

From Rescue to Aftercare: The Case Management of Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) in General Santos City, Philippines

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Abstract

This qualitative research investigates the case management of children in conflict with the law (CICL) in General Santos City. It focuses on the functions of agencies, the case management process from rescue to aftercare, the challenges encountered, and the narratives of reformed CICLs. Key informant and in-depth interviews were conducted using purposive sampling and thematic analysis. The findings suggested that the agencies generally adhered to the mandated functions according to their area of responsibility (AOR). Applying Merton's structural functionalism, agencies operated as interconnected parts of a system aimed at maintaining order. Efforts were made to synchronize their functions but multidimensional challenges were encountered, potentially leading to latent functions and dysfunctions. Various factors led children to conflict with the law. Their experiences inside *Bahay Pag-Asa for Boys* showed that the length of their stay depended on the type of case and adherence to the terms and conditions. It has a structured daily schedule that offers a variety of rehabilitative activities, and it provides support to help them overcome the challenges they face. However, the programs offered limited support, focusing only on monitoring, home visitation, and limited financial assistance. Additionally, the participants viewed hope as a crucial factor in their transformation as it gave them the belief of living a good life and provided a sense of purpose. The aspirations helped them realize the meaning of life and signify restoring order. Overall, the case management process repaired the harm caused and addressed the situation through reintegration while ensuring fair treatment. The community-based programs offered during reintegration and aftercare further facilitated the restoration of peace, healing, and reconciliation. Ultimately, their experiences highlight that their success hinged not only on the programs offered but also on their self-determination to make positive life choices.

Keywords: *Case Management, Reformed Children In Conflict With The Law, Structural Functionalism, Manifest Function, Latent Function, Dysfunction*

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Introduction

In the City of General Santos, there were 145 CICL cases in 2021 and 222 CICL cases in the year 2022. It had a significant increase of 53.10% equivalent to 77 CICL cases higher than the previous year. In the 1st and 2nd semesters of 2022, there were 94 and 150 CICL cases wherein 222 as headcount and 22 were repeat offenders. It had a 9.90% chance of becoming repeat offenders. Additionally, there were 76 and 142 CICL cases below 15 years old and above 15 years old but below 18 years old, respectively. The top five CICL cases committed were theft, rape concerning RA7610, robbery, carnapping, and frustrated murder. Usually, the case status of the CICLs was undergoing community-based intervention, endorsed to parents/guardians, the complainant was not interested in filing a case, and pending inquest proceedings before the City Prosecutor Office (CPO). Significantly, the top 5 barangays with the highest number of CICL cases were *Labangal*, *Mabuhay*, *Fatima*, *Apopong*, and *Calumpang* (City Social Welfare and Development Office).

Case management of CICL in the Philippines is anchored on the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (RA 9344) which aligns with Article 40 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This ensures that the children in conflict with the law are treated with dignity and respect. This prioritizes restorative justice measures like counseling and vocational training over court proceedings which consider the child's age and aim for their reintegration into society (Supreme Court Revised Rule on Children in Conflict with the Law, 2019). Moreover, the R.A. 9344 mandated that the case management of CICL should be dealt with in a manner appropriate to their well-being by providing the disposition measures in terms of care, guidance, supervision order, counseling, probation, foster care, education, and vocation training programs and other alternatives to the institutional care. Significantly, the principles of restorative justice should be applied in implementing case management in terms of law, policies, and programs to CICL.

However, Forones (2017) argued that despite having a legal framework concerning CICL case management there was a gap between legal protections and the actual treatment of the CICL. The conditions of detention centers often lack proper hygiene, are overcrowded, and have limited rehabilitation programs (Forones, 2017). Hence, it is significant to study the functions of the different agencies handling CICL cases and to examine the process of CICL case management from rescue to aftercare concerning the mandates of the national law. Also, the experiences of the reformed CICLs in the case management process are valuable to account to have a holistic perspective in the context of General Santos City.

This study focused on the implementation of the case management of CICL in General Santos City. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following objectives:

1. To determine the functions of different agencies handling CICL cases, namely:
 - 1.1. Philippine National Police- Women and Children Protection Desk
 - 1.2. Regional Trial Court Branch 11- Family Court

- 1.3 . City Social Welfare and Development Office
- 1.4. *Bahay Pag-Asa* for boys
- 1.5. Marcellin Foundation Inc.
2. To describe the process of CICL case management in terms of:
 - 2.1. Rescue
 - 2.2. Diversion
 - 2.3. Rehabilitation
 - 2.4. Reintegration
 - 2.5. Aftercare
3. To determine the challenges encountered by the agencies handling the CICL case management.
4. To describe the experiences of the reformed children in conflict with the law related to the case management process.

