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EXPLORING FACTORS INFLUENCING THE NUMBER OF PERSONS APPLYING FOR PROBATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the factors influencing the number of individuals applying for probation in 2025, focusing on the socio-demographic, economic, and legal variables shaping this decision-making process within the Antique Parole and Probation Office in San Jose, Antique, Philippines. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combined quantitative data from probation office records with qualitative insights from interviews with probation officers and probationers. Quantitative findings revealed that age, gender, offense type, marital status, and educational attainment significantly affect the likelihood of applying for probation. Most applicants were aged 31–40 (41%), male (83%), and charged under special laws (59%). Furthermore, 43% were married, and 53% had secondary education. Qualitative analysis identified multiple challenges faced by probation officers, including the lack of rehabilitation programs and funding, heavy caseloads, geographical barriers, economic instability, and negative environmental influences. Probationers often struggled with compliance due to fear of violation, psychological barriers, and distance to reporting stations. The study underscores the need for policy reforms and resource allocation to strengthen supervision, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs. The insights gained aim to inform evidence-based strategies that support the rehabilitation of offenders and promote public safety, addressing the multifaceted challenges within the probation system.

KEYWORDS: *Probation, Criminal Justice, Socio-Demographic Factors*

INTRODUCTION

Probation serves as a judicial alternative to incarceration that allows eligible offenders to remain within the community under supervision while demonstrating rehabilitation and good conduct. It aims to balance accountability, community safety, and offender reintegration. In the Philippine criminal justice system, probation plays a critical role in reducing prison overcrowding while promoting reformation (Phelps, 2016).

Understanding the factors influencing individuals to apply for probation is crucial to improving the implementation and accessibility of this legal remedy. Previous research (Morgan, 1994; Schulenberg, 2007) identified several predictors of probation outcomes, such as age, gender, marital status, work stability, prior felonies, and educational level. However, limited studies have examined the factors that influence individuals' decisions to apply for probation rather than serve prison sentences.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing the socio-demographic and legal factors influencing probation applications, the challenges faced by probation officers, and the compliance behavior of probationers in Antique Province. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates statistical data with lived experiences of officers and probationers to develop evidence-based insights for improving local probation practices.

Research Objectives

a) To identify which socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, offense type, marital status, and educational level) are associated with the likelihood of applying for probation.
b) To determine the challenges faced by probation officers in supervising probationers.
c) To assess the extent to which probationers comply with the conditions of their probation.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The researchers utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. Quantitative data were collected from probation offices, court records, and relevant databases, including the number of probation applications, demographic information of applicants, offense details, etc. Qualitative data were gathered through interviews or surveys with probation officers, criminal justice professionals, and individuals who have applied for probation.

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Quantitative data were collected to analyze trends in the number of probation applications, examining socio-demographic characteristics (such as age, gender, and education level), economic factors (including income level and employment status), and legal variables (such as type of offense and prior criminal history). The study utilized statistical analysis such mean and percentage

Qualitative were gathered through interviews or surveys with probation officers, inmates, and relevant stakeholders within the Antique Parole and Probation Office. These qualitative insights provided a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the decision to apply for probation and offer valuable perspectives on potential policy improvements.

Data Analysis

The researchers conducted statistical analysis to know the demographic characteristic, offence profiles, and risk levels of individual placed on probation, and how the factors influence probation outcomes. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically to extract key insights and perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of participants involved in the qualitative aspect of the research. The researchers obtained necessary permissions and ethical approvals from relevant authorities before accessing any sensitive data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-demographic characteristics of probationers in terms of age. The study revealed that in terms of age, 41% of probationers aged 31-40 years old, followed by 21% aged 18-30, 19% were aged 41-50 years old, 13% are 51-60 years old and 7% were 61 years old and above.

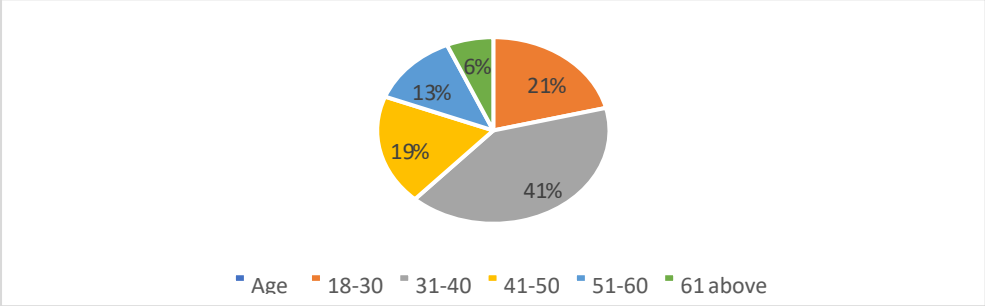

Figure 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristic of probationers in terms of age

Socio-demographic characteristics of probationers in terms of gender. The study revealed that in terms of gender, probationers were 83% male and 15% were female and 2% were members of LGBT.

