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## Research Article

### Causes and Measures of Conflicts Among Gang Inmates in Dipolog and Dapitan City Jails

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#### ABSTRACT

Current jail management models strictly prohibit inmates from assisting with jail administration or governance. This is feasible in developed countries where governments can provide adequate resources, security, and personnel. It is not, however, realistic in developing countries like the Philippines, which is characterized by poverty, corruption, and under resourcing of correctional facilities. In such circumstances, inmate leaders tend to share governance with jail administrators. Gang leaders help in maintaining peace and order in jail. This paper explored the causes of conflicts among gang members in Dipolog and Dapitan City jails and identified preventive measures to eliminate threats caused by the conflicts. There were two groups of respondents who were considered in the study. The first group are the gang inmates composed of 188 who answered the survey instrument intended to determine reasons of joining gang and the different causes of conflicts. The second group was the jail personnel who answered the survey instrument on the measures to prevent the conflicts. Study revealed that conflicts usually occur during the start and playoff time of National Basketball Association (NBA) and Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) because it is this time that gambling is usually occurred. Conflicts were mainly caused by unpaid debts, theft and overcrowding. Admonition and forfeiture of good conduct time, close confinement and reduction of visiting hours were among the most common measures to discourage conflict. It is recommended to prohibit gambling of any sort. Conduct more physical activities to make the inmates busy.

**Keywords:** *conflicts, causes, and measures, inmates, city jail.*

#### Introduction

Gangs have the potential to be used as a form of informal social control. The purpose of a jail is to be a whole institution that controls

all areas of inmates' lives. However, if the jail population grows, it may become more difficult for jail guards to maintain the level of formal social control required to maintain continuous

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control over the convicts (Narag & Jones, 2017).

Moreover, Narag (2018) observed that the number of people detained in Philippine jail continues to rise, frequently with few correctional officers on staff, and the inmate-to-officer ratio continues to widen. Gangs can thus support the prison's existing formal social order by providing convicts with rules and ideals to which they can adhere. He added that the existence of gangs inside jail facilities may actually aid in the formation of group cohesion. Although inter-gang violence is an issue, being a member of a gang can provide convicts with an informal social structure that can help them cope with the harsh reality of prison life.

The study of Skarbek and Freire (2017) states that convicts who are members of a gang may be protected from violence by other inmates, even if there is no physical violence. In other words, inmates may be isolated inside their gangs for protection because of the prospect of gang vengeance, rather than actual violence. They added that some of the violence perpetrated by inmates may divert some of the violence perpetrated by correctional guards. Inmates who see one other as the enemy are less likely to commit acts of violence against the jail staff.

Furthermore, the study of Narag and Lee (2018) found out that jail personnel may become less of a threat to the existing social structure among the convicts by offering a form of informal social control, the methods of formal social control in this situation. They suggested that in order to address some of the difficulties associated to gang violence, a large-scale change in the structure of jail management is required. Because the inmate culture thrives on a "us versus them" mindset, pitting inmates against jail employees, breaking down barriers between the two groups could be crucial to resolving many of the difficulties surrounding the criminal code and inmate subculture.

The study of Thaxton and Agnew (2017) found out that existing gangs within correctional facilities can lead to an increase in violence, gambling, and black-market activity, among other things. Some contend, however, that the presence of gangs may be helpful to jail facilities and personnel. Convicts who are unable to defend themselves against more aggressive, dangerous inmates may be looked down upon by correctional officials.

The study aims assess the reasons of inmates in joining gang or pangkat, determines the causes of conflicts among the gang inmates, and evaluate measures of conflicts. The study is significant to the jail personnel in managing the jail, city key officials and community for them to have a knowledge on the happenings inside jail facility which leads them to allocate funds and assistance for the improvement of the jail facility. Likewise, the study is significant to the researchers.

## **Methodology**

### **Methods**

The study utilized the descriptive method of research. A thorough investigation and interpretation along the causes of conflicts and measures among gang inmates in Dipolog and Dapitan City jails. Unstructured interview was also used. There were two groups of respondents who were considered in the study. The first group are the gang inmates composed of 188 who answered the survey instrument intended to determine reasons of joining gang and the different causes of conflicts. There was a total of 386 gang inmates in the two city jails, but only 188 were allowed by the jail personnel to answer the questionnaires due to security concerns, venue where they will be gathered. The second group was the jail personnel who answered the survey instrument on the measures to prevent the threat caused by the gang conflicts.

