



## Evaluation of probationers' risk factors and support needs for SUC intervention



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### ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the needs and risk factors of probationers to develop more effective intervention programs at a State University. Using a quantitative-descriptive research design, data were collected from 240 probationers through a survey questionnaire, with respondents selected through convenience sampling. Statistical analysis revealed that low education levels, unemployment, and criminal history were the primary risk factors affecting probationers. The most critical support needs identified were educational assistance, employment support, and life skills training. A strong correlation was found between these risk factors and support needs, indicating that the identified barriers hinder probationers' rehabilitation, while the support measures address these challenges. The study concludes that integrating educational and employment support into probation programs, along with comprehensive life skills training, is essential for reducing risk factors and improving probationers' chances of successful reintegration into society.

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### 1. Introduction

Probation services play a crucial role in the criminal justice system by providing supervised community-based rehabilitation for offenders (Bird et al., 2023). However, to ensure these programs are effective, it is essential to assess the specific risk factors and support the requirements of probationers. Research indicates that addressing these factors can significantly reduce the likelihood of reoffending, promoting successful reintegration into society. This study evaluates probationers' risk factors and support requirements, identifying areas where state universities and colleges (SUCs) can intervene to enhance their rehabilitation programs (Anderson and Medendorp, 2024).

Studies have demonstrated that probation services should not only categorize individuals by their risk levels but also offer targeted interventions that address specific needs, such as antisocial behavior patterns, substance abuse, and lack of stable housing (Stevens et al., 2025).

However, it is essential to understand that probationers have diverse needs beyond their reoffending risk. Addressing criminogenic factors such as antisocial personality traits, substance abuse, and lack of education or employment is crucial to reducing the risk of recidivism (Chloupis and Kontompasi, 2025). Therefore, SUCs have a unique opportunity to intervene by providing educational programs, vocational training, and psychological support tailored to the specific needs of probationers. By doing so, these institutions can help bridge the gap between evidence-based assessments and effective rehabilitation practices, ultimately enhancing the outcomes of probation programs.

In the Philippines, the criminal justice system recognizes the importance of probation as a vital component in managing offenders and promoting their rehabilitation. The Philippine Probation Law in 1976 established the framework for probation services in the country, aiming to provide a less punitive alternative to imprisonment while ensuring public safety. Recent studies highlight the need for comprehensive risk assessments and support mechanisms tailored to Filipino probationers' unique cultural and socioeconomic contexts (Farayola et al., 2023).

Addressing the support needs of probationers requires a multifaceted approach. Studies highlight the importance of continuous support and community-based interventions in promoting successful rehabilitation. Effective reentry programs

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that provide ongoing support have been shown to significantly reduce recidivism rates (Wilson et al., 2025). In the City of Cabanatuan, the probationers of the Parole and Probation Administration and any other probation offices indeed face various risk factors in their rehabilitation programs. The researchers would like to identify such risk factors to identify further support requirements that a State University can intervene, and thus, it is essential to understand the prevailing condition of the probationers. The probationers were profiled according to their age, education, and employment. The study comes from various age groups, education levels, and employment statuses, which helps us understand their different needs and challenges. Most probationers (147) are between 20 and 40 years old, likely in the middle of their working and family-raising years. A smaller group (93) is 40 years old and above, which may include those facing additional challenges, such as age-related health problems or difficulties finding employment.

