



Social Workers' Practices in the Reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law

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Abstract

This study explored the practices of social workers in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law (CICL) in Bahay Pag-asa, Pagadian City. It aimed to understand how social workers assess, coordinate, monitor, address challenges, and employ intervention strategies in facilitating the return of CICL to their families and communities. The study used a qualitative case study design. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with three social workers and two head supervisors who were directly involved in CICL reintegration. The findings revealed that social workers assessed CICL through screening cases prior to admission, assessing behavioral functioning, assessing family support, and documenting case information. They coordinated reintegration through securing family participation, providing family counseling, conducting case conferences, and coordinating community support. Monitoring was carried out through home-based aftercare monitoring, observing the child's behavior, and gathering stakeholder feedback. The study also found that social workers encountered lack of family cooperation, lack of behavioral consistency, and lack of consistent local support. To address these challenges, they used counseling-based, education-based, and referral-based interventions. The study concluded that social workers' practices show that reintegration involves sustained social work involvement, family and community cooperation, and access to support services that help the child adjust after returning to the community.

Keywords: Social Work Practices, Children in Conflict with the Law, Reintegration, Bahay Pag-Asa, Assessment, Coordination, Monitoring, Intervention Strategies

Background to the Study

Today's society, in fact, is confronted with complex problems such as juvenile delinquency and the reintegration of children in conflict with the law (CICL). Children and

adolescents' experiences as they grow up are significantly influenced by globalization and reintegration programs. A very relevant topic for research is the role of social workers in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law into the community. Even more precisely, it is about how these practitioners handle and deal with the various layers of social change, rehabilitation, and justice.

Patterns of juvenile offenders around the world are still a problem. Li et al. (2019) observe that numerous countries have had enduring or increasing teenage crime rates, especially concerning violent offenses, over past two decades. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020) stresses that these actions are typically caused by poverty, neglect, abuse, peer pressure, and not getting enough education, which means that a lot of different groups need to work together to fix the problem. Hoge (2019) also warns that putting people in jail without getting them help can make them more likely to do it again, especially if they are low-risk adolescents and high-risk offenders are pit together. The global trend advocates for rehabilitation and social reintegration, perceiving children as individuals with the capacity to transform, rather than as offenders.

In the Philippines, the legal framework that govern responses to children in conflict with the law (CICL) are centered on restorative rather than punitive approaches. Restorative justice has been captured in the domestic legislation framework in the Philippines through Republic Act No. 9344 (An Act Establishing a juvenile Justice and Welfare System). Amended by Republic Act No 10630, wherein Children in Conflict with the law (CICL) are considered to be "criminally liable person below eighteen (18) years of age who are alleged or adjudicated to have committed a crime or offense which is punishable under the law of Philippines, and under such Act, diversion, rehabilitation, and reintegration are provided, and are prescribed to be age/developmentally appropriate. The fact that the justice system chooses to see child offenders as social beings with and absence of constructive direction opts for other social treatments that may aid in the restoration of the infringer's basic rights.

In spite of this system, juvenile delinquency continues to be a major challenge in the country. In fact, there national statistical data over the years reveals that juvenile delinquency patterns have been changing. For example, the crime rate of 16- to 17-year-olds fell by an impressive 30% between 2017 and 2018 (Macaraeg, 2019). Nevertheless, despite this downward trend, the amount of crimes committed by minors in conflict with the law remains a big issue. In 2020, 1, 506 children in conflict with the law (CICLs) were reported to be involved in rape cases, 1, 207 in drug-related offenses, 756 in theft, 1, 542 in violation of RA 11332, and 10, 079 in other crimes (PCIJ, 2022).

Bahay Pag-asa in the Philippines is where children in conflict with the law who cannot safely live in their homes or communities are temporarily accommodated. While these children stay there, their cases are being processed or interventions are being arranged for them. Establishing Bahay Pag-asa (House of Hope) facilities was a turning point in the

Philippine juvenile justice system. It marks a shift from giving punishments to focusing on rehabilitation as these residential facilities that were legislated under Republic Act No. 9344 and amended by Republic Act No. 10630 (JJWC, 2024).

Social workers help rehabilitate young people imprisoned in Bahay Pag-asa facilities (Suerte et al., 2023). Aside from case management, family intervention, community liaison, advocacy, and coordination with other service providers, they oversee design and implementation of intervention programs. Getting to know each child's situation is often the starting point of their work. Social workers are also responsible for the psychosocial evaluation of the child admission. This evaluation takes into account not only the child's offense, but also their family, education, peers, and other social contexts. This evaluation informs the design of individualized plans aimed at reintegration into family and community, address the child's risks, and sustain the child's positive attributes.