Theoretical framework

The structural functionalism theory of Robert K. Merton was used in this study. He extended Parson's point that society is a system of interrelated parts and reworked it to emphasize that the components of the system may or may not be in sync and that the results are not always predictable. To this, the well-known concepts that arise from his functionalism are manifest, latent, and dysfunctions. The manifest function refers to the overt or intended purpose of an action while the latent function refers to the implicit or unintended purpose. Dysfunction is the occurrence of unintended consequences because of the disconnection between the cultural and social realms. He also emphasized that the different parts of a system might be at odds with each other and even the functional or beneficial institutions or subsystems can produce dysfunctions. Further, he argued that the positive social institutions (or changes) may have unintended negative consequences. The body is not a flawless machine and on the contrary, problems and irregularities often arise as subsystems go awry. With this, Merton points out that laws, social policies, norms, values, and religions can produce dysfunctions (Appelrouth and Edles, 2007).

In the context of this study, the structural functionalism theory was used in reading the narratives of the key informants from the agencies concerning the case management process from rescue to after. The different agencies, namely: PNP-WCPD, RTC Branch 11- Family Court, CSWDO, BPA for Boys, and Marcellin Foundation Inc., were like a system of interrelated parts wherein its components may or may not be in sync or can produce latent functions and dysfunctions. Moreover, the manifest functions of the different agencies were mandated by the RA 9344 for the implementation of case management concerning CICL in General Santos City. However, the different agencies might be at odds with each other and, thus, the functional institutions can also produce latent functions and dysfunctions.

Significantly, the experiences of the key informants from the various agencies and the narrative accounts of the reformed children in conflict with the law (CICL) can be helpful in terms of assessing the process from rescue to aftercare throughout the case management process. With this, further discussion concerning the challenges encountered by the agencies can be influential factors that may result in latent functions and dysfunctions. Further, the implementation of case management is significant to transform the CICL in the process of case dismissal.

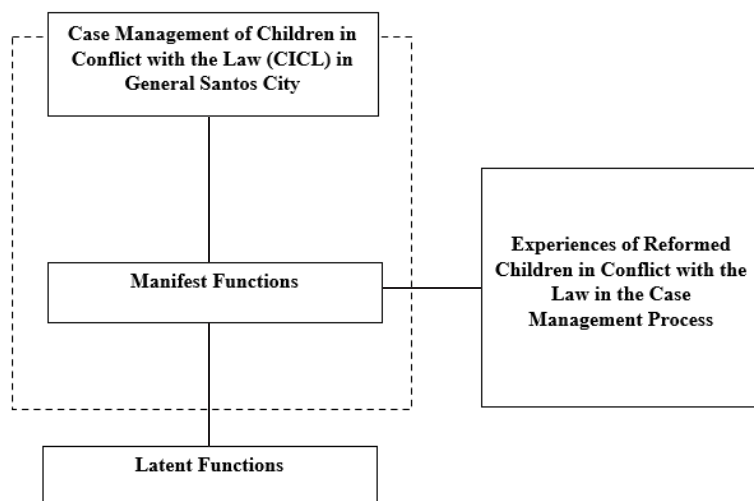


Figure 1. Theoretical Paradigm

Review of Related Literature

Socioeconomic factors and juvenile delinquency

There is a strong correlation between socioeconomic disadvantages and juvenile delinquency. The poverty, poor housing, broken homes, and lack of education create an environment where children are more vulnerable to engaging in criminal behavior. These factors can lead to increased stress and strain, limited opportunities, and exposure to negative influences. The financial hardship, unstable living situations, and lack of parental guidance can increase stress levels and contribute to emotional and behavioral problems. Also, the lack of access to quality education and employment opportunities can limit legitimate avenues for success and push youth towards criminal activities. Further, the children from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more likely to be exposed to violence, substance abuse, and other negative influences within their communities (Bermudez et al., 2004; Irene et al., 2013; Palomares, 2018; Gupta, 2015; Das, 2022; and Sartika, 2019).

Legal frameworks, gaps, and rights protection

The Philippines has legal frameworks such as Republic Act No. 9344 (Juvenile Justice Act) and the UNCRC to protect the rights of CICL however, there are significant gaps exist

between the legal protections and implementation in practice. The inadequate implementation have issues on corruption, lack of resources, and insufficient training for law enforcement and judicial personnel can hinder the effective implementation of the laws. Additionally, the conditions of the detention center are overcrowded with poor hygiene and limited access to rehabilitation programs within detention centers violate the rights and well-being of CICL. Also, the labeling and stigmatization of youth as "delinquents" can have long-term negative consequences for their reintegration into society (Forones, 2017; Lynch, 2020; Davies, 2016; Rochaeti, 2021; Rawanda, 2021; Nega, 2022; Omondi, 2022).