As to their education, 56 probationers have only completed elementary education, which often limits their job opportunities. The majority, 140 probationers, have completed high school, providing them with more opportunities but often leading to lower-income jobs. Forty-four probationers have some college education, giving them access to more skilled jobs, but their criminal records can still present obstacles. Eighty-one probationers are currently unemployed, which is a risk factor for reoffending due to financial instability. One hundred fifty-nine probationers are employed in various fields, a positive factor for rehabilitation and reducing the likelihood of reoffending. For probationers with elementary or high school education, jobs are mostly in manual labor, trades, or small businesses. Many work in farming, gardening, driving (tricycle, truck), mechanics, construction, and factory work. Others run small businesses like online selling and dried fish trading or work in service roles such as cooks, beauticians, welders, and security guards. For college-educated probationers, jobs tend to be more specialized or professional. Some work as business owners, auditors, electricians, or security managers. Others have more creative roles, like musicians or makeup artists. Hence, studying the profiles of the probationers is essential in the identification of the critical risk factors, as well as in the determination of their support needs or requirements in the areas of their rehabilitation programs. Several recommendations can be made to improve probation programs based on the identified risk factors and support needs. The study aims to assess probationers' risk factors and support requirements to develop effective intervention programs. Specifically, to;

1. Identify key risk factors affecting probationers in their rehabilitation programs.
2. Determine the support needs of probationers in areas of their rehabilitation programs.

3. Identify the significant relationship between the risk factors and the support requirements of the probationers.
4. Provide recommendations for improving probation programs based on the study's findings.

## 2. Methodology

This study is quantitative-descriptive research; a survey questionnaire was used to collect data to assess risk factors and support the needs of probationers in their rehabilitation. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the issues and supports requirements.

A total of 240 probationers as respondents were selected through convenience sampling to participate in the study to ensure a representative sample from a total population of 600 as per the office's record for the year 2024. The study is limited to probationers in Cabanatuan City, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other regions.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on probationers' risk factors and support needs. The questionnaire includes sections on demographic information, perceived risk factors, and support needs. The researchers administered the questionnaires in person. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the survey, and assistance was provided.

The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the probationers' demographic characteristics, risk factors, and support needs. Statistical tools used the Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's  $r$ ) to measure the significant relationship between the identified risk factors and support needs or requirements; a heat map was also used to depict the strength and direction of correlations between variables.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Risk factors affecting probationers in their rehabilitation programs

The rehabilitation of probationers is influenced by several risk factors that can impede their successful reintegration into society. To better understand these factors, a survey was conducted to assess the prevalence of various challenges probationers face. Table 1 presents the critical risk factors identified, including substance abuse, mental health issues, low education, unemployment, criminal history, behavioral issues, family problems, negative peer influences, unsafe community environments, and limited access to support services. Table 2 provides the number and percentage of probationers affected by each risk factor and a brief interpretation of the findings. This information helps to highlight the areas where targeted interventions may be most needed to support probationers in their rehabilitation programs.

**Table 1: Risk factors affecting the respondents in their rehabilitation programs**

Risk factor	Yes	No	%(yes)	Interpretation
Substance abuse	77	163	32%	Concern for some is not a predominant issue for the majority
Mental health issues	66	174	27%	Affects a smaller portion of the probationer population
Low education	131	109	55%	Significant risk factor; more than half face educational limitations
Unemployment	138	102	58%	Critical risk factor, impacting a substantial portion
Criminal history	124	116	52%	Moderately common risk factor among probationers
Behavioral issues	75	165	31%	Affects a smaller segment of the population
Family problems	72	168	30%	Concern but not widespread
Negative peers	79	161	33%	Affects a minor portion of the probationer population
Unsafe community	90	150	38%	Poses a risk for a notable segment of probationers
Limited support services	88	152	37%	Affects a significant minority of probationers

The study revealed that key risk factors: Low education, unemployment, and criminal history are the most prominent risk factors affecting probationers, as more than half of the respondents reported these issues. Moderate risk factors: Unsafe community and limited support services are moderately prevalent. Less common risk factors: Behavioral issues, family problems, substance abuse, and mental health issues are less common but still significant.

The study implies that programs targeting employment opportunities, educational advancement, and supporting those with criminal histories could significantly address critical needs. Developing strategies to provide access to mental health services, family counseling, and peer support programs could reduce these risk factors.