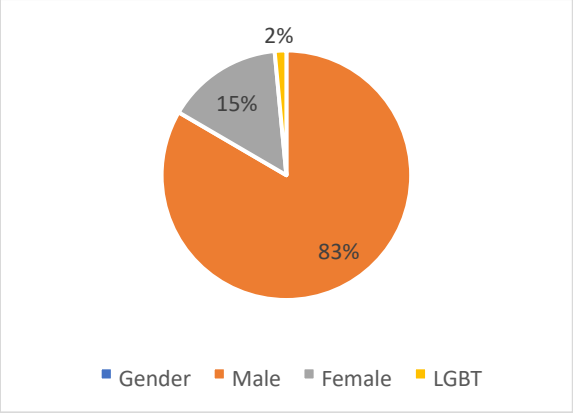

Figure 2. Socio-Demographic Characteristic of probationers in terms of gender

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of probationers in terms of Offences. The study revealed that in terms of criminal offences, 30% committed crime against person, 11% committed crime against property and 59% committed crime against special laws such as gambling, illegal possession of firearms, drugs and environmental laws.

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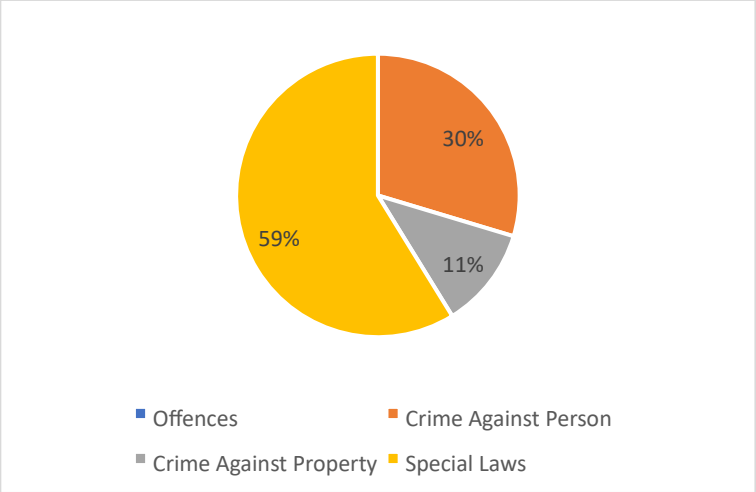

Figure 3. Socio-Demographic Characteristic of probationers in terms of offences

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of probationers in terms of Marital Status. The study revealed that in terms of marital status, 43% of probationers were married, 41% were single and 16% of them are with common law spouse.

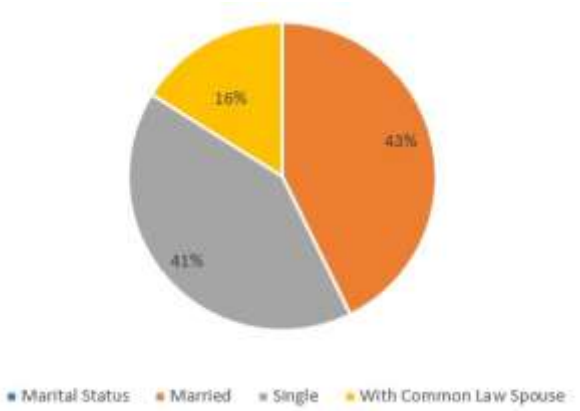

Figure 4. Socio-Demographic Characteristic of probationers in terms of marital status

Socio-demographic characteristics of probationers in terms of Educational Level. The study revealed that in terms of educational level, 33% were elementary level, 53% were secondary level and 15% were college level/graduate.

