

The Influence of Therapeutic Communities on the Psychological, Behavioral, and Psychomotor-Vocational Development of Parolees and Probationers in Samar

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Abstract

Therapeutic Communities (TCs) are widely implemented in community-based correctional programs to promote rehabilitation among parolees and probationers. While existing studies highlight the effectiveness of TCs in fostering behavioral and psychological change, limited attention has been given to how these gains translate into vocational readiness and lawful livelihood. This study examined the role of Therapeutic Communities in the psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills of parolees and probationers in Samar. Using a qualitative-dominant explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, quantitative data were collected from 160 parolees and probationers through a structured survey, followed by in-depth interviews with seven key participants. Quantitative analysis revealed satisfactory to very satisfactory levels of psychological behavioral management, particularly in behavioral accountability and emotional regulation. In contrast, psychomotor-vocational learning skills were rated low, indicating dissatisfaction with practical skill acquisition, employment-related training, and readiness for independent living. Statistical analysis further showed a weak relationship between behavioral management and vocational skills, confirming a disconnect between internal rehabilitation and employment preparedness. Qualitative findings explained this gap through participants' lived experiences, highlighting limited vocational training, lack of credentials, employment stigma, and constrained labor-market opportunities as major barriers to reintegration. Despite these challenges, participants expressed strong aspirations for lawful livelihood, economic stability, and peaceful reintegration. The findings

suggest that while Therapeutic Communities are effective in achieving psychological and behavioral rehabilitation, they remain insufficient in preparing participants for vocational reintegration. The study underscores the need for an integrated behavioral–vocational framework that intentionally links therapeutic change with market-aligned skills training and employment support. Future research may examine such integrated interventions across multiple contexts and through longitudinal designs to assess sustained reintegration outcomes.

Keywords. *Therapeutic Communities, Vocational Skills Development, Rehabilitation and Reintegration*

Introduction

The rehabilitation and reintegration of parolees and probationers remain enduring concerns within community-based correctional systems, particularly in contexts where socioeconomic limitations and post-incarceration stigma persist. Individuals under community supervision often confront intersecting psychological, behavioral, and economic challenges that complicate their transition back into society and increase vulnerability to recidivism. In response to these challenges, Therapeutic Communities (TCs) have been widely implemented as structured, peer-oriented interventions designed to promote behavioral accountability, emotional regulation, moral reorientation, and prosocial living (Shaver, 2023; DOJ, 2020).

Therapeutic Communities are grounded in the assumption that individuals are capable of meaningful change when supported by structured routines, shared norms, peer accountability, and guided self-reflection. Within TC settings, participants engage in group-based activities, behavioral management practices, and value-oriented learning aimed at reshaping conduct and identity (Wiese et al., 2024). Prior research has demonstrated that TCs are effective in strengthening interpersonal relationships, improving emotional control, and fostering socially responsible behavior, particularly among justice-involved populations with histories of substance use and psychosocial instability (Lamph et al., 2023; Wood & Suzuki, 2024).

In rural Philippine settings such as Samar, reintegration efforts are further shaped by fragile community trust in justice institutions, influenced by historical experiences, limited engagement, and perceived inequality in enforcement (Alviola et al., 2025). These dynamics form the broader social environment in which Therapeutic Community programs seek to rehabilitate parolees and probationers.

This divergence points to a critical concern in TC-based rehabilitation: psychological and behavioral gains do not automatically translate into vocational readiness or employment outcomes. While parolees and probationers reported improvements in self-discipline, emotional safety, and moral orientation, these internal gains were not matched by corresponding improvements in employability or lawful livelihood attainment. Similar patterns have been observed in correctional and reentry research, where therapeutic and cognitive improvements remain insufficient without labor-market-aligned skills training and employment support (Evers et al., 2020; Towne et al., 2023).

The importance of this gap is particularly salient in provincial settings such as Samar, where access to technical-vocational education, stable employment opportunities, and employer willingness to hire justice-involved individuals remains limited (DOJ, 2020). Parolees and probationers frequently encounter structural barriers, including disrupted work histories, lack of formal credentials, and persistent stigma, which restrict their ability to convert behavioral reform into economic stability. As a result, rehabilitation efforts that focus primarily on behavioral management without integrating psychomotor and vocational skill development risk producing internally transformed yet economically vulnerable individuals.