Rehabilitation and reintegration strategies

Effective rehabilitation and reintegration strategies are crucial for addressing juvenile delinquency. Programs like restorative justice offer promising alternatives to incarceration by focusing on repairing the harm caused by the offense and promoting reconciliation between the offender, victim, and community (De Pano, 2014; Cortel, 2020; Rochaeti, 2021; Marlina, 2024). These programs aim to divert youth from the formal justice system by offering alternative interventions such as counseling, community service, and educational programs. (Harve, 2021; Zubaedah, 2023; Sudewo, 2020). Also, the effective rehabilitation requires addressing the underlying causes of offending behavior, such as poverty, trauma, and mental health issues. (Aguilar, 2016; Koller, 2015; Cortel, 2020; Gupta, 2015; Sartika, 2019)

CICL perspectives and needs

Understanding the perspectives and needs of CICLs is essential for developing effective and appropriate interventions. Involving CICLs in the development and implementation of programs that affect their lives can improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of these interventions. The negative impact of labeling and stigmatization on CICLs' self-esteem and future opportunities must be acknowledged and addressed (Korde, 2023; Limantl, 2022; Attivon, 2022).

The Role of Stakeholders

Effective responses to juvenile delinquency require the active involvement of various stakeholders. Strong parental involvement and support are crucial for preventing delinquency and promoting successful reintegration. (Malesa, 2024; Sartika, 2019). The community-based programs and support networks can provide crucial resources and support for CICLs and their families. While the law enforcement agencies must be trained to interact with CICLs in a manner that respects their rights and minimizes the potential for trauma (Del Rosario, 2018).

Methodology

This study used qualitative research design to understand how agencies handle CICL cases in General Santos City. It allows the researcher to delve into people's experiences, uncovering attitudes, motivations, and contexts through interviews, recordings, field notes, and visual materials (Barrios et al., 2018). Moreover, the key informant interviews (KIIs)

were employed to gain deeper insights into CICL case management. These informants, including social workers from various agencies, a court social worker, and a police officer, offered unique perspectives due to their positions within the institutional system. On the other hand, in-depth interviews were used to understand the narrative accounts of the reformed CICLs in the case management process from rescue to aftercare. Purposive, criterion, and snowball sampling were used to identify these knowledgeable informants, with CSWDO playing a key role in referrals. The researcher used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, allowing the interview duration to adapt to the richness of the information provided by the informants.

Participants

The key informants of this study were composed of the following: court social worker in Regional Trial Court Branch 11- Family Court, police officer of Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD), forensic social workers in 5 barangays (Labangal, Mabuhay, Lagao, Apopong, Calumpang), center social worker assigned in Bahay Pag Asa for boys, and center social worker assigned in Marcellin Foundation. These key informants were selected because they were actively involved in the case management of CICLs from rescue to aftercare in General Santos City. The police officers and social workers from these agencies should have at least 1 year in service who were directly involved in CICL case management regardless of their age, sex, and office rank.

Table 1. List of participants and their demographic profiles

Key Informants	Position	Sex	Age	Agency
Informant #1	Court Social Worker	Male	36 years old	RTC- Family Court Branch 11
Informant #2	Police Corporal (PCPL)	Female	34 years old	PNP-WCPD
Informant #3	Center Social Worker	Female	37 years old	Marcellin Foundation Inc.
Informant #4	Social Welfare Officer I (Center Social Worker)	Female	36 years old	BPA for Boys and Substitute Home for Girls
Informant #5	Social Welfare Officer I (Forensic Social Worker)	Female	36 years old	CSWDO
Informant #6	Social Welfare Officer I (Forensic Social Worker)	Female	43 years old	CSWDO
Informant #7	Social Welfare Officer II (Forensic Social Worker)	Female	63 years old	CSWDO
Informant #8	Social Welfare Officer I (Forensic Social Worker)	Female	46 years old	CSWDO
Informant #9	Social Welfare Officer II (Forensic Social Worker)	Female	62 years old	CSWDO

Moreover, the reformed CICLs were included in the interview. Safety protocols and ethical considerations were followed as per referral from the forensic social workers and center social workers of General Santos City. They are aged 18 to 24 years old and were previously alleged/accused/violated the law in the age of minority but discharged from the BPA for Boys, and their case status was dismissed. Only four (4) reformed CICLs voluntarily confirmed their participation in the interview. The inclusion criteria were the following: should be a resident of General Santos City; aged 18 years old and above; alleged/accused/ violated a law at the age of minority; discharged from *Bahay Pag-Asa* for boys; accomplished the terms and conditions based on the contract agreement; and cases dismissed from the court. Moreover, the exclusion criteria were the following: participants with mental health concerns (including those reported for self-harm or harming others); participants with underlying health and medical conditions; participants with scheduled court hearing sessions; repeat offenders with criminal offenses aged 18 years old and above.