The study showed that low education and unemployment are critical risk factors that affect probationers' success. Employment is identified as a protective factor against recidivism, and barriers to employment (such as low education levels and a lack of vocational training) significantly increase the risk of reoffending (Schiraldi, 2020). Probationers with higher educational attainment and steady employment are less likely to return to criminal

behavior, suggesting that providing educational and vocational training opportunities is vital for successful rehabilitation.

Also, the study indicates that the less common risk factor is mental health issues, but according to the U.S. Department of Justice, mental health issues are a significant concern in the criminal justice system, particularly for those under community supervision. Many probationers with mental health disorders do not receive adequate support, leading to higher chances of reoffending due to unmanaged symptoms or co-occurring disorders such as substance abuse.

### 3.2. Support needs of probationers in areas of their rehabilitation programs

The rehabilitation of probationers is a multifaceted process that requires addressing various support needs to foster successful reintegration into society. Key support areas include access to substance abuse treatment, mental health services, educational opportunities, employment assistance, life skills training, and family counseling.

**Table 2: Support needs of probationers in their rehabilitation programs**

Support needs	Yes	No	%(yes)	Interpretation
Substance abuse treatment	113	126	47%	Access is necessary for nearly half, which indicates moderate need
Mental health services	77	162	32%	It affects a smaller portion, not a predominant issue for the majority
Educational opportunities	197	42	82%	Critical support needs: A significant majority require educational programs
Employment assistance	200	39	84%	High demand for employment-related support, indicating a crucial area of need
Life skills training	175	64	73%	Primary support needs: A large majority would benefit from life skills development
Family counseling	107	132	45%	Moderate need: critical for a substantial portion but not the majority
Positive peer groups	143	96	60%	There is a significant need for opportunities to connect with supportive peer networks
Safe housing	127	112	53%	Over half require stable housing, a common need among probationers
Community integration programs	111	128	46%	Nearly half seek support in community reintegration; moderate need identified
Legal assistance	136	103	57%	There is a high demand for legal support, especially in navigating probation requirements

The study results highlight a range of support needs among probationers essential for successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The most significant needs identified were employment assistance and educational opportunities, suggesting that most probationers require help finding and maintaining employment and furthering their education to enhance their prospects for a stable future. Life skills training also emerged as a significant need, reflecting the importance of developing essential skills such as budgeting, communication, and decision-making to improve daily living and foster independence.

While safe housing and legal assistance were also notable concerns, indicating that more than half of

the probationers require stable living environments and help navigating legal challenges, other needs, such as substance abuse treatment and community integration programs, were seen as moderately necessary, impacting nearly half of the respondents. Mental health services and family counseling were less frequently cited but still represent crucial areas for many probationers who face specific personal and relational challenges.

These findings emphasize probationers' diverse and interconnected support needs, underscoring the need for a comprehensive and individualized approach to developing intervention programs. Addressing these needs holistically could significantly enhance the effectiveness of

rehabilitation efforts, reduce recidivism, and promote long-term positive outcomes for probationers.

Moreover, the result of the study can be corroborated with [Pew \(2023\)](#); individuals on probation often face significant challenges that go beyond the specific requirements of their probation conditions, such as substance abuse treatment and mental health services. For instance, many probationers need access to both mental health care and substance use disorder treatment, reflecting a high prevalence of these issues among the probation population. Probationers with these behavioral health challenges are almost three times more likely to have a substance use disorder compared to the general population, and around 16% to 27% are dealing with a mental illness. This supports the need for comprehensive counseling and rehabilitation services, as outlined in the study ([Pew, 2023](#)).

Similarly, recent studies have documented the need for educational and employment support. The Office of Justice Programs notes that probationers often need more educational qualifications, limiting their employment opportunities. Programs that provide job training, placement services, and educational support are critical for reducing recidivism and improving community integration ([Gettinger, 1983](#)). Additionally, life skills training, such as budgeting, communication, and decision-making workshops, has been essential for helping probationers navigate daily challenges and avoid reoffending.