Despite the growing body of literature on Therapeutic Communities, much of the existing research continues to evaluate TC effectiveness using broad, multi-domain satisfaction frameworks. While such approaches are valuable for establishing overall program impact, they offer limited explanatory power regarding how specific therapeutic gains are converted into concrete reintegration outcomes—particularly employment. There remains a notable gap in focused analyses examining the interaction between

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psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills, especially from the lived perspectives of parolees and probationers themselves.

Guided by this gap, the present study reframes the evaluation of Therapeutic Communities by narrowing its analytical focus to two interrelated pillars: Psychological Behavioral Management and Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills. Rather than reassessing all TC domains, this study investigates whether behavioral accountability, emotional regulation, and psychological stability fostered within TCs meaningfully support vocational competence and employment readiness.

By concentrating on the behavioral–vocational linkage, this study extends existing TC research and responds directly to previously identified program limitations in Samar. The findings aim to inform the development of an integrated behavioral–vocational enhancement framework that aligns therapeutic progress with labor-market realities, thereby strengthening the long-term reintegration prospects of parolees and probationers.

Research Questions

This study aimed to examine the role of therapeutic communities in psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills of parolees and probationers in Samar.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of psychological behavioral management of parolees and probationers regarding the therapeutic community programs they participate in? in terms of:
 - 1.1. behavioral accountability;
 - 1.2. emotional regulation and psychological safety; and
 - 1.3. interpersonal and self-management skills?
2. What is the level of psychomotor-vocational learning skills of parolees and probationers regarding the therapeutic community programs they participate in, in terms of:
 - 2.1. acquisition of practical and livelihood-related skills;
 - 2.2. training relevant to future employment; and
 - 2.3. readiness for independent and lawful living?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills between parolees and probationers?
4. Is there a significant relationship between psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills among parolees and probationers?
5. What are the lived experiences and perceived barriers of parolees and probationers in translating behavioral change into vocational competence and employment readiness after participating in the therapeutic community program?
6. What are the aspirations of the informants regarding lawful livelihood, economic stability, and reintegration after completing the therapeutic community program?

Literature

Therapeutic Communities in Community-Based Corrections. Therapeutic Communities (TCs) are among the most established rehabilitative models used in correctional and community supervision contexts. Originally developed to address substance use and behavioral disorders, TCs operate on the premise that sustained change occurs through structured environments, peer accountability, shared norms, and guided self-reflection (Shaver, 2023). Within community-based corrections, TCs have been adapted to support parolees and probationers by emphasizing responsibility, discipline, emotional regulation, and prosocial interaction as foundations for reintegration (DOJ, 2020).

Research consistently shows that TC participation contributes to improved behavioral control, reduced antisocial thinking, and enhanced social functioning (Wiese et al., 2024). The communal structure of TCs allows informants to internalize norms through daily routines, group feedback, and role modeling, making behavioral accountability a central mechanism of change (Wood & Suzuki, 2024). In community supervision settings, these features are particularly valuable, as parolees and probationers must navigate social relationships, authority structures, and decision-making without the containment of incarceration.

However, while TCs are widely recognized for their psychosocial benefits, scholars increasingly caution that therapeutic change alone does not guarantee successful reintegration unless it is linked to tangible post-program outcomes, particularly employment and economic stability (Evers et al., 2020). This limitation has prompted calls for more targeted evaluations of how TC-driven behavioral change translates into real-world functioning.

Psychological Behavioral Management as a Foundation for Reintegration. Psychological behavioral management refers to the development of self-regulation, accountability, emotional control, and prosocial conduct—capacities consistently targeted by TC programs. Studies have demonstrated that structured behavioral management within TCs reduces impulsivity, improves anger regulation, and strengthens adherence to social norms (Lamph et al., 2023). Accountability practices, when framed as collaborative rather than punitive, foster internalized discipline and moral responsibility among justice-involved individuals (Wood & Suzuki, 2024).

In community-based supervision contexts, behavioral management is critical because parolees and probationers must independently apply learned behaviors in complex social environments. Research indicates that individuals who develop stronger emotional regulation and interpersonal skills are better equipped to maintain social relationships, avoid criminogenic peers, and comply with supervision requirements (Kendall et al., 2018). These outcomes align with findings that TC participation produces strong effects in social relationships and community involvement.