Earlier studies have provided significant insights into the responsibilities and experiences of social workers within the juvenile justice system and in their engagement with Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), as well as into the programs and services established at various Bahay Pag-asa facilities across the Philippines. Nonetheless, the literature is still limited when it comes regarding particular local context like Zamboanga del Sur. One must give thorough account of how social workers in this particular context describe their roles with relation to the child's reintegration into the community. For the context in this study, the author looks into the social workers' practices in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law (CICL) at Bahay Pag-asa, Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur, to derive implications for the improvement of reintegration programs and outcomes for children in conflict with the law (CICL).

Theoretical Framework

The current study draws upon Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory which comprehensively explains how social workers engage in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law (CICL). Bronfenbrenner proposes that the formation of human behavior and its development is a consequence of multiple surrounding systems and their interactions.

Bronfenbrenner identifies five systems that are interconnected and affect development: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem includes the child's most salient interpersonal connections which directly influence their everyday life experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). On the other hand, mesosystem encapsulates the bi-directional connections between various microsystems, which may either facilitate or impede the process of reintegration (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). In relation to this, activities other than the child's home, such as those involved in the community and government, which influence the child's surroundings in an indirect

manner, are referred to as external ecosystems by Bronfenbrenner (1979). Meanwhile, the macrosystem describes the broad social and legal systems that determine and shape the culture and social order, while the chronosystem describes the influence of time and changes over time development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

This research draws on Ecological Systems Theory to analyze the social workers' role in the various environments that facilitate the social reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). At the microsystem level, social workers directly address the behavioral, emotional, and relational challenges of the children, families, and school systems they work with. Social workers operate at the mesosystem level when they bring together families, schools, and other community stakeholders for the collaborative integration of service delivery systems and processes (Suerte et al., 2023).

The exosystem level encompasses social work partnerships at systems and institutions that influence a child's recovery. According to UNICEF Philippines (2014), social workers, in trying to help children reintegrate, are faced with most challenges when there is a lack of cross-sector integration and collaboration. In such situation, social workers often rely on advocacy, case conferencing, and collaboration with both the public and private sectors. For the macrosystem, social systems, and policy, in particular, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (RA 9344) that emphasizes more restorative approaches and rehabilitation (Oppus & Trabajo, 2019), the social worker's advocacy is often in response to community stigma, which is often a barrier to reintegration (Rendaje et al., 2024).

The chronosystem is critical in reiterating that the process of reintegration is a function of the developmental changes and life circumstances, and the reintegration is an ongoing process that evolves alongside the life changes. In this regard, Solmayor and Embornas (2024) pointed out that children go through different phases of reintegration, with each phase requiring a different level of social work assistance, ranging from adjustment to stability.

Statement of the Problem

Specifically, the study aims to answer the central question; what are the social workers' practices in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law? It aims to answer the following queries:

1. How do social workers assess children in conflict with the law in preparation for their reintegration?
2. How do social workers coordinate with family, guardian, and society to facilitate the reintegration of children in conflict with the law?
3. How do social workers monitor the progress and adjustment of children in conflict with the law during and after reintegration?

4. What challenges do social workers encounter in carrying out the reintegration of children in conflict with the law?
5. What intervention strategies do social workers employ to address these challenges and promote the successful reintegration of children in conflict with the law?

Research Method

In order to understand the subject matter thoroughly, the researcher explored the topic more deeply. This chapter details more the method of research. Along with the research design, procedures, the place of the study, the participants, and the instruments, the processes of data collection and analysis are also described.

Research Design

This study uses qualitative research design to comprehend the values a person or group puts on a certain human or social problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). Here the social problem is the target of this research. This comprehension is very valuable as it opens the door for a longer discussion on how social workers can facilitate the reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Thus, qualitative research goes beyond quantifying and also considers the context, experience, and explanation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Meriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Under the said approach, the study employed Merriam Tisdell's (2016) case study technique, which emphasizes "intensive, holistic and detailed description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon a program, an institution, a persona, a process, or a social unit" (p. xiii). The "case" in this research was limited to the professional roles of social workers who handle the reintegration of children in conflict with the law (CICL) within the Philippine juvenile justice system, especially in Bahay Pag-asa.

Along with Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the paper employed triangulation as a method of strengthening the credibility of the findings. Data gathering involved interviews with the main participants, who were the social workers on the ground reintegrating children in conflict with the law, and the secondary participants, who were the head supervisors performing the same role.

Research Environment

The study commenced at Bahay Pag-asa, Pagadian City, situated at Purok Bliss, Barangay Lenienza, Pagadian City, Zamboanga del Sur. Bahay Pag-asa is a residential facility that operates 24 hours a day. Being among the child-caring institutions, the facility

offers temporary shelter, case management, and rehabilitation services primarily to children in conflict with the law or CICL, but they also accommodate to the extent of children at risk or CAR. In fact, the center serves as a modality where social workers would carry out psychosocial assessment, carry out their various interventions and reintegration plan, collaborate with families, schools, local government units and community organizations, and monitor the behavior changes of CICL during their stay in the facility as well as after.

