ti mangkita ti agpatpatnag kanyada... no adda saksakiten da.” (Who will be taking care of him, who will give his medicines, who will buy his medicines, who will look after them throughout the night if they are sick?) Participant 6 recounted her experience when her child was in bad condition, “Intaray da ti hospital ta nagkaro ta... agtakki... daydiay. Ma-dehydrate diay baby’k ket awan nak pay diay sibay na idi. Adda diay ospital suna ket “kumusta’n ni baby”, kunak. “Ok metten”, kunkuna da. Tawag nak idi nga tawag kada aglalaok.” (They rushed her to the hospital because of severe condition. She had watery stools. She was dehydrating but I was not beside her. While she was in the hospital, I called many times to know if she is okay. They said that she is fine.) She further told, “Agpatnag nak nga nakariing ah... kapapanunot kanyana. Haan nak pay makakaan ah.” (I was awake all throughout the night thinking of her. I cannot eat.) As much as they want to see and take care of their child, the mother can do nothing. Participant 4 recalled, “Aglalo idi last year, December 10, 2012, nadungpar ti pick-up anak ko. Diak ammo no anya ti umuna nga aramidek ta uray no kasano ayat ko mapan kitaen hospital, madi met agbalin ta balud nak ngarud. Haan kasdiay kadasar ti mapan ta adu pay ti proseso na.” (Especially last year, my child was hit by a pick-up truck. I do not know what to do initially because although I want to see him in the hospital, it is not possible for I am a prisoner. It is not that easy because there are lots of things to be processed.)

Mothers in prison also have wishes for their children. But because they are contained behind bars, these aspirations often remain as wishes since they are powerless. One wish that these mothers have in their hearts is to be

allowed to go out from prison to visit their child during special occasions. When a child celebrates a special occasion, he needs the presence of his parents but a mother in prison cannot fulfill this task. “No koma adda mabalin ading ket no kasdiy koma nga banbanag nga okasyon, mabalin koma met nga mapan mi isuda kitaen.” (If there are only means, we wish to be allowed to go to our children during special occasions), Participant 1 spoken.

Moreover, they wish to be granted more time during visiting hours especially when their children visit them. Participant 6 said, “Ar-arakupek pay diay anak ko no... nga... nga... nga iliwliwag... nga haan koma pay nga time nga malpas diay visiting hours ta maipapas ko pay, kunak.” (I was cuddling my baby to entertain him. I was hoping that the visiting hours will not be over soon so that I could enjoy more the moments.)

Although the situation of the mother who is in prison may be hard for the child to understand, they still wish that their children would understand their situation. But the children may hear different information from different sources about her mother’s status. The mother has no power to control these things and the only thing that she can do is to wish that she will personally do the explanation to her children. “No mabalbalin ket haan koma maimula diay panunot nan nga kwa nak diay pagbaludan. Ta ti kayat ko koman ket haan da nga ammo nga naggapu nak diay pagbaludan. Mas kaykayat ko koma ‘ton dumakkel da ta mas ma-explain ko ta ammok ‘ton nga adda ti knowing dan ta maamwan danto met laeng. Ngem ti kayat ko, siak to mismo ti paggapuan na diay usto ken rason no apay nga napan nak ti pagbaludan. Diak kayat nga daydiay sabalin to nga tao ti pakaam-amwan da.” (If possible, the idea about me in jail should not be planted in their mind. Because I do not want them to know that I came out of prison. I would prefer to explain when they are old enough since they will find it out sooner or later. But I want that the truth and reason should come from me and not from anybody else.), Participant 6 explained.

In other instances, the mothers are also worried that their daughter might get married at young age. Since they are inside the jail, they cannot constantly supervise their children. This state would also lead them to feel being powerless. Participant 1 expounded, “Daydiay ti pakadanagak. Isu nga ibagbagak nga haan koma pay mangas-asawa. Daydiay laeng ti kanayon ko nga ipalpalagip kanyana ading ko, nga haan koma pay nga mabalbalin. Ubing pay, agbasa pay.” (It worries me. That’s why I’m telling her not to get married yet. I constantly remind that it is not yet the time. She is still young. She must study first.)