Despite these strengths, the literature also suggests that psychological and behavioral improvements often plateau at a functional but not transformative level when programs prioritize behavioral compliance over deeper trauma-informed or skill-transfer interventions (Levenson et al., 2021). As a result, participants may demonstrate improved conduct without achieving the functional competencies needed for independent living and employment. This limitation underscores the need to examine behavioral management not as an endpoint, but as a prerequisite that must be intentionally connected to vocational outcomes.

Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills and Employment Readiness. Psychomotor-vocational learning skills encompass practical, hands-on competencies, work habits, and daily living skills essential for lawful employment and economic independence. Extensive reentry literature identifies employment as one of the most significant protective factors against recidivism, providing not only income but also structure, identity, and social legitimacy (Towne et al., 2023). Programs that integrate vocational training, certified skills development, and job placement assistance consistently demonstrate stronger post-release outcomes than those offering therapeutic services alone.

However, studies also reveal that many TC programs—particularly those implemented in community supervision contexts—underemphasize psychomotor and vocational training (Evers et al., 2020). While participants may gain motivation and work ethic, they often lack market-relevant skills, credentials, and exposure to real employment environments. This gap results in dissatisfaction with vocational components and limited employment effects, even when psychological readiness is present.

The absence of vocational alignment is especially problematic in rural or economically constrained settings, where employment opportunities are scarce and competition is high (DOJ, 2020). Without deliberate partnerships with technical-vocational institutions, employers, or livelihood programs, TC participants struggle to convert rehabilitative gains into sustainable livelihoods. Research further emphasizes that vocational interventions are most effective when they are labor-market-connected,

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credentialed, and supported by post-program coaching (Connell et al., 2023). Research further suggests that the successful transfer of learning and readiness into real-world application depends not only on individual motivation but also on sustained academic and institutional support. This aligns with findings by Chavez et al. (2023), who emphasized that continuous academic support plays a critical role in enabling learners to extend classroom-based learning into everyday and applied contexts.

The Behavioral–Vocational Disconnect in Therapeutic Communities. A growing body of literature highlights a recurring pattern in correctional rehabilitation: strong psychological and behavioral gains coexist with weak employment outcomes. Cognitive-behavioral and therapeutic interventions improve decision-making, self-control, and motivation, yet these gains frequently fail to produce measurable improvements in job attainment or economic stability (Smith et al., 2024). This disconnect suggests that behavioral change, while necessary, is insufficient without structured pathways to employment.

Scholars argue that the transition from internal change to external reintegration is mediated by structural factors, including stigma, credential deficits, and limited access to vocational training (Shi & Denver, 2025). For parolees and probationers, employer discrimination and lack of recognized skills often negate the advantages of improved behavior and motivation. As a result, individuals may internalize responsibility and moral reform while remaining excluded from the labor market.

This pattern is evident in evaluations of TC programs that show strong effects on social relationships and community involvement but minimal effects on employment (Graves & Fendrich, 2024). The literature increasingly calls for integrated models that align therapeutic programming with vocational preparation, emphasizing that behavioral management must be paired with skill acquisition to support long-term desistance.

The literature affirms that Therapeutic Communities are effective in fostering psychological behavioral management among parolees and probationers. However, it also reveals a consistent gap between behavioral rehabilitation and vocational reintegration. While existing studies document each domain separately, few have examined how behavioral gains are—or are not—converted into psychomotor-vocational competence, particularly within local community supervision contexts.

Moreover, limited research foregrounds the lived experiences of parolees and probationers as they navigate this transition, leaving gaps in understanding the barriers that prevent motivated, behaviorally stable individuals from achieving lawful livelihoods. Addressing this gap requires a focused examination of the interaction between psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills.

Accordingly, the present study responds to this gap by narrowing the analytical lens to these two interrelated pillars, positioning vocational skill development as the critical bridge between therapeutic change and sustainable reintegration. By doing so, it advances a more targeted understanding of TC effectiveness and informs the development of integrated behavioral–vocational interventions tailored to the Samar context.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative-dominant explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (QUAN → QUAL). The design enabled an initial quantitative assessment of participant experiences in Psychological Behavioral Management and Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills, followed by an in-depth qualitative exploration of how these experiences are interpreted and applied in daily life. The qualitative phase was emphasized to explain quantitative patterns, particularly the persistent gap between behavioral stability and vocational readiness observed in Therapeutic Community (TC) participation.