## Results, Analysis and Discussions

### Result and discussion

Table 1. Reasons for Joining Gangs

| Reasons for joining the Gang    | Dapitan |      | Dipolog |      |
|---------------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|
|                                 | F       | Rank | F       | Rank |
| Protection and security         | 26      | 1    | 43      | 1    |
| Support systems                 | 19      | 2    | 31      | 2    |
| Brotherhood                     | 14      | 3    | 27      | 3    |
| Family                          | 7       | 4    | 12      | 4    |
| Economic gains                  | 0       | -    |         |      |
| Power and respect               | 4       | 5    | 4       | 5    |
| Access to goods while in prison | 0       | -    | 1       | 6    |

Table 1 presents the reasons of the inmates for joining gangs. It could be seen on the table that the topmost reasons of inmates for joining gangs is protection and security. This shows inmates join groups for security and safety so they would not feel alone and they have a group to lean on during difficult times. They need to be in a group so that during chaos inside the prison cell, they have this group of people beside them. Next reason is support system. This shows that inmates join gangs for support from the very basic need up to the need for personal support. The next reason is brotherhood. The inmates believed that they are protected and secured as their co-inmates considered them as brothers and that they will help them in times of need. Next reason is family, they join gangs because they wanted to have a family. Next reason is power and respect where inmates join gangs for them to gain power and respect over other inmates, especially if they become

leaders of the gang. They feel more powerful and they gain the trust of other inmates.

Whatever the reason of the gang member is, it is their own consumption and that these people are entitled to it, basically because they are human beings and human beings are normally social animals. Going back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, one could simply rationalize why these people join gangs while in prison.

The study of Narag (2018) supported the result. He said that in most cases, gangs in jail or prison are structured informally along racial or ethnic lines, mirroring and often overlapping the formation of street gangs. Convicts join gangs for a variety of reasons, including personal safety from other inmates and financial gain. Gang members relied on their fellow gang members, whom they saw as surrogate family members. He added that majority of inmates join gangs to protect themselves from potential violence from their fellow inmates or to acquire prestige within the correctional institution.

Table 2. Causes of Conflict as Identified by the Gang Inmates

| Causes of Conflict   | Dapitan |      | Dipolog |      |
|----------------------|---------|------|---------|------|
|                      | F       | Rank | F       | Rank |
| Unpaid debts         | 29      | 1    | 31      | 1    |
| Gambling             | 0       | -    | 28      | 2.5  |
| Theft                | 26      | 2    | 28      | 2.5  |
| Messy cell           | 3       | 5    | 16      | 6    |
| Bullying             | 0       | -    | 24      | 4.5  |
| Drugs                | 0       | -    | 24      | 4.5  |
| Overcrowding         | 25      | 3    | 22      | 5.5  |
| Gang war             | 4       | 4    | 22      | 5.5  |
| Revenge              | 0       | -    | 25      | 3    |
| Mismanagement (jail) | 0       | -    | 9       | 7    |

Presented in Table 2 are the causes of conflict among gangs inside the prison cell. The inmates in Dapitan City simply believed that the most common cause of conflict is unpaid debts, theft and overcrowding. Unpaid debts are most common especially among prisoners/inmates who have meager support from family members. This means that inmates borrow money from their fellow inmates and are unable to pay on time. Theft on the other hand is very common inside jail facility. This is not alarming or surprising at all because most of them are convicted criminals who are not afraid to take other inmate’s possessions. They take it away without asking permission.

Overcrowding, on the other hand, is also among the most popular reasons of the inmates. When prison cells get overcrowded, the inmates would not feel comfortable, thus, they resort to conflicts so that the BJMP personnel would know that they can no longer be accommodated in their prison cell. Conflicts naturally arise when there is gambling, theft, messy cell, bullying, drugs, overcrowding, gang war and revenge. The least popular reason for conflict inside prison is mismanagement of the jail.

Human Rights Watch (2017) affirmed the result. The report stated that gangs frequently make money by participating in a variety of illicit activities. Inside the jail or prison

institution, these activities will produce tensions and problems. Selling drugs, extortion, theft, and prostitution are just a few of the unlawful acts. Gang members are frequently involved in the theft of their fellow inmates' property, breaching another inmate's cell with other members of their gang to steal their belongings, which they then sell on the prison's illicit black market. Members may also use coercion or extortion techniques to buy and sell their fellow inmates to other gang members for sexual purposes.

The report added that overcrowding causes confrontations that turn violent. Correctional authorities' ability to continuously supervise convicts reduces as the number of inmates increases. Inmates who are double-celled, or who are housed in a cell that was built for one person, are more likely to be violent. This is especially true when you consider how many violent physical and sexual activities take place amongst cellmates. Authorities' ability to isolate aggressive offenders or those who have been violently assaulted into their own housing units to prevent future acts of violence is also hampered by overcrowding. A larger jail population means fewer job prospects, potentially leaving those most prone to perpetrate acts of aggression against other convicts.