Research Participants

Participants of the study were social workers licensed professionals doing their assignments at Bahay Pag-asa, Pagadian City and on the other hand were head supervisors who also handled the children in conflict with the law (CICL) cases in the same facility or office. The social workers were chosen because as the primary people who conducted assessment, case management, intervention, and reintegration services for CICL, they had the most knowledge of the practices, challenges, and strategies in reintegration work. Head supervisors were added to the study to get the perspective on how social work practices are supervised, coordinated, and implemented in the reintegration process from a more managerial position.

This research involved a total of five (5) individuals as participants, including three (3) social workers and two (2) head supervisors who were purposively sampled. The basis on which they are chosen includes the following: (1) be registered social worker; (2) presently assigned to the direct, case management of CICL or have, at least one (1), year of experience with the same, and (3) working at Bahay Pag-asa. Head supervisor participants criteria include the following: (1) whether they were holding supervisory positions in the City Social Welfare and Development Office or in Bahay Pag-asa; (2) whether they were directly involved in the supervision, coordination, or monitoring of CICL reintegration cases; (3) whether they had sufficient experience and knowledge of the reintegration processes and institutional practices concerning CICL; and (4) whether they were willing to participate in the study.

Research Instrument

The researchers themselves and a semi-structured interview guide were the principal instrument of this study. The directions for the interviews were examined by the research panel to ensure that they were clear, suited, and congruent with the research. Participants could choose the language of their thoughts sharing, English, Filipino, or Cebuano, respectively, to make them at ease and accurate. The researchers requested permission to tape the interviews and besides that, they made field notes to capture non-

verbal gestures and other contextual information.

Data Gathering Procedure

Conducting a qualitative case study, the researcher employed the recognized procedures at each step. First a formal letter was addressed to the Dean of the College of Teacher Education, Arts, and Sciences requesting permission for the study. After getting permission the researchers reviewed and finalized the semi-structured interview guide to make sure the questions were understandable and appropriate. The chosen ones were contacted, and the informed consent papers were forwarded. Prior to the interview, the researchers outlined the study, promised the participants' data would be kept confidential, and made them aware that they could withdraw their participation at any time. Also, permission to record the interviews was sought to have an accurate record of the information.

The location of the interviews was at the CSWDO and the Bahay Pag-asa of Pagadian City, according to the choice of the participants. A set of semi-structured questions was prepared which not only funnel the discussions towards the strategies and barriers but also provide room for participants to express themselves freely and at length. Following the interviews the researchers verbatim transcribed the audio recordings and made the transcripts the basis of investigating the issues methodically.

Data Analysis

The researchers gathered descriptive data, which were analyzed by using a qualitative case study approach as set out by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). By applying this method, the researchers went from raw data to definite categories that presented the social workers' practices in the reintegration of CICL. Consequently, the researchers could comprehend the different ways social workers assess, coordinate, monitor, and address problems, as well as the kinds of intervention strategies they employ in reintegrating CICL with their families and communities.

In this paper, the researchers thoroughly analyzed the participants' responses to the interview questions. Words, phrases, and statements of significance were marked with codes consecutively so that the most meaningful ones related to the social workers' reintegration practices could be identified. When the researchers noticed similar codes appearing in different interviews, they decided to collate them to form a bigger theme. These themes reflected the core areas of the research, e.g. Children before reintegration are assessed; collaborating with families and the community; child's progress and adjustment are being monitored; social workers' challenges; and intervention strategies to overcome challenges. Understanding the different stages of the reintegration process, these allowed

the researchers to find out more about the common patterns of social workers' reintegration activities.

Once the data were coded and categorized, the researchers did a deeper analysis of the categories to obtain a few overall themes that reflected the results of the study. These themes described how social workers carried out their roles in getting CICL ready for reintegration, including the child's family and community in the process, keeping track of the child's adjustment, overcoming obstacles, and using interventions to help the child return to the family and society.

Ethical Consideration

The study adhered strictly to voluntary participation. Social workers and head supervisors determined voluntarily whether to partake, without any forced participation, pressure, or undue influence.

Informed Consent. The right to informed consent was defended. Participants were fully informed of all study-related activities, including their purpose, objectives, and methodology. Participants signed consent documents prior to their participation in the study.

Voluntary Participation. Participating in the study was entirely voluntary. No one was compelled to take part in the study. Social workers and head supervisors decided whether or not they wanted to participate in the study.

Confidentiality. Maximum protection was given to the information collected on participants. Only the researchers had access to the secure storage of data, transcripts, and audio files. These were used to analyze the study, but they were not utilized in any publications. Sensitive information was protected, and only general information was made available to the public.

Respect and Non-Maleficence. The study was conducted with complete regard for the dignity of participants and their roles as professionals.

Results and Discussion

This chapter of the article report exposes the findings and discussions of the research on social workers' practices in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law.

The main themes extracted from the research are: *Social Workers' Assessment of Children in Conflict with the Law for their Preparation of Reintegration, Social Workers' Coordination with Family, Guardian, and Society in Facilitating the Reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law, Social Workers' Monitoring of Children in Conflict with the Law Reintegration Progress and Adjustment, Social Workers' Challenges in the*

Reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law, and Social Workers' Intervention Strategies in Addressing the Challenges of and Enhancing the Successful Reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law.