Unlike prior broad evaluations of TC programs, this design was intentionally focused on examining the behavioral–vocational linkage, allowing the study to move beyond general program satisfaction toward understanding mechanisms and barriers shaping employment-related outcomes

Population and Sampling

The study population consisted of parolees and probationers participating in Therapeutic Community programs in Samar, Philippines, drawn from both the First and Second Districts.

For the quantitative phase, purposive sampling was employed. A total of 160 participants (80 parolees and 80 probationers) were included, representing approximately 46.5% of the eligible supervision population during the study period. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently enrolled in or recently completed TC programming and capable of providing informed consent.

For the qualitative phase, purposive criterion-based sampling was used to select seven (7) key informants (four parolees and three probationers). Selection prioritized participants who could articulate experiences related to behavioral change, vocational challenges, and post-program aspirations. Interviews were conducted until thematic saturation was achieved.

Instrument

Two instruments were utilized. The quantitative instrument was a researcher-developed, Likert-type questionnaire designed to measure: (1) Psychological Behavioral Management, including accountability, emotional regulation, interpersonal boundaries, and perceived psychological safety; and (2) Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills, including acquisition of practical skills, employment-relevant training, daily living competence, and readiness for independent work.

Items were derived from existing TC evaluation frameworks and informed by preliminary qualitative insights. Content validity was established through expert review, and reliability was assessed prior to analysis.

The qualitative instrument consisted of a semi-structured interview guide focusing on participants lived experiences of behavioral change, barriers to vocational skill acquisition, employment challenges, and aspirations for lawful livelihood and reintegration.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection followed a sequential process. After securing institutional approvals, informed consent was obtained from all participants. The quantitative survey was administered first, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Following preliminary quantitative analysis, key informant interviews were conducted in private and secure settings. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim. The qualitative phase was specifically designed to explain quantitative findings, particularly low ratings in vocational and employment-related indicators.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative data occurred during interpretation through joint display analysis, linking statistical trends with participant narratives

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics appropriate for ordinal data, including medians and interpretive descriptors. Non-parametric inferential tests (e.g., Mann–Whitney U test) were applied to examine differences between parolees and probationers where relevant.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, combining directed and inductive coding. Initial codes reflected the study’s focus on behavioral management and vocational skills, while additional themes emerged from participant narratives. Codes were refined into overarching themes that explained the behavioral–vocational disconnect.

Findings from both strands were integrated using joint displays, enabling systematic comparison of quantitative results and qualitative explanations.

Ethical Considerations

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Ethical standards for research involving justice-involved populations were strictly observed. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were informed of the study’s purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences to their supervision status.

Confidentiality was maintained through the use of coded identifiers, and no personally identifiable information was included in the report. All data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. The study was conducted in accordance with principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for human dignity

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study and provides an in-depth discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions, existing literature, and the conceptual focus of the study. Following the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, quantitative results are presented first and are subsequently explained and enriched by qualitative findings.

Research Question 1. What is the level of psychological behavioral management of parolees and probationers regarding the therapeutic community programs they participate in?

Table 1. Level of Psychological Behavioral Management of Parolees and Probationers

Indicators	Parolees (Median)	Description	Probationers (Median)	Description	Overall
Behavioral accountability	4	Very Satisfied	4	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Emotional regulation & psychological safety	3	Satisfied	3	Satisfied	Satisfied
Interpersonal & self-management skills	3	Satisfied	4	Very Satisfied	Satisfied
Overall	3	Satisfied	4	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied

The findings indicate that parolees and probationers generally exhibit satisfactory to very satisfactory levels of psychological behavioral management as a result of their participation in the Therapeutic Community (TC) program. Behavioral accountability emerged as the strongest component for both groups, reflecting participants’ perceived improvement in self-discipline, rule compliance, and responsibility for personal actions. Emotional regulation and psychological safety, while positively rated, remained at a “Satisfied” level, suggesting moderate emotional stabilization rather than deep psychological transformation.

Notably, probationers reported slightly higher overall psychological behavioral management than parolees. This difference may be attributed to probationers’ continued immersion in community and family settings, where behavioral improvements are immediately tested and reinforced. Despite this variation, the overall pattern suggests that TC participation effectively strengthens internal behavioral controls across supervision types.

These findings are consistent with the foundational principles of Therapeutic Communities, which emphasize behavioral accountability, peer monitoring, and structured social learning as mechanisms for change (Wiese et al., 2024; Wood & Suzuki, 2024). The high ratings in accountability affirm that TC programs are successful in instilling rule-governed behavior and moral responsibility—critical competencies for individuals under community supervision.