Table 2. List of participants and their cases

Participants	Sex	Age (when alleged/accused/ violated the law)	Present Age	Case Status
Participant #1	Male	17 years old	18 years old	Case Dismissed
Participant #2	Male	15 years old	24 years old	Case Dismissed
Participant #3	Male	15 years old	23 years old	Case Dismissed
Participant #4	Male	17 years old	24 years old	Case Dismissed

Data gathering procedure

To gain access to the informants involved in the CICL case management, the researcher obtained approval letters from the agencies. The Human Resource Management and Development Office (HRMDO) issued Memo Number 05-2023-1086 to CSWDO for the conduct of the study. Followed by individual approvals from CSWDO, the RTC Branch 11-Family Court (through a court social worker), the PNP-WCPD, and Marcellin Foundation Inc. (through a center social worker). On the other hand, social workers referred four (4) reformed CICLs who voluntarily agreed to have an interview to account their experiences in the case management process from rescue to aftercare. The interview duration varied depending on the interviewee's availability and the details of their experiences.

Ethical considerations

This study adhered to the ethical research protocols and data privacy regulations. The researcher obtained approval from the Local Government Unit (LGU) of General Santos City and relevant agencies before interviewing the informants involved in the CICL case management. Informed consent was obtained to explain the study's purpose, participant rights, and confidentiality measures. All the interview data was anonymized to protect informants' identities. Moreover, the data from 2021 and 2022 shared by the CSWDO were secured for educational purposes only. Also, the visual materials were only shown as a sample document for the researcher to understand the process of case management and kept

confidential. Furthermore, the researcher followed the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring only authorized personnel had access to the data. Interviews were conducted in secure locations to prioritize the participants' safety. This study used the narratives to develop recommendations for improving CICL case management in the city.

Data analysis

The researcher organized and prepared the collected data for analysis by transcribing interviews, integrating field notes and observations, and arranging the data. Followed by a thorough review of the data to grasp its overall meaning. The detailed analysis began with a coding process, where sentences and paragraphs were segmented into categories and labeled based on the participant's language. Categories and themes were then generated from this coding process. The qualitative narratives were used to present the findings, describing the data and themes. Finally, interpretations and meanings of the data were derived.

Results and Discussions

The functions of various agencies handling CICL cases

In this section, the functions of the various agencies that have been handling CICL cases in General Santos City were discussed. The agencies involved were the following: Philippine National Police- Women and Children Protection Desk (PNP-WCPD), *Bahay Pag-Asa* (BPA) for Boys, Marcellin Foundation Inc., City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), and Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 11- Family Court.

The PNP-WCPD is the first to offer assistance and performs different functions such as rescuing the child from the place of incident, filing of case to the Prosecutor, assisting in terms of turning over the child to the social workers, offering police diversion, and active involvement to all the intervention programs conducted as part of the case management.

Then, the BPA for Boys and Marcellin Foundation Inc. (recently recognized as BPA for Boys and a credited partner civil society organization with the LGU) are the agencies tasked with the diversion and rehabilitation of the CICLs. The diversion process is the appropriateness of the treatment and process from the initial contact of the CICL together with the informed consent of the child's parents, guardians, or relatives to the consultation with the social welfare and development officer before placing the child inside the BPA for boys without resorting to formal court proceedings. On the other hand, the rehabilitation process pertains to the participation of the CICLs in any institutional and/or community-based programs that are available in General Santos City's BPA for Boys and Marcellin Foundation.

In line with this, the primary functions of BPA for Boys and Marcellin Foundation Inc. include handling the CICLs who were accused, alleged, or adjudged. Also, providing intensive monitoring or intensive juvenile rehabilitation to CICLs aged above fifteen (15) years old but below eighteen (18) years old. They also assist the CICL in court hearings, prepare the quarterly status report of behavioral modification, submit the status report and

manifestation report to the court. It is also important to orient the CICL about the case process and the consequences of their actions, as well as translate the English conversation in the case hearing session into the appropriate level of language the CICL can understand.

Moreover, the CSWDO offered numerous services to the CICL. They assist the CICL and help them reintegrate into their family and community and ensure the welfare and best interest of the child at all times as mandated by RA 9344. Also, they provide different services and assistance such as conducting assessment and discernment (within 7 days) needed for the filing of CICL case and conduct interventions as part of the restorative justice process. In addition, they provide counseling, therapeutic rehabilitative, comfort-giving, advice-giving, and family counseling. Further, they assist and monitor the progress of the CICL and monitor the compliance of the CICL based on the disposition measures from the court. Lastly, they submit the quarterly report as the basis for compliance and recommendation.