Social Workers' Assessment of Children in Conflict with the Law in Preparation for Reintegration

Assessment is one of the important steps social workers take when dealing with children in conflict with the law (CICL) prior to the children's reintegration with their families and communities. Social workers are able to understand the child's upbringing, behavior, psychosocial needs, and family conditions through evaluation which provides them with a starting point for intervention and rehabilitation planning. The subcategories that emerged from this category are: *Screening Cases Prior to Admission, Assessing Behavioral Functioning, Assessing Family Support, and Documenting Case Information.*

Screening Cases Prior to Admission. First of all, social workers need to know the child's case details, like who referred the child, what are the child's admission requirements and how to formalize the child's admission before moving ahead with assessment and intervention. This helps social workers to understand whether the child's case has been filed in court, whether the complainant is pursuing the case, and what processes have to be followed for the child's admission to Bahay Pag-asa.

“Upon the child’s admission here, not all CICL are filed with cases because many cases are not pursued. Once the child is not filed with a case, we interview and counsel the child, and then contact the parents to determine the child’s location.” – SW1

“Usually, when I assess, it depends on the referral. For example, if the child comes from the WCPD and is a CICL, I assess the child. First, we assist the child with the medico-legal process. If we bring the child to Bahay Pag-asa, we proceed directly after that.” – SW3

According to the responses, social workers first find out the status of the child's case before doing any assessment. A case may be opened by the police, a child complaining to the board, the child being taken to the authorities, or a family member reporting the situation. It also checks whether the case is actively being pursued or has been abandoned. This initial screening helps them decide what to do next. If it's a case, they might use the discernment tool. On the other hand, if there is no complaint, the social worker double-checks with the police or the child welfare department and, if necessary, carries out a more suitable intervention. They also make sure that the medical or medico-legal examination has been done before the child is admitted to Bahay Pag-asa. This is to make sure that the child is brought in properly and safely.

Guidelines on the Operation of the Bahay Pag-asa provide support to this practice by mandating that the intake be assessed, a physical examination be done, the intervention process be explained, and the necessary documents, such as the initial social case study report, proof of age, and medical certificate, be submitted either before or at the time of admission (Department of Social Welfare and Development [DSWD], 2015).

Assessing Behavioral Functioning. It is the process of looking at a child's behavior, decision-making, family functioning, peer influence, and overall reaction to his or her changing situation. Through this assessment, social workers discover which factors may have influenced the child's behavior and consequently determine the child's needs, strengths, and intervention areas as bases for rehabilitation and reintegration. These are manifested in following statements:

“What we really focus on is the child’s behavior, because through it we can see the factors that influenced why the child became that way. Often, there is peer influence because the child feels a sense of belonging there... the child lacks attention from the family. When the child is with peers, the child feels that he or she belongs there.” – SW1

“In the initial assessment, the focus begins with the child—where the child comes from, what problems the child is experiencing, and the reasons why the child committed the act. The child’s family and community situation are also examined in order to understand the root of the problem. The assessment is not just a plain interview. We use a discernment tool. We have the level of value judgment, family functioning tool, child functioning tool, and level of moral development... in the index of value judgment, they answer questions with right or wrong to determine their decision-making. In child functioning, we can also see whether they want to return to school or what their plans are.” – SW2

Behavioral functioning assessment is an evaluation of a child's behavior which provides the primary basis for getting to know the child's situation. Social workers observe children's behaviors, and map it with possible influencing factors such as peer influence, desire for belongingness, lack of family attention, and personal circumstances. In this regard, behavior is not simply seen as a violation of rules, but a reflection of the child's needs, experiences, and opportunities for intervention. As per Suerte et al. (2023), social workers working with CICL take into account the child's history, family situation, and other related factors by employing a holistic and client-centered approach to the rehabilitation and reintegration work.

The implementation of the discernment tool, value judgment assessment, family functioning tool, child functioning tool, and level of moral development creates a framework for behavioral functioning assessment. Social workers can use these instruments to analyze the child's decision-making, grasp of right and wrong, family

relationships, school engagement, and plans for the future. The Supreme Court of the Philippines (2024) states that discernment is the ability of the child to comprehend the difference between right and wrong and the effects of the wrongful act, with the social worker conducting the initial discernment assessment.