However, the plateau observed in emotional regulation and psychological safety aligns with existing literature suggesting that behavioral change often precedes deeper emotional healing (Levenson

et al., 2021). While participants may learn to manage outward behavior effectively, unresolved trauma, emotional vulnerability, and stressors related to reintegration may limit the depth of psychological recovery. This finding suggests that TC programs, as currently implemented, may prioritize behavioral compliance over sustained therapeutic processing.

Importantly, while strong psychological behavioral management is a necessary condition for reintegration, it is not sufficient on its own. As subsequent findings demonstrate, these internal gains do not automatically translate into functional independence or employment readiness, highlighting the need to view behavioral management as a foundation, not an endpoint, of rehabilitation.

Research Question 2. What is the level of psychomotor-vocational learning skills of parolees and probationers regarding the therapeutic community programs they participate in?

Table 2. Level of Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills of Parolees and Probationers

Indicators		Parolees (Median)	Description	Probationers (Median)	Description	Overall
Acquired skills	practical	1	Very Dissatisfied	1	Very Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Employment-relevant training		1	Very Dissatisfied	1	Very Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Readiness for independent living	for	2	Dissatisfied	1	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Overall		2	Dissatisfied	1	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied

In contrast to the positive behavioral outcomes, the results show consistently low levels of psychomotor-vocational learning skills among both parolees and probationers. Participants expressed strong dissatisfaction with the acquisition of practical skills, employment-relevant training, and readiness for independent living. These low ratings were evident across both groups, with probationers reporting slightly lower overall vocational preparedness.

The sharp contrast between psychological behavioral management and vocational learning outcomes underscores a critical imbalance in TC programming. While participants feel internally reformed and motivated, they lack the practical competencies necessary to translate this motivation into lawful employment and economic stability.

The weak vocational outcomes reflect a well-documented limitation of many TC-based rehabilitation programs, particularly in community supervision contexts where vocational training is not embedded as a core component (Evers et al., 2020). Although TCs emphasize structure, responsibility, and work ethics, these values alone do not equip participants with market-relevant skills or credentials demanded by employers.

Employment is widely recognized as a cornerstone of successful reintegration, providing not only income but also identity, routine, and social legitimacy (Towne et al., 2023). In the absence of vocational preparation, parolees and probationers remain vulnerable to economic marginalization, even when they are psychologically ready to change. This gap is particularly pronounced in provincial settings such as Samar, where job opportunities are limited and competition for employment is high (DOJ, 2020).

The findings suggest that TC programs must move beyond symbolic or informal work activities toward intentional, skills-based, and employment-linked vocational training if reintegration goals are to be realized.

Research Question 3. Is there a significant difference between parolees and probationers in psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills?

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Table 3. Difference Between Parolees and Probationers (Mann–Whitney U Test)

Variable	U Value	p-value	Interpretation
Psychological Behavioral Management	3083	0.158	Not Significant
Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills	2662	0.005	Significant

The analysis revealed no significant difference between parolees and probationers in terms of psychological behavioral management, indicating that the TC program delivers comparable behavioral outcomes regardless of supervision type. This uniformity suggests that the behavioral mechanisms of TCs—such as peer accountability and structured routines—are broadly effective across justice-involved populations.

However, a significant difference was observed in psychomotor-vocational learning skills, with probationers reporting lower satisfaction than parolees. This difference may reflect the differing reintegration pressures faced by the two groups. Probationers, who remain embedded in community life, may experience stronger and more immediate expectations to secure employment, thereby becoming more acutely aware of vocational gaps.

These findings support prior research indicating that supervision context shapes how rehabilitation outcomes are experienced and evaluated, particularly in employment-related domains (Harding et al., 2022).

Research Question 4. Is there a relationship between psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills?

Table 4. Relationship Between Psychological Behavioral Management and Psychomotor-Vocational Learning Skills

Variables	Spearman's ρ	Interpretation
Behavioral $\times$ Vocational Skills	Weak	Not Strongly Associated

The analysis revealed only a weak relationship between psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills. This finding confirms the central analytical claim of the study: behavioral rehabilitation does not inherently produce vocational competence.

Although emotional regulation, accountability, and interpersonal skills are essential for workplace functioning, they do not substitute for technical skills, certifications, or job-specific training. This finding aligns with reentry research emphasizing that employability requires both “soft skills” and “hard skills,” and that the absence of either undermines employment outcomes (Smith et al., 2024).