Further, the RTC Branch 11- Family Court is tasked from a diversion to aftercare process. The cases with below 6 years penalty will have a case conference while the cases with above 12 years penalty will have hearings for formal proceedings. It has two (2) types namely, statutory family court and designated family court. The statutory family court is the only court that needs court social workers' services. It executes multiple functions such as putting the child, aged above 15 years old but less than 18 years old, into trial with above 6 years penalty. The court will direct the diversion committee to handle the CICL case. The Family Court is tasked to propose a recommendation through the court social worker in the diversion committee and the court social worker will recommend the best or appropriate diversion measures needed to comply within 6 months (maximum of 2 years) with the close supervision of the social workers in the area to comply with the diversion measures.

The community-based rehabilitation was recommended due to the availability of resources in the community and the court judge has the final approval. If the CICL is non-compliant with the diversion measures, it will be forwarded to the court for formal proceedings and a series of hearings shall be conducted. The court will issue disposition either a suspended sentence or a court disposition. Also, it will decide if the CICL will be assigned to the community or BPA for Boys. On the other hand, the Designated Family Court has social workers in the Regional Trial Court Office of the Clerk of Court (RTCOC) and their primary function is to wait for the court order to conduct case study reports concerning children.

The process of CICL case management from rescue to aftercare

The process starts with filing the incident report to police stations or barangay level then, the client will be rescued by WCPD or BCPC. The police officer will prepare the necessary documents to prove the minority of the child and other important records (medical reports, antigen test, physical examination, and birth certificate) needed within 8 hours. After the rescue, a spot report shall be submitted within 30 minutes to 1 hour, and an endorsement for medical examination to the hospital as well as an antigen test of the child.

Then, the child will be taken to the police station. The WCPD will interview the child about his age, address, and parents/guardians' information. After the interview, the parents will be called and informed about the case incident and will be asked to provide a birth certificate or school record that will prove the child is a minor. All the documents should be processed within 8 hours. After this, the child will be turned over to the social workers of BPA for Boys. Followed by the filing of the inquest and filing of the case to the Prosecution. If the case cannot be filed to the court, a police diversion and case conference will be conducted together with the handling social worker, parents, complainant, and the child.

Moreover, the forensic social workers will conduct an assessment of discernment using a standardized 14-item tool for minor clients. From this, the center social worker of BPA for boys will prepare the discernment and filing of inquest proceedings. Next, the Prosecution will resolve the case (with probable cause or no probable cause) and the case will be forwarded to RTC Branch 11-Family Court. There will be a schedule of arraignment and pre-trial then the client will be brought to court to plead guilty or not guilty. Usually, the case of the minor is suspended regardless of the case.

Before entering the BPA for Boys, the center social worker will conduct a disposition conference or orientation with the parents/guardians and the child about the admission to BPA as well as the rehabilitation programs and the diversion measures that the CICL needs to accomplish based on the contract of agreement. The CICL will undergo a rehabilitation program inside BPA for Boys. Once the CICL accomplished the terms and conditions, there will be a pre-discharge conference with the handling social worker, parents/guardians, and CICL to discuss the reintegration process of the suspended sentence for at least 6 months, depending on the progress and transformation of the child in the family and community level.

On the other hand, if the CICL is committed to Marcellin Foundation Inc., the center social worker will have a case conference together with the court social worker, LGU social worker, parents, and child, and if needed, the multidisciplinary team, psychologist, and doctor. The information on the diversion process will be discussed in the case conference. It will be scheduled according to the availability of the involved participants as mentioned below wherein, the presiding officer is the court social worker. Then, the center social worker will draft a diversion report to the court and the Judge will call for a diversion hearing. The diversion measures will depend on the agreement from the case conference. If the diversion program is approved by the Judge, the CICL will start the diversion program at Marcellin Foundation Inc. In the rehabilitation process, the center social worker will monitor the CICL regarding the child's compliance with terms and conditions stipulated in the diversion contract which has a minimum of 6 months. Lastly, the duration process is dependent on the assessment of the social worker if there will be positive behavior that can be seen in the behavior of the child.

After the pre-discharge conference, the child will be turned over to the handling forensic social worker for reintegration and aftercare programs. There is a need to conduct a Parental Capability Assessment Report (PCAR) first to evaluate if the parents/guardians are capable of handling the child for his reintegration process both at the family and community level. Then, they will monitor the progress and compliance of the child based on the terms and

conditions in the contract. There will be monitoring, home visitations, and family counseling. Forensic social workers need to submit progress and manifestation reports to the court regarding the status of the child. There will be aftercare services and programs subject to the availability of funds in the city. Once the child accomplishes the terms and conditions, the forensic social workers will recommend, through a manifestation report, for the termination or dismissal of the case. It means that the case will be treated as if it never happened. The case will be archived and sealed in the carpeta of Branch 11 family court.

On the other hand, there were cases that the CICLs were put into jail if non-compliant with the disposition measures or terms and conditions based on the contract agreement, given multiple chances to change, commit another offense/case, and/or become a recidivist at the age of eighteen (18) years old and above. In this case, it will be treated as a regular case in the court with formal proceedings and hearing sessions.