Assessing Family Support. It refers to the activity of checking the accessibility, readiness, and ability of the child's family, guardian, or relatives to help the child in his/her reintegration. With the help of this evaluation, social workers find out if the child is living in a good family environment, if the parents/guardians care about the child, and if it is possible to place the child in another family when it is not advisable to return to the parents. These are shown in the following points:

“In the child’s reintegration plan, we call the family and ask where the child may be best placed. There are cases where the child no longer wants to stay with the family. If possible, the child may be turned over to an aunt or other relatives, whether near or far. It is important that the parents show concern for their child so that we can understand the possible reintegration arrangement for the child.” – SW1

“After that, we proceed to the family aspect: where the child lives, whether the home is peaceful, and whether the parents fight. In that way, we determine the root of the problem.” – SW2

Family support assessment mainly deals with figuring out if the child is provided with a safe and supportive family environment to facilitate this child's reintegration. The social workers judge the child's willingness to come back to the family, the level of concern parents show, and if a different relative could offer a more suitable placement. The assessment does not, by any means, signal family return as the only option; on the contrary, it aids the social worker to find an arrangement possibly better matched to the child's circumstances. Donato (2025) discovered that the parents could be either the facilitators or the barriers of CICL rehabilitation, based on aspects like parental burden, parental attitude towards the rehabilitation program, and the quality of the parent-child relationship. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2018) notes that family engagement is important in juvenile justice because family members may help improve the effectiveness of community-based, residential, and reentry programs when their participation is properly supported.

Documenting Case Information. This refers to the systematic recording and organization of information gathered from the child during admission and assessment. Through intake forms, interviews, and case study reports, social workers document the child's personal information, presenting problem, family background, and other relevant circumstances that serve as basis for professional assessment and intervention planning. These are manifested in the following statements:

"From the moment the child is admitted here, a case study is prepared. This

may take several days, especially when additional information about the child is needed... we interview and counsel the child, then contact the parents to obtain accurate information about the child.” – SW1

“In our assessment, there is a written and verbal component. For the written part, we use an intake sheet.” – SW2

“In our case, we really begin with intake, where we immediately gather information, including the presenting problem. When assessing a client, all necessary information is gathered, such as personal information, family background, and the presenting problem.” – SW3

Detailed documentation of the case is a great tool for organizing the child's data to be used throughout the child's stay. A case study, intake sheets, interview notes, counseling details, and family background records are the written basis for a thorough understanding of the child's situation. Such records assist a social worker in identifying the child's presenting issue, relevant family background, and details that need to be confirmed during assessment. In direct social work practice, assessment may be evidenced by written products such as psychosocial reports or brief analyses of specific concerns. On the other hand, social work recording refers to documenting pertinent information about the client, the problem, social and economic factors, intervention plans, and progress in the case file (Hepworth et al., 2010; Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers [NLCSW], 2023).

It is also through documentation processes that case accuracy is supported. The 2019 Revised Rule on Children in Conflict with the Law locates the social case study report as a written document of a social worker regarding the social, cultural, economic, and legal status of a child, including family and social relationships, quality of peer group, family strengths and weaknesses, parental control, attitude towards the offense, and other relevant circumstances (Supreme Court of the Philippines, 2019).

Properly organized case documentation supports the professional continuity of activities such as assessment, intervention planning, and case management over time. Intake and case study preparation processes collect information, which social workers can use as a basis for reviewing the child's situation, to rely less on memory or oral accounts, and to have a systematic record for future services (NLCSW, 2023; National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2013).

Assessment practices of social workers in terms of preparing CICL for reintegration can be explained through Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The theory posits that a child's behavior and development are influenced by the different systems around the child, which is very much in line with the social work perspective of understanding the individual within the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Greene,

2017). Social workers examine the child's behavior, decision-making, peer influence, family situation, case status, and available support.

These practices enable social workers to get a comprehensive understanding of the child's individual functioning, family support system, and the influence of legal or institutional factors on the child's case. The framework provides a rationale for why assessment should include not only the child but also the surrounding systems which may either support or create obstacles to the child's reintegration. A child's adjustment is a result of the interactions with family, community, institutions and wider social structures (Rosa & Tudge, 2013; Suerte et al., 2023).

Coordination of Social Workers with Family, Guardian, and Society in Facilitating the Reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law

Coordination with families, guardians, and community institutions is one of the main components of reintegration process for children in conflict with the law (CICL). Social workers are the main facilitators in communication and collaboration with parents, family, and community. Social workers interact with families, barangay officials, community social workers, and other areas making a bridge between the institutions and the child. These measures are directed at establishing proper support systems, resolving issues with the community, and making sure that reintegration process results in rehabilitation and positive adjustment of the child.

Securing Family Participation. This refers to the social workers' efforts to involve the family or guardian in the process of reintegrating children in conflict with the law. It has been considered as the most important factor in preparing the child to be re-introduced to the home and community especially when promoting cooperation, responsibility, and support throughout the reintegration process are the main roles of the family participation. Below are the statements that show these points:

“There are some families who do not really pay attention to the child, so what we do is send a letter to the barangay, saying, ‘If you do not appear, ma’am, or visit your child here in the center, we will call you through the barangay.’ ... This is so that the parent will really come and meet with us, and that is where we are able to interview them.” – SW1

“We inform the parents or guardian in a timely manner while the child is still here ... we inform them about what will happen to the child after reintegration.” – SW2

Showing how securing family participation can be a means through which social workers are in touch with or guard at least as an early and necessary part of reintegration is one of the essences of the social work profession. Thus, that way, the relation with the

family is not only communication of one's intent but it is also preparation of the home environment for the child's arrival and designation of the person who will take care of and the child after return. Donato (2025) made a point that parental involvement may be a supporting or a hindering factor in CICL rehabilitation, while Piper et al. (2024) revealed that family-driven care enables more engagement and shared decision-making in juvenile justice settings.