The weak association underscores the need for structural and programmatic bridges between therapeutic progress and labor-market integration.

Research Question 5. What are the lived experiences and perceived barriers of parolees and probationers in translating behavioral change into vocational competence and employment readiness after participating in the Therapeutic Community program?

5.1 Psychological and Behavioral Transformation Through the Therapeutic Community

Six (6) participants reported that participation in the Therapeutic Community (TC) program led to significant psychological and behavioral transformation. They described becoming more disciplined, emotionally controlled, and self-aware. Participants emphasized that the structured routines, peer accountability, and continuous reflection within the TC environment helped them develop better self-regulation and a stronger sense of personal responsibility. Many noted improvements in anger management, rule compliance, and interpersonal behavior, which they viewed as essential for reintegration.

Despite these positive changes, informants emphasized that the transformation they experienced was largely personal and moral in nature, rather than directly connected to vocational preparation or employment readiness.

“There was a big change in my behavior. I learned how to control myself and follow rules.”

“I became a better person compared to before — calmer and more respectful toward others.”

These findings align with the core principles of the Therapeutic Community model, which emphasizes behavior modification through structure, social learning, and peer accountability (De Leon, 2010; Wiese et al., 2024). Prior studies consistently demonstrate that TCs are effective in improving emotional regulation, impulse control, and prosocial behavior among justice-involved individuals (Messina et al., 2021; Wood & Suzuki, 2024). The participants’ narratives illustrate how these mechanisms operate in practice, reinforcing the role of TCs as effective platforms for internal behavioral reform.

However, the emphasis on moral and behavioral change, as reflected in the participants’ accounts, also supports critiques in the literature that TC outcomes are often strongest in psychosocial domains and less effective in addressing functional reintegration needs such as employment (Evers et al., 2020). This suggests that while TC participation successfully facilitates internal change, additional components are required to translate this transformation into external, livelihood-related outcomes.

5.2 Lack of Vocational Skills and Employment Preparation

Seven (7) participants expressed frustration over the limited opportunities to acquire practical and vocational skills during their participation in the TC program. Although they felt emotionally and behaviorally ready to re-enter society, participants reported that they were not equipped with marketable skills necessary for securing lawful employment. They emphasized that program activities focused primarily on discipline and behavior, with minimal attention to hands-on skills training or job preparation.

Participants consistently highlighted the gap between internal readiness and external capability, noting that motivation alone was insufficient without concrete vocational competencies.

“I am ready to change, but we were not given enough training to help us find a job.”

“Our behavior improved, but when it comes to work skills, that is where we are lacking.”

These accounts reflect a well-documented gap in rehabilitation programs that prioritize therapeutic change while underemphasizing vocational skill development (Evers et al., 2020; Connell et al., 2023). While soft skills such as discipline and emotional control are important, employability also requires technical competencies, certifications, and job-specific training (Towne et al., 2023). The findings reinforce research suggesting that behavioral readiness alone does not translate into labor-market competitiveness without structured vocational pathways.

In community-based correctional settings, particularly in economically constrained regions, the absence of market-aligned skills training may significantly limit reintegration outcomes (DOJ, 2020). This supports calls in the literature for rehabilitation models that intentionally integrate behavioral interventions with employment-focused programming.

5.3 Structural Barriers to Employment and Reintegration

Five (5) participants identified structural and social barriers that hindered their transition from behavioral reform to employment. These included stigma associated with being a parolee or probationer, lack of formal credentials, and limited employment opportunities within their communities. Several

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participants shared that disclosure of their supervision status during job applications often resulted in rejection.

These experiences contributed to feelings of discouragement, reinforcing the perception that personal reform alone was insufficient to overcome societal barriers.

“Even if I want to work, once they know you came from jail, they no longer accept you.”

“There is still stigma, even if you have already changed.”

The persistence of stigma as a barrier to employment is widely documented in reentry literature. Employers’ reluctance to hire justice-involved individuals significantly reduces employment opportunities, regardless of demonstrated behavioral reform (Pager, 2007; Shi & Denver, 2025). These findings highlight how structural exclusion, rather than individual deficiency, often prevents parolees and probationers from achieving economic independence.