Under R.A. 9344, the RTC Branch 11- Family Court has no jurisdiction if the case is the following: 1) below six (6) years of a penalty with the offended party will be directed a diversion at barangay level; and 2) below six (6) years of a penalty with a victimless crime will be directed to diversion at social worker's level. On the other hand, the court has jurisdiction only with the cases above six (6) years penalty.

The family court has a diversion committee wherein, the social worker will coordinate the diversion process to propose the right or appropriate diversion measures that the child needs to accomplish; with close supervision and assistance of social workers on the ground. The rehabilitation program is the content of the diversion measures that need to be accomplished within six (6) months and will not exceed two (2) years. The court has speedy trials for the CICL cases as part of the restorative justice process. If the CICL is non-compliant with the diversion measures given, the court social worker will recommend that the case be forwarded to formal court proceedings and a series of hearings shall be conducted. On the other hand, if the CICL is compliant with diversion measures and rehabilitation programs, the diversion committee will recommend reintegration back to the family and community.

Moreover, there will be a pre-disposition conference in order to determine pre-disposition measures for contract or agreement that the child needs to accomplish. Moreover, the Judge will base the disposition of the case on the submitted report from the pre-disposition conference. The court will order a diversion process for the child with disposition measures. If the diversion is directed to the BPA for Boys, the BPA will assist the child and provide rehabilitation programs.

The challenges encountered by the agencies handling CICL case management

Based on the narratives of the key informants, there were some experiences from the social workers during the assessment that the child experienced some threatening words during the initial contact with the child and during the initial investigation conducted by some police officers. There were experiences where the child was told that he would be put into jail because of his actions. Doing such acts may affect the thoughts of the child to leave without

proper notice because of the fear of going to jail with adult offenders. Once this action has been discovered by the handling social worker during the assessment interview with the child, he/she will report the incident to the police station where the police officer is assigned or report it directly to the police headquarters so that the police officer who committed the act will be disciplined and reminded about his/her duties and ethical considerations during the initial contact with the child.

Moreover, despite the exerted efforts given by the CSWDO specifically the handling of social workers in BPA for Boys and Marcellin Foundation Inc., there were challenges that they encountered that could affect their functions and would somehow lead to dysfunction if not properly addressed. Such as lack of number of social workers to facilitate court cases and the number of tenants and/or house parents; the security of the BPA needs to be strengthened to avoid leave without proper notice (LWOP) cases inside the institutional facility care; there is a need to increase the number of occupants in BPA for boys to accommodate the cases committed to BPA as part of the diversion process; lastly, there is a need to provide an institutional care facility or BPA for CICL girls and separate building for heinous crimes. In addition, specifically in the Marcellin Foundation, the house parents have insufficient training in terms of handling children at risk (CAR) and CICL. Also, there is no clear separation of houses between CAR and CICL and their workforce is not enough to attend to all the workloads assigned to the center's social worker.

Based on the narratives of forensic social workers, some challenges need to be addressed to properly implement community-based reintegration and aftercare services such as: there is a need for a more holistic approach to address the multidimensional needs of CICL specifically, psychological and social well-being; provision of comprehensive mental support for CICL; strengthen the family involvement and support system for successful rehabilitation and reintegration; a need to organize all barangays to conduct 1 or 2-hour spiritual sessions with CICL; no enough financial support hence, a need to increase the amount of financial support to the family of CICL in the aftercare; provision of educational and skills training in the aftercare; improvement of tools for assessment used by the social workers; and provide enough number of social workers about workload and the rank position should be aligned to the assigned task or area of responsibility.

Furthermore, the court social worker stated that the CICL case management should be holistic and collaborative in approach however, there were challenges encountered in terms of lack of financial support to the local setting as well as to the CICL for the aftercare services. Also, there is a lack of institutional care facility or BPA for girls, a lack of several hired social workers according to the area of responsibility, the barangay level is not well-equipped and well-oriented in terms of the CICL case management process, and the Substitute Home for Girls (SHFG) has no separate facilities intended for CAR, CNSP, and CICL.

The experiences of the reformed CICL related to the case management process

The participants had multi-dimensional reasons for committing an offense. This included the act of attempted or frustrated murder due to peer group conflicts. Their engagement with negative influences on peers and involvement in harmful activities. The adult offender (school guard) framed the child (drug case) and the police used the child for the buy-bust operation to apprehend another offender. The family conflict ends up in a murder case and the accusation of his involvement in the incident. Moreover, the previous clients were all rescued by the police officers and the documents were prepared and submitted to prove their minority.