### 3.3. Significant relationship between the risk factors and the support requirements of the probationers

This section of the study explores the significant relationships between identified risk factors and the support requirements of probationers. By analyzing the correlations, we aim to understand how various risk factors, such as substance abuse and low education, relate to specific support needs like employment assistance and educational opportunities. Understanding these relationships helps in designing more effective and targeted interventions to address the interconnected needs of probationers, ultimately supporting their successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

[Table 3](#) displays the correlation coefficients between various risk factors and support needs identified among probationers. The correlations indicate the strength and direction of relationships between different factors and needs. The study found a strong positive correlation (0.58–0.78) between educational opportunities and employment assistance, suggesting that these two factors are closely related and that improving education is likely to have a positive impact on employment outcomes. Moderate positive correlations (0.30–0.45) were also observed, such as between substance abuse issues and the need for substance abuse treatment, indicating that individuals struggling with substance

abuse often require specific treatment support. In addition, low positive correlations (0.25–0.32) were identified between access to health services and the need for family counseling, showing a weaker relationship and suggesting that these needs may not always occur together. Overall, these results highlight the connected nature of risk factors and support needs, indicating that addressing several areas at the same time may improve the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs for probationers.

### 3.4. Recommendations for improving probation programs based on the study's findings

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance probation programs and better support probationers:

- **Integrate Educational and Employment Support:** Develop programs that combine educational opportunities with employment assistance. This integration can help probationers acquire the skills needed for stable employment while addressing educational deficiencies.
- **Provide Comprehensive Life Skills Training:** Implement life skills training programs covering essential budgeting, communication, and decision-making skills. These skills are critical for probationers' successful reintegration into society.
- **Expand Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services:** Increase access to comprehensive substance abuse treatment and mental health services, recognizing their importance in addressing underlying issues that affect rehabilitation.
- **Support Positive Peer Networks and Family Counseling:** Facilitate access to positive peer groups and family counseling to strengthen social support networks and address relational issues that impact rehabilitation.

The study's findings indicate that the primary risk factors affecting probationers are low levels of education, unemployment, and a history of criminal behavior. The study also reveals that the primary support requirements of probationers include educational assistance, employment assistance, and life skills training. The correlation between the risk factors and the support needs is robust, especially concerning the three most prominent areas: education, employment, and life skills.

## 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study show that key risk factors play an important role in the challenges probationers face during their rehabilitation, as these factors often act as obstacles to their progress. The identified support needs are considered helpful in addressing these challenges by providing probationers with the necessary



knowledge, skills, and opportunities for successful rehabilitation. The clear link between the risk factors and the support needs suggests that the difficulties experienced by probationers align with the type of support required for effective rehabilitation. Therefore, it is recommended that probation programs include educational and employment

support, along with life skills training, to address the root causes of criminal behavior. In addition, expanding services for substance abuse and mental health, promoting positive peer relationships, and offering family counseling are suggested to strengthen the support system for probationers and improve their chances of successful rehabilitation.

**Table 3:** Correlation matrix of risk factors and support needs

Risk factor/support needs	Educational opportunities	Employment assistance	Safe housing	Substance abuse issues	Positive peer groups	Family counseling	Mental health	Behavioral issues
Educational opportunities	N/a	0.78	0.58	0.45	0.42	0.30	0.32	N/a
Employment assistance	0.78	N/a	0.60	0.43	0.40	0.29	0.31	N/a
Safe housing	0.58	0.60	N/a	0.35	0.37	0.28	0.32	N/a
Substance abuse issues	0.45	0.43	0.35	N/a	0.40	0.25	0.32	N/a
Positive peer groups	0.42	0.40	0.37	0.40	N/a	0.31	0.28	N/a
Family counseling	0.30	0.29	0.28	0.25	0.31	N/a	0.27	N/a
Mental health	0.32	0.31	0.30	0.32	0.28	0.27	N/a	N/a
Behavioral issues	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

N/a: Not applicable

## Compliance with ethical standards

### Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

### Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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