Mothers in jail also often move with limitations. Although they are performing their mother caring roles even inside the prison, their actions are somewhat restricted. There is nothing like a mother who can freely do what she wants for her children. Participant 7 said, “Narigat latta met a sir ta madi ka nga makagunay. Haan met nga kasla diay free ka.” (It is still hard, sir because we can barely move. It is not like when you are free.) Even when buying things that will be needed by her child, the imprisoned mother feels powerless and restricted. She further added, “Sakbay gayam nga naganak nak, ket napan nak pay lang naggatang-gatang ti kailangan na diay anak ko. Nagpa-escort nak sir. I week before the expected ko ket nagpa-escort nak nga napan-napan naggatang ti kailangan diay anak ko.” (Before I gave birth, I went to out to buy things for my baby. I was escorted. I was escorted in buying things for my baby a week before my expected date.)

For instance, when a mother gave birth while inside the jail, she is only allowed to have the child for one week. After a week, the mother has no choice but to give her baby to her relatives to be taken care outside the jail. Participant 7 shared, “Idi kwan a ket awan met maaramidak. Uray kayat ko nga ag-stay pay lang kanyak diay anak ko ah ket isu da met ti mangiparit kanyak nga ... ‘iyawid mon’... kasta-kasta... kunkunada... agsao-sao da dagidiay guardia ditoy ah nga dadduma sir. Ket kapilitan ah nga... ‘tawagam ni lakay mon ta umay da iyawid ta ubing mon’, kunada. Kasdiy, kapilitan a sir nga inpayawid kon ta balud nak lang met. Awan maaramidak ah ta isu met.” (I cannot do anything. Although I want my child to stay with me, they forbid... ‘Let him go home’, that is what some guards here say. So, I have no choice... ‘Call your husband so he can take the baby now’, they say. That’s it. I had no choice but to let my baby go home. I can do nothing because I am just a prisoner.)

But sometimes, when a mother has her child in jail, this privileged is envied by other mothers who are away with their children. When one of the mothers has her child with her inside prison, the other mother inmates envies her and feel more powerless towards the situation. This condition may lead to dispute among mothers. Participant 1 said, “Haan met nga maiwasan ti apal gamin ta... iti daydiay nga prebiblehyo ti ina.” (The envy about that privilege of the mother cannot be avoided.) She further added, “Depende gamin diay itsuraen ti ubbing... pakaalaan ti pagririan ti inna.” (Depending on the situation of the child, dispute among mothers occur.)

While in jail, the child can stay with his mother inside the jail. This privileged of the mother could mean that the child must have to spend days living inside the prison. Participant 2 said, “Dagidiay maiyanak, dagidiay ti mabalin

nga agyan.” (Those who can live inside are those who were born here.) Although every mother would want to provide the best environment for her child, a mother inmate has no power to do this condition. The baby has to sleep on the same bed where her mother sleeps. The bed is in the same room where other female inmates’ beds are. Participant 7 told, “Agkaida kamin a diay tarima min ah sir. Tallo kami kada nanang ko idiy tarima mi. ‘Akinbaba nak met no kwa sir. Tarima kunada gamin ta double deck sir. ‘Akinbaba nak ta nalawlawa gamin. Adda kam latta diay... agdidinneppet kami lattan ‘diay kada nanang ko.. agkikinnuros kamin ah.” (We share the double-deck bed, sir. Together also with my mom, we share the same bed. We are on the lower level of the bed. They call the double-deck as tarima. We sleep side by side tightly... like crossed.)

Since a mother’s action is limited inside the jail, she needs someone to assist her in taking care of her child. The mother asks her mother to live with her inside the jail so that she will be assisted in looking after her newborn. Participant 7 shared, “Immay ni mother ko. Siyempre na-Caesarean nak, narigat ti makagunay-gunay. Ni nanang ko ti immay. Kasla immay nang-guide kanyak ditoy. Bale makalawas na sa... inpayawid da.” (My mother came. I had a Caesarean section so it is hard to make movements. My mother came. She somewhat guided me here. She stayed for a week then... told to go home.) She further added, “Ket ni nanang ko ah ti baon-baonek ah. No kasla koma adda ti kailangan na... gatas, kasjay... baon-baonek.” (I ask my mother to do things for me. If my child needs something like milk, I do ask my mom.)..

Conclusion

The central theme that emerged from the findings is that the mother caring role experiences of inmates is unique. Although behind bars, inmate mothers make ways to fulfill their mother caring role in their own ways.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the researchers have the following recommendations in order to assist and strengthen the mother caring role of inmates:

1. Self-awareness programs for inmate mothers.
2. Counseling activities for the mother inmates.
3. More programs and activities to promote bonding between the mother inmate and her children.
4. The conduct of the same study to father inmates. In addition, the conduct of quantitative research studies on the same topic.

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