Before the admission of CICLs to BPA for boys, the center social worker conducted an admission conference to discuss the reason for admission to BPA for Boys and explained their rights and processes throughout the case management. Moreover, the length of stay inside the institutional facility for the diversion and rehabilitation process depends on the type of case, accomplishment of the diversion contract's terms and conditions, change in behavior, and center social worker's monitoring, progress, and manifestation reports. In the context of this study, there are four (4) cases: Case 1. Damage to property/ physical injuries (The previous client stayed for almost one year.); Case 2. Drug case (The previous client stayed for over three years. The process took longer due to the involvement of a hired private lawyer. The social worker encouraged and suggested having a public lawyer from the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) instead of hiring a private lawyer so that the case process would move.); Case 3. Attempted murder/frustrated murder (He stayed for two years); and Case 4. Attempted murder/frustrated murder (He stayed for three months in the same year of admission.)

As a mandate, the regional trial court (RTC) implemented a speedy trial if the case was considered minor under the Branch 11 Family Court. It is part of restorative justice in the CICL's case management. All the participants experienced a speedy trial during the case conferences.

During the admission of CICLs to BPA for Boys in General Santos City for diversion and rehabilitation, there were various programs and services offered, such as gardening or garden beautification contests. Also, sports or physical activities were accessible, including basketball, chess, and dama (board games). Moreover, livelihood or skills training was also available. They offered rug-making to the children. Also, educational opportunities such as Alternative Learning Systems are accessible for continuing educational learning inside the institutional facility. Religious activities, specifically Bible study and sharing, were offered. Various church institutions visited the institutional care facility, like Mount Calvary Bible Baptist Church and Catholic, and a separate session for Muslim brothers who practiced Islam faith. Counseling sessions were also available. Usually, they prioritize those who are more vulnerable and need constant counseling sessions. Also, there were donations from outside organizations or foundations. Inside the institutional facility care, there were structured daily activities for the CICLs, namely: a. Morning Schedule (wakeup call, arrange and clean the bed, take a bath/shower, prayer, exercise, eat breakfast, clean the dishes, educational activities or Alternative Learning System, and break time/leisure time to watch television or play); b. Noon Time Schedule (eat lunch and clean dishes); c. afternoon schedule (nap time

if no other activities or join activities conducted by foundations/organizations, watch television or play, and take a bath/shower); c. Evening Schedule (clean dishes, watch television or play, journal writing, and sleeping time).

The abovementioned structured daily activities functioned as a training ground for the CICLs to cultivate habitual routines, ultimately facilitating their successful reintegration and participation in the aftercare process. Based on the narratives, the most influential activity they experienced was religious activities such as Bible study, sharing, and praying. It influenced them to acquire good morals, values, and self-discipline.

Significantly, the children who stayed inside the institutional care facility also faced some challenges, such as feeling lonely, longing to see their family, realizing that their parents were far away from them, stealing things from other children and storage room (clothes and food), initiation (“welcome”) for newcomers, and some peers turn into foes. Despite facing numerous challenges, the participants developed multifaceted coping strategies. These include seeking guidance from their mentor, accepting responsibility of their actions, seeking solace through prayer, and reflecting on past advice from family. Additionally, they focused on rebuilding trust with social workers through helpful actions, reconciling with peers, and developing a positive self-image. Finally, they actively participated in youth activities after their case dismissal to demonstrate a commitment for positive change.

After being discharged from BPA for Boys, all the participants affirmed that their immediate family or guardian accepted them during reintegration and aftercare. Their support, care, and love were essential to the success of reformation. Most of the participants disengaged from the negative influence of peers, gained new friends who accepted them for who they were, and provided social support.

There were cases wherein CICL's status were disclosed to the educational institution. This disclosure aimed to facilitate the implementation of appropriate interventions conducive to the reintegration. While some classmates extended social support and encouragement, a subset of teachers initially harbored reservations. However, these reservations ultimately yielded to acceptance.

Furthermore, reintegration at the community level presents distinct challenges. Social acceptance was obstructed by informal communication channels, such as gossip, that disseminate inaccurate information about the child and generate negative commentary. On the other hand, the religious institutions embraced these individuals without any judgment. Despite societal stigma, the program participants resolutely maintain their aspirations and establish goals for a fulfilling and virtuous life.

The participants attested to the availability of reintegration and aftercare programs and services conducted by the forensic social workers. These services primarily included monitoring, home visitations, and community-based programs. Implementing these programs were essential for generating monitoring reports, progress reports, and manifestation reports that were submitted to the family court. Only two participants received

cash assistance under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program of CSWDO due to limited funds.

Notably, the participants emphasized the need for financial aid during the aftercare program to address necessities. They identified multifaceted challenges such as financial hardship, physical strain from demanding labor (such as carrying 50kg tanks), social stigma, and difficulties in the educational expenses (including uniforms and school allowance). Despite the challenges encountered, they demonstrated remarkable resilience by securing employment with income, pursuing educational opportunities through scholarships (e.g., the UNIFAST program), maintaining humility, and seeking alternative means to support themselves, their parents and/or guardians.

