

Unsung voices: Struggles, coping, and insights of persons with chronic illness behind bars

Darlene Mai B. Umang, Donna C. Camarillo, John Kristof F. Alcantara, Demy Louise B. Carganilla, Cielo Marie B. Cerezo, Darabelle Joy F. Dator, ErizOdille M. Gumabon, Mel-Hanie L. Mabatas, Justine Ray A. Mahor, Irelyn Marie C. Tilan,; Joy S. Mercado and Roderick R. Ortega
School of Nursing, St. Louis University, Philippines

Aims: To unveil the lived experiences of chronically ill prisoners and to know the impact of their illness to them.

Methods: Hermeneutic Phenomenological qualitative study was utilized to unveil the experiences of prisoners with chronic illness. The concept of saturation was used wherein 11 participants were obtained through referral method. Unstructured interview was used and all data gathered were placed in a transcript file. Analysis and data interpretation were done through Collaizzi method.

Results: Prisoners with chronic illness have various experiences inside the jail. From these experiences, the impact of chronic illness to prisoners were found to be their struggles, coping, and insights. Their struggles were identified to be exacerbation of existing condition, having repulsive control of activities of daily living by jail personnel, inadequate health resources and services, financial insufficiency to address illness, un conducive jail set-up, and development of negative feelings. As a response, they made a way to cope by dealing with jail system, developing renewed optimism, striving for diet modification, engaging to physical activities, and practicing complimentary therapy. And in the process of coping, insights were gained which are being grateful despite being imprisoned, gaining widened source of support system, and having a strengthened faith towards God. These helped the participants accept their condition, adjust to the new environment they were imposed to live in, and think optimistically of the future.

Conclusions: Prisoners with chronic illness have varied struggles while inside the prison. Consequently, they are ought to adjust and cope up with their current situation. In addition to this, they were able to gain insights, while in the process of coping, that have helped them gain new reason to move ahead and keep them believing that one day, they will be free from bastille without their chronic illness taking its toll.