Providing Family Counseling is a side of social work where staff members offer counseling to parents/guardians help them understand the situation of the child, their continuing responsibility, and the support that is needed for the child's return. Through counseling, social workers can directly communicate with the family, identify problems that may lead to the child's maladjustment, and strengthen parents/guardians to be actively involved in the reintegration process.

“One of the things we do is family counseling because through this, we are able to know the real reason behind the situation. Even the parents also need counseling. There are parents who say, ‘Ma’am, just let the child stay there because I cannot understand that child anymore.’ That is why the parents themselves also need counseling. Even if the child has become like that, it does not mean that the parent should neglect the child, because the child is still their child, still a minor, and still their responsibility. That is why they also need counseling to remind them of their responsibilities.” – SW1

“Sometimes we also ask them to come, then provide counseling to the family. Sometimes we also refer them to the Family division so they can become more aware of their children.” – SW3

Family counseling allows social workers to work directly with parents or guardians in the situation even before the child is returned to the home. The participants' accounts reveal that some parents are frustrated, find it difficult, or are uncertain in handling the child. Social workers can understand through counseling the concerns of the family and let parents know that the child is still under their care and they are responsible for the child. This is necessary since the attitude and readiness of the family is capable of affecting the adjustment of the child after reintegration. Usually, social workers dealing with CICL utilize counseling, family intervention, and coordination with stakeholders as a means of comprehensive reaction, and whether parental involvement supports or hinders the rehabilitation is dependent on the attitude of the parent, burden, and the parent-child relationship (Suerte et al., 2023; Donato, 2025).

Conducting Case Conferences. Case conferences have become a vital tool for coordination through which the reintegration of children in conflict with the law is prepared. Social workers by arranging such meetings bring the family or guardian along with the other concerned stakeholders for deliberations on the child's situation, the

identification of the support required, and the determination of the responsibilities of those involved in a child's return to the family and community. The below quotations provide clear evidence of this:

“We inform the parents or guardian in a timely manner while the child is still here ... the other stakeholders, such as the police or the BCPC, become involved later, such as in the case conference ... we inform them about what will happen to the child after reintegration.” - SW2

“We have what we call a pre-discharge conference ... the community social worker, I, and the social worker handling the child's rehabilitation are there, together with the family and the barangay.” - SW3

In these cases, case conferences served as the venue where coordination was organized before reintegration. By means of this procedure, the child's circumstance was able to be elaborated on, the kind of support which will be necessary after release was discovered, and the roles of those who will accommodate and direct the child were agreed upon beforehand.

In reality, Suerte et al. (2023) considered family conferences and engagement of other stakeholders as part of the actual work of the social workers skilled in handling CICL. Piper et al. (2024) also recognized that involvement of families in planning and decision-making directly leads to stronger juvenile justice services, whereas Bonett et al. (2025) found less repeated recidivism among higher-risk youths referring group conferencing, with effects differing depending on who attended the conference., and service providers into one reintegration plan before the child returns home.

Coordinating Community Support. Apart from the other categories, one more aspect emerged from the data which is Coordinating Community Support. The social workers involved the barangay officials, BCPC members, community social workers, and other local stakeholders in the process of reintegrating the child. Through the establishment of these connections, they aimed to guarantee that the community support is ready even before the child's reintegration. Here are the statements that reflect these:

“We coordinate with the Barangay Captain and approach the BCPC (Barangay Council for the Protection of Children). Then, in reintegration, we also coordinate with the BCPC because they are the ones tasked with monitoring; once the child is released, the monitoring is under them. In school, we send a letter ... we really coordinate with the school and inform them that the child has circumstances in life, but still needs to return to school and should not simply be dropped. Then with some NGOs ... we also coordinate with them so the child can be helped ... We also request skills training from TESDA and coordinate with them through letter.”- SW1

“Other stakeholders such as the police or the BCPC ... together with the community focal social worker... they discuss the plans and what will happen

to the child once the child is reintegrated into the community.” – SW2

“The first thing we really do is visit the school, then visit the barangay, and all stakeholders who can help the child.” -SW3

One of the ways that social workers help prepare children in conflict with the law for reintegration is by coordinating community support. Working with barangay officials, BCPC members, schools, and other local stakeholders, social workers organize and support the child's return to the community. Thus, reintegration is not limited to the family, as the child returns to a social environment that can influence adjustment, behavior, and ongoing development. Through engaging community actors prior to and during the child's return, social workers contribute to establishing a local support system where guidance, assistance, and shared responsibility are readily available.