Table 3. Measures Undertaken to Address Conflicts

| Measures   | Dapitan |      | Dipolog |      |
|--|---------|------|---------|------|
|  | F       | Rank | F       | Rank |
| Admonition or verbal reprimand                                 | 10      | 1    | 15      | 1    |
| Restitution or Reparation                                      | -       | -    | -       | -    |
| Temporary or Permanent cancellation of recreational activities | 1       |      | -       | 7    |
| Reduction of visiting time                                     | 5       | 4    | 7       | 4    |
| Close confinement  | 7       | 3    | 10      | 3    |
| Community services   | -       | -    | -       | -    |
| Transfer to other BJMP jail                                    | -       | -    |         |      |
| Suspension of visiting privileges                              | 2       |      | 3       | 5    |
| Permanent Cancellation of visiting privileges                  | -       | -    | 3       | 6    |
| Forfeiture of GCTA   | 9       | 2    | 13      | 2    |

Table 3 shows the measures undertaken to address threats of conflicts among inmates. As shown on the table, its admonition or the BJMP will reprimand inmates when any of conflicts have occurred. The jail authority will resort

into forfeiting the Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA) of inmates, Close confinement or reduction of visiting time whenever the first measure will not discourage the inmates.

The study of Morales (2017) supported the result. He found out that in some jails, inmates identified as gang members were obliged to be placed in disciplinary segregation, which is a kind of segregation from other inmates. Inmates in disciplinary segregation have no rights other than one hour of daily outdoor leisure time, which can be cancelled at the

discretion of correctional authorities. The justification for disciplinary segregation is twofold: it is intended as a punishment for the confrontations, and it also prevents connection with other gang members in an effort to reduce violence among inmates in the general population of the jail.

*Table 4. Level of Effectiveness on the Measures of Conflicts as Perceived by the Personnel of Dipolog and Dapitan City Jails*

| Measures   | Dipolog |    | Dapitan |    |
|--|---------|----|---------|----|
|  | AWV     | D  | AWV     | D  |
| 1. Admonition or verbal reprimand                                  | 3.36    | E  | 3.00    | E  |
| 2. Restitution or Reparation                                       | -       | -  | -       | -  |
| 3. Temporary or permanent cancellation of recreational activities. | 3.59    | ME | 3.41    | ME |
| 4. Reduction of visiting time.                                     | 3.65    | ME | 3.53    | ME |
| 5. Close confinement.  | 3.52    | ME | 3.50    | ME |
| 6. Community service.  | -       | -  | -       | -  |
| 7. Transfer to other jail facility.                                | -       | -  | -       | -  |
| 8. Suspension of visiting privileges.                              | 3.57    | ME | 3.52    | ME |
| 9. Permanent cancellation of visiting privileges.                  | 3.54    | ME | 3.45    | ME |
| 10. Forfeiture of GCTA   | 4.11    | ME | 3.76    | ME |
| Mean   | 3.62    | ME | 3.45    | ME |

Table 4 shows the level of effectiveness on the measures implemented by the two city jails in addressing the conflicts between gangs. The table shows that both jails affirmed that Admonition or verbal reprimand is effective measures against conflicts caused by gang inmates while measures like temporary or permanent cancellation of recreational activities, reduction of visiting time, close confinement, suspension of visiting privileges, permanent cancellation of visiting privileges and forfeiture of good conduct time allowance (GCTA) are much effective measures in both city jails. Among the measures that was rated as much effective by the jail personnel, forfeiture of good conduct time allowance (GCTA) has the highest average weighted mean, it shows that this particular measure is widely consider as the most effective one among other measures. Measures like restitution or reparation, community service and transfer to other jail facility has no rating. According to jail personnel of the two city jails they did not apply or use the following measures.

The study of Narag et al. (2017) supported the result. He affirmed that in an effort to decrease the violence that occurs as an outcome of frustration or despair at the loss of contact with loved ones, jail officers allow for visits between prisoners and family members. By allowing inmates to visit with their families, especially their spouses and children, many believe they are better able to maintain a healthy, masculine self-image, reducing their need to commit violence against other inmates in an effort to exert male domination. Conjugal visits in particular may prevent sexual violence in that it allows inmates to maintain a healthy, non-violent sexual relationship. All forms of visitation are believed to be helpful in preventing violent rule violations, as inmates view them as part of a reward system for good behavior.

**Conclusion**

Inmates in jails join gangs for personal reasons of security and safety, support system, brotherhood, family and to gain power and respect. The most common conflicts in are unpaid

debts, theft and overcrowding. The common measures given by the jail authority are admonition forfeiture Good Conduct Time Allowance (GCTA), Close confinement or reduction of visiting time whenever the first measure is not effective means of eliminating the conflicts.

### Recommendations

1. BJMP personnel should strictly prohibit any sort of gambling inside the jail.
2. Activities that will make the inmates busy maybe conducted by the BJMP personnel
3. Construction of additional cells is considered to accommodate the desired number of occupants in a cell.

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