The narratives support the argument that rehabilitation outcomes are shaped not only by individual change but also by societal receptivity. Without supportive labor-market policies, employer partnerships, and credentialing mechanisms, behavioral improvements may fail to yield sustainable reintegration outcomes (Harding et al., 2022).

Research Question 6. What are the aspirations of the informants regarding lawful livelihood, economic stability, and reintegration after completing the Therapeutic Community program?

6.1 Aspiration for Lawful and Dignified Livelihood

All seven (7) participants expressed a strong desire to secure lawful and dignified employment after completing the TC program. Participants emphasized that having a stable job was essential not only for financial survival but also for restoring self-worth and rebuilding trust with family and community members. Employment was often described as tangible proof of genuine change and rehabilitation.

“I want a decent job to prove that I have really changed.”

“What I want most is work so I can support my family.”

These aspirations align with desistance theory, which emphasizes employment as a key turning point in sustaining lawful behavior and identity transformation (Maruna, 2001; Uggen, 2000). Meaningful employment provides structure, social belonging, and a sense of legitimacy, reinforcing behavioral change initiated through rehabilitation programs.

The emphasis on “dignified” work reflects participants’ desire not merely for income, but for social acceptance and moral restoration—an outcome frequently highlighted in qualitative studies of reentry (Bushway & Apel, 2012).

6.2 Desire for Peaceful and Stable Reintegration

Six (6) participants articulated aspirations centered on living a peaceful, stable, and crime-free life. Participants expressed hope for a future characterized by emotional stability, family reconciliation, and social acceptance. They emphasized that reintegration meant maintaining behavioral change and avoiding environments or influences associated with their past offenses.

“I just want a peaceful life, away from trouble.”

"I do not want to return to my old life anymore."

These findings reflect the internalization of prosocial identities, a key marker of successful rehabilitation and desistance (Maruna & Farrall, 2004). The desire for peace and stability suggests that participants have embraced behavioral norms promoted within the TC environment. However, sustaining this identity requires external supports that reduce exposure to criminogenic stressors, including unemployment and economic insecurity.

6.3 Alignment of Aspirations with Program Gaps

While participants expressed strong aspirations for lawful livelihood and successful reintegration, they also recognized a mismatch between their goals and the support provided by the TC program. Two (2) participants emphasized that without vocational training, employment assistance, and skills certification, their aspirations might remain unrealized. This highlights the gap between internal motivation and external opportunity.

"We have dreams, but we also need support to make them possible."

This mismatch highlights a critical structural limitation of the TC model as implemented in the study context. While the program effectively fosters motivation and behavioral reform, it lacks the instrumental mechanisms needed to convert aspiration into attainment. Scholars argue that rehabilitation programs must evolve toward integrated behavioral–vocational frameworks that link therapeutic progress with labor-market opportunities (Graves & Fendrich, 2024; Smith et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study examined the role of Therapeutic Communities in the psychological behavioral management and psychomotor-vocational learning skills of parolees and probationers in Samar. The findings demonstrate that Therapeutic Community programs are effective in fostering psychological and behavioral change, particularly in terms of accountability, emotional regulation, and interpersonal self-management. Both quantitative and qualitative results indicate that participants experienced meaningful internal transformation, confirming the strength of the TC model as a mechanism for behavioral stabilization and moral reform within community-based correctional settings.

Despite these positive behavioral outcomes, the study revealed a significant weakness in psychomotor-vocational learning skills. Participants reported low levels of satisfaction with practical skill acquisition, employment-relevant training, and readiness for independent living. The weak relationship between psychological behavioral management and vocational learning skills highlights a critical disconnect: behavioral improvement does not automatically translate into employment readiness. Qualitative findings further explained this gap by pointing to limited skills training, lack of credentials, stigma, and constrained labor-market opportunities as major barriers to vocational reintegration.

While the findings provide important insights, they should be interpreted within certain limitations. The study was conducted in a single provincial context, and findings are based on self-reported participant experiences, which may limit generalizability. Nevertheless, the results underscore the need for Therapeutic Community programs to move toward an integrated behavioral–vocational framework that deliberately links therapeutic change with market-aligned skills training and employment support. Addressing this gap is essential for transforming internal rehabilitation gains into lawful livelihood, social inclusion, and sustainable reintegration. Future research may extend this inquiry by examining integrated behavioral–vocational interventions across multiple regions and by incorporating longitudinal and

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employment outcome data to better assess how therapeutic gains translate into sustained livelihood and reintegration.

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