One can consider this category through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which states that a child's growth and well-being are influenced by the people, relationships, and surroundings that form a child's world. The results indicate that reintegration is not only achieved by focusing on the child. Social workers first explore the child's close relationships, mainly the family or guardian, by getting their consent and offering family counseling. These methods are a representation of the microsystem, where the child's behavior, adjustment, and readiness to return home are directly affected by the parents, guardians, and family members.

The category also shows the wider systems described in the theory. The involvement of barangay officials, BCPC members, schools, and community social workers, for instance, exemplifies an exosystem because these entities can impact the child's reintegration even though they are not the child's closest daily relationships. In some ways, the chronosystem is discernible too as reintegration unfolds with the necessary steps of preparation, planning, and ongoing support over time.

Monitoring of Social Workers on the Progress and Adjustment of Children in Conflict with the Law Reintegration

Monitoring plays a very important role in the process of reintegration for children in conflict with the law (CICL). Returning the child to the family and community is not the end, social workers still need to keep an eye on the progress, behavior, and adjustment of the child in various aspects of life, such as family relationships, school participation, and community involvement. Activities related to follow-up and monitoring are what this section is all about. The main purpose of the follow-up is to find out how the child is doing after the return to the family and community. At the same time, it shows how social workers keep track of the child's situation regarding behavior, family relationships, schooling, and community adjustment during the entire reintegration process.

The subcategories that emerged from this category are: *Conducting Home-Based Aftercare Monitoring*, *Observing the Child's Behavior*, and *Gathering Stakeholder Feedback*.

Conducting Home-Based Aftercare Monitoring. One of the subcategory that emerged is Home-Based Aftercare Monitoring. After the child is reintegrated into the family and community, social workers conduct follow-up through home visits and other aftercare activities to closely monitor the child's situation. Through this process, they can check how the child is coping at home, identify potential concerns, and assess the child's adjustment after reintegration.

"After Care Monitoring is really what the social worker does. It contains information about the child in different aspects. It covers the child's family dynamics, religion and whether the child attends church, education and whether the child is still going to school, social status, and the way the child interacts with the community. There are some who just stay at home and become afraid to go out because they fear that what happened to them before might happen again. They no longer meet their peers. So, the child still needs to be monitored, including whether the child's way of interacting with others is already normal." – SW1

"By doing a home visit, that is really where it can be seen... you are able to check on them, especially the family, and you can see whether their living situation is still okay. We always conduct assessment, so even when the child is already outside, we still assess the child in the home. That is why we conduct a home visit, so we can personally see the child's improvement and also hear from the parents how the child has been doing after being released back to the community." – SW2

"Then there is a home visit; if the place is far, the parents may also be contacted by phone. But it is necessary that not only the child is visited at home, but also the parents are asked about how their child is doing, the child's adjustment, as well as the school and the barangay. When we monitor, it is the same—home visit, so we can assess the child's adjustment in the community and whether the behavior has changed. We also base it on the community rehabilitation plan, which serves like a checklist. During the child's pre-discharge, we already discuss what changes need to be improved and what support can be given. A community rehabilitation plan is prepared for the child, including the activities for the child. If, when I check, the child is already going to school and the behavior has really improved, then that is okay." – SW3

The participants' accounts show that home-based aftercare monitoring is used to follow the child's condition after returning to the family and community. Through home visits, social workers are able to see the child's actual situation at home, ask parents about the child's adjustment, and observe whether the child is functioning well in daily life. SW1

described aftercare monitoring as encompassing various areas of the child's life, including family dynamics, education, religion, social interaction, and relationships with the community. SW2 and SW3 also emphasized that home visits allow them to personally see the child's improvement, hear from the parents, and assess the child's adjustment in the community.

These narratives demonstrate that home-based aftercare monitoring cannot be equated to just one visit or one source of information. It is a process of repeated follow-up, parental communication, school checking, and community input in order to find out whether the child's adjustment is being maintained after the release. Youth reentry literature also points out that children who return from residential placement may face concerns at home, community, and school or work, which makes the provision of continuing support after release imperative (Youth.gov, n.d.).

Observing the Child's Behavior. Behavioral Signs of Adaptation is another secondary theme that came out of the data. It is the child's behavioral, interaction with others, school participation, and response to daily life changes after reintegration. Social workers during monitoring consider these signs as a guide to deciding if the child is improving, positive changes are maintained, and is adjusting at the family and community level after coming out from Bahay Pag-asa. This finding is backed up by the following quotes:

"Their behavior. Even when the child is already back at home, we still continue counseling them so that the child's behavior, as well as the family situation, can be monitored." – SW1

"It is really through the parents that this can be seen; we are also able to observe that there is indeed a change in the child's behavior because the child continued schooling. Even if, while the child was here with us, the child did not want to study, once reintegrated, the child became convinced that going to school is good. That is where the change can really be seen." – SW2

"First, it is really behavior, since that is where we focus. Behavior is really the most important. Their schooling is also very important. Sometimes they say they were unable to finish school, so we really find ways to place them in the ALS so that they can continue their studies." – SW3

The participants identify behavior as the main basis for monitoring the child's adjustment after reintegration. Social workers observe whether the child's conduct has changed, whether the child responds better to guidance, and whether the child is able to relate more appropriately with the family and community. In the accounts, continued schooling appears together with behavioral improvement because it shows that the child is beginning to follow routine, accept responsibility, and move toward a more stable daily

life.