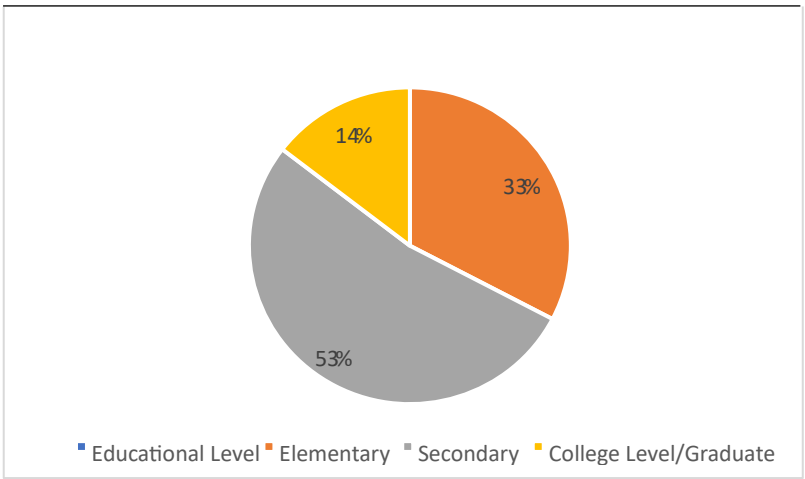

Figure 5. Socio-demographic characteristic of probationers in terms of educational level

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Challenges faced by probation officers in supervising the probationers. Upon the data gathered through interview questionnaires the following themes prevailed.

Limitations of resources such as Lack of Rehabilitation Programs and Budgets. The study revealed that the absence of dedicated rehabilitation programs and specific budget allocations is a challenge. Also, the high ratio of probationers to probation officers (1 officer to 66-100 probationers) makes effective supervision difficult.

It was affirmed by interviewee 1 who answered, “Lack of rehabilitation program, budget (no specific item or budget component in annual budget of the region” and seconded by Interviewee 2 with an answer, “High ratio of probation officer and probationers under supervision; 1 probation office: 66:100 probationers”.

Geographical Challenges. The study revealed supervising probationers living in remote and hard-to-access areas presents logistical challenges and the distance between the probation office and the probationers' residences complicates regular home visits and community monitoring.

It was answered by interviewee 3 when asked about the primary challenges faced when supervising probationers was, “Supervising provisioners living in farflung areas and hard to reach areas”. Interviewee 4 agreed saying that “Regular home and visitation their respective communities due to its distance of the location of the office. The solution for this is clustering of clients and report to the nearest respectorial station.”

Fear and Psychological Barriers. Probationers fear violating their probation conditions, which can lead to revocation. This was emphasized by Interviewee 1, who noted the "fear of violation of the conditions of probation and revocation of probation."

Probationers aim to completely dissociate from their criminal past, affecting their compliance behavior. Interviewee 2 highlighted this by stating, "Probationer’s desire to be totally distinguished from the criminal liabilities on the offense wherein they were convicted and granted probation."

Negative Environmental Influences. Probationers face temptations and negative influences in their environment that hinder their efforts to live upright lives. Interviewee 3 mentioned the "Probationer’s desire to live upright lives in the midst of temptation and negative environmental factors."

Close Association with Negative Influences. Associations with drunkards and similar negative influences contribute to non-compliance. Interviewee 4 pointed out the "close association with drunkards" as a reason for non-compliance.

Economic Challenges. Lack of a permanent source of income affects probationers' stability and compliance. Interviewee 4 also mentioned the lack of a "permanent source of income" as a contributing factor.

Distance to Reporting Stations. The physical distance to reporting stations makes regular reporting difficult for probationers. Interviewee 4 noted the "distance of their residence to the reporting station" as a challenge.

Complying with the conditions of your probation. Some probationers able to complied with the conditions, compliance of probation with the probation officer aand unfortunately, some are still not complying thus, there are still challenges faced by supervising probationers. Some of these challenges were stated:

Serious Behavioral Problems and Maladjustments. Dealing with clients who have serious behavioral issues and maladjustments is a challenge. Interviewee 1 highlighted this by mentioning, “Dealing with clients with serious behavioral problems and maladjustments.”

Resistance to Change. Some probationers are resistant to change and need to be threatened with possible incarceration to comply with their probation conditions. Interviewee 2 stated, “Resistance to change by some probationers need to be threaten of possible incarceration if they will not comply with conditions of probation and their probation will be revoked.”

Negative Peer Influence. The presence of negative peer influences at the probationer’s place of residence hinders their compliance and rehabilitation. Interviewee 3 pointed out the “Presence of negative peer influenced at the probationer’s place of residence.”

Mandatory Conditions and Enforcement. Monthly reporting to the office and avoiding new offenses are mandatory probation conditions. Probation officers remind probationers to comply and are prepared to submit revocation reports if necessary. Interviewee

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4 explained, "Monthly reporting to office and not to be convicted of crime or offense are mandatory conditions of their probation. They are reminded every month to comply with all of their probation conditions otherwise we will submit revocation report so that the limit revokes their probation for them to serve in jail/prison the sentence originally imposed to them. In essence, we try our best to make them good-natured and productive law-abiding citizens but we will not think twice if their behavior demands an action that we must revoke their probation and turn them to jail/prison."