According to the participants, hope is a multifaceted concept. They described it as a symbol of personal transformation undertaken for the benefit of their families, an ideology that motivates them to pursue a positive and fulfilling life, and a source of internal motivation that propels them forward. Also, the participants' aspirations provided them with a realization that life has a purpose. They aspired to have complete and healthy family members, financial stability, to review and pass the board exam in one take, apply to the government for work, and buy a house and lot for parents and family. Through this, they develop a life strategy to find a job that will suffice their basic needs.

The participants attributed their reformation and the pursuit of a meaningful life to the transformative power of their experiences. These experiences fostered a sense of responsibility towards their families, motivating them to achieve their goals and strive for personal growth. Additionally, participants drew strength from their faith and a personal conviction that life's challenges serve a purpose. The program equipped them with enduring life lessons, fostering resilience in adversity and empowering them to earn respect through their accomplishments. Moreover, they have a sense of self-determination to exercise their own rights in terms of decision-making and choices in life.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The intended and unintended consequences of implementing the case management process emphasized the importance of understanding how the various agencies operated as a system and how they can improve their effectiveness in supporting CICL in General Santos City. The manifest functions of agencies involved in the CICL case management were mandated by the R.A. 9344. Based on the narratives, the PNP-WCPD, RTC Family Court Branch 11, BPA for Boys, and Marcellin Foundation Inc. operated as interrelated parts of a system from rescue operations to aftercare process in the community. These agencies exerted efforts to harmonize their primary functions for the effectivity of process flow and to facilitate the reformation of CICL. They also synchronized their areas of responsibility (AOR) with other agencies to adopt a child-centered approach and uphold the best interest of the child, guided by the principles of restorative justice in case management.

Various challenges were encountered during the implementation of the CICL case management, potentially leading to agencies' latent functions and dysfunctions. This

pertained to the unintended and often negative consequences of social structures and institutions, which may include bureaucratic delays, inadequate resources, and inconsistencies in applying restorative justice principles. It can disrupt the intended functions of the agencies, leading to inefficiencies and potential harm to the children involved.

Significantly, the reformed CICL had various factors that led them to conflict with the law. Their experiences during the diversion and rehabilitation programs at BPA for Boys showed that the length of their stay depended on the nature of their case and compliance with the given terms and conditions. The structured daily schedule offered a variety of rehabilitative activities. A multifaceted approach was used to address the complex challenges encountered. This approach incorporated guidance, self-acceptance, spiritual reflection, and a commitment to personal transformation.

In the reintegration and aftercare process, the local government unit offered limited support to the CICL. With this, forensic social workers primarily focused on monitoring, home visitation, and financial assistance (when funds were only available). Hence, the family and/or guardian of the CICL played an important role in the reintegration and aftercare process. Moreover, the participants viewed hope as a push factor in reformation and transformation. It motivated them to change, gave them the belief to live a good life, and provided a sense of purpose. Their aspirations helped them realize the meaning of life, and hope implied as a restoration of order.

Furthermore, the case management process aimed to repair the harm caused, and children's situations were addressed through reinstituting them back into society while ensuring fair treatment. To some extent, the community-based programs offered during reintegration and aftercare further facilitated the restoration of peace, healing, and reconciliation. The experiences of these reformed CICLs highlighted that their success were not based only on the programs offered but also on their self-determination and capacity to make positive informed life choices.

Generally, based on the narratives of the reformed CICLs, the level of consciousness of their actions and decision-making in life varied on the reflective monitoring, rationalization, and motivation of their actions. They only behave according to what they know or believe concerning the outcome of the action. However, intentional acts often produced consequences for which the reformed CICLs had not originally accounted for. These unintended consequences become unacknowledged conditions of future actions. Generally, the ability to become a successful reformed individual may also depend on their self-determination to make the “right” and “good” choices in life.

There are seven (7) future directions of possible research exploration and opportunities based on the emerging social issues of CICLs in General Santos City. First, is to conduct quantitative research from 2006 up to the present to establish baseline data of CICL in city for future references and research opportunities. Second, it is suggested to increase the number of reformed CICL participants and conduct a study in other local settings, at regional or national levels in terms of the implementation of RA 9344 specifically on the integration of Restorative Justice principles and framework in the CICL Case Management. Third, to

consider the retroactive CICL Cases wherein it is suggested to explore the experiences of CICL who were committed inside the City Jail before the implementation of R.A. 9344 in 2006. Fourth, it is recommended to study focusing on CICL that is no longer a minor, a recidivist, and at the same time non-compliant to diversion measures. Fifth, research on gender because in the case of General Santos City, there is no institutional facility care for CICL girls. It will be valuable to study CICL girls placed in the RJJWC institutional care facility. Lastly, a comprehensive study on how the barangay executes the juvenile justice system at the barangay level).

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