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to know the factors influencing the number of persons applying for probation in the year 2023. Specifically, the study would answer the following questions:

Which socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, offences, marital status and education level, are associated with the likelihood of applying for probation?

What are the challenges faced by probation officers in supervising the probationers?

Are probationers able to complied with the conditions, compliance of probation with the probation officer?

The study found out that:

1. The majority of probationers are aged 31-40 (41%), indicating a higher propensity for individuals in this age group to seek probation, followed by those aged 18-30 (21%) and 41-50 (19%).
2. There is a notable gender disparity, with males constituting 83% of probation applicants, females 15%, and 2% identifying as LGBT, highlighting a predominantly male demographic in probation applications.
3. Probationers commit a wide range of offenses, with 30% involved in crimes against persons, 11% in crimes against property, and 59% violating special laws, reflecting the varying nature of criminal activities leading to probation.
4. The marital status distribution of probationers—43% married, 41% single, and 16% with a common-law spouse—suggests that being married may influence the decision to seek probation.
5. The majority of probation applicants have at least secondary education, with 33% having elementary education, 53% secondary education, and 15% having some college education or graduation, indicating the role of educational background in probation considerations.
6. Probation officers face numerous challenges including limited resources, high caseloads, geographical barriers, economic instability among probationers, and a lack of rehabilitation programs and specific budget allocations, which hamper effective supervision.
7. Probationers face significant challenges in complying with probation conditions due to fear of violation, psychological barriers, negative environmental influences, economic hardships, and logistical issues related to the distance to reporting stations.

Recommendations

Based on the results, the researchers recommend the following:

Develop and implement probation programs specifically tailored to the needs of individuals aged 31-40. These programs could focus on employment assistance, family counseling, and life skills training to address the high propensity for probation within this age group.

Increase the availability of gender-specific support services, such as male-focused rehabilitation programs and initiatives to support female probationers, including addressing issues unique to women in the criminal justice system and offering specialized support for LGBT probationers.

Create diverse rehabilitation and support programs that address the specific types of offenses committed by probationers. This could include counseling and educational programs for those committing crimes against persons, property, and violations of special laws, ensuring that each group receives targeted interventions.

Incorporate family-based interventions and support services for married probationers, such as family therapy and relationship counseling, to leverage the influence of marital status in the rehabilitation process. Programs should also cater to single individuals and those with common-law spouses.

Enhance educational and vocational training programs for probationers, focusing on increasing their educational attainment and providing pathways to higher education and skilled employment. This could help reduce recidivism by improving their socioeconomic prospects.

Advocate for increased funding and resources for probation officers, including reducing caseloads, improving geographical coverage, and establishing dedicated rehabilitation programs. Ensure specific budget allocations for these initiatives to enhance supervision effectiveness and probationer support.

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Implement measures to support probationers in meeting their probation conditions, such as offering transportation assistance to reporting stations, providing psychological counseling, and creating programs to mitigate negative environmental influences. Additionally, provide economic support initiatives to address financial hardships, thereby improving compliance rates.

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Exploring Factors Influencing the Number of Persons Applying for Probation
Introduction
Interview Questionnaire for Probation Officer
This study aims to know the number of the PDLs who qualified for probation in the year 2023.
Which socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and education level, are associated with the likelihood of applying for probation?
What are the challenges faced by probation officers in supervising the probationers?
Are probationers able to comply with the conditions, compliance of probation with the probation officer?
Instruction: Check and fill out the certain information needed. I. General Information:

Total Probationer in the year 2023:__
Age
__ 18-30 __31-40 ___41-50 ___51-60 ____61 and above
c) Gender
___ Male ____Female LGBT_____
Offences:
Crimes Againts Person: _____ Crimes Agiants Property:_____ Special Laws:
Gambling:____
Illegal possession of Fire Arm:___
Drugs:_____
Marital Status:
Married:____ Single:____ With Common law Spouse:_____
Educational Level:
Elementary:___
Secondary:___
College Level/ College Graduate:___
For Probation Officers:
Can you describe some of the primary challenges you face when supervising probationers?
_____
_____
_____
_____

What are the most common reasons why probationers struggle to comply with their probation terms?
_____
_____
_____
_____

Can you share your experience with complying with the conditions of your probation? What has been the most challenging aspect?
_____
_____
_____