Progress can be detected through tangible changes in the child's behavior and daily functioning. When the child interacts more with family members, is less involved in negative behavior, and goes to school more regularly, social workers have clearer proof that the adjustment is being done.

Gathering Stakeholder Feedback. Another subcategory that was revealed by the data is Stakeholder Feedback in Monitoring Progress. In monitoring the child's adjustment after reintegration, social workers also relied on information from the family, school, barangay, and other community stakeholders. Their feedback helped social workers gain a clearer understanding of the child's behavior, school participation, and overall adjustment in the family and community. The following statements support this finding:

"Their feedback is very important. Sometimes the parents are busy, and when you ask, 'Ma'am, is the child really attending school?' some are unable to answer. That is why we go directly to the school and ask for updates. Some show the child's report card or other documents, and some teachers say, 'Ma'am, the performance is okay.' As for the community, we ask the BCPC. Before the child is properly turned over, the child is required to do certain things, such as a minimum of 48 days of community service. That is why we visit the BCPC to check whether the child is complying with the 48 days of community service. We also ask the family and the school about the child's schooling." – SW1

"During the discharge case conference, the activities are already discussed there, including what the barangay can do and what the school's role will be. That is why what I regularly do is school visits, barangay visits, and visits in the community, because the community can really see how the child is doing and whether the child is already okay." – SW3

It is evident from the responses stated above that stakeholder feedback is an important part of how social workers monitor the child's progress after reintegration. The participants explained that they ask for updates from the family, school, barangay, BCPC, and community social workers in order to understand how the child is doing in different settings. This demonstrates that monitoring is not solely based on the social worker's on-the-spot observation. Instead, it relies heavily on inputs from those who are usually with the child throughout the day. HS2 explained that the barangay and school are visited and asked for updates to confirm whether the child is still "aligned with the plan." Therefore, feedback from stakeholders helps social workers get a more accurate assessment of the child's progress after returning to the family and community.

HS2's narrative strengthens this verification process as the community social worker checks with the barangay and the school to establish if the child's circumstances have continued to reflect the reintegration plan. This implies that social workers have the

ability to compare and validate information from multiple sources instead of depending on a single report. This is in line with Roche and Flynn's (2021) research showing that child protection efforts in the Philippines are facilitated through the interaction of local actors and processes besides Lim and Cometa-Lamberte's (2025) study which revealed that barangays and BCPCs are actively involved in the local interventions for CICL.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is a great framework to help us understand why care and control of children in conflict with law continues even after the child has returned to his/her family and community. Monitoring progress after reintegration cannot focus only on the individual changes the child has made. Instead, we must look at the child's behaviors within the settings where she/he now lives, studies, interacts with others, and adjusts to new ways of life. The focus on behavioral changes and school participation is also in line with the ecological perspective that a child's adjustment is a result of his/her interaction with immediate surroundings rather than solely personal changes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Ferolino & Yap, 2023). Using the feedback of parents, schools, barangay officials, BCPC, and community social workers illustrates that monitoring relies on interconnected sources of information. Through these combined observations, social workers obtain a more complete picture of whether reintegration is being maintained in the child's daily life.

Challenges Encountered by Social Workers in the Reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law

Reintegration of children involved in conflict with the law is a complex process with multiple difficulties creating problems for social workers at every step. These difficulties are with the child, family, community and other systems that provide support during the child's return to family and community. They are the impediments, limitations and situations that make reintegration not only difficult but also undesirable, thus requiring social workers to act very sensitively to the needs and situation of the child.

The subcategories that emerged from this category are: *Lack of Family Cooperation*, *Lack of Behavioral Consistency*, and *Lack of Consistent Local Support*.

Lack of Family Cooperation. Social workers identified the family as one of the major challenges in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law, particularly when parents or guardians were difficult to contact, unwilling to participate, or unable to provide stable care and guidance after the child's return. In some cases, family instability and weak caregiving further complicated the reintegration process. The following statements support this finding:

“Parents who really do not cooperate are very difficult to deal with. Some parents can be contacted, but others really cannot, and some even change their numbers. That is important because it is also through them that we determine

whether the child's reintegration is successful. Some parents really cannot be contacted. There are also some whom we visit, but they hide in their homes. There are children who, no matter how many services are given, still do not respond. Still, we also have to consider the child's family, because they do not cooperate and do not even visit here, which is also why the child has become like that." – SW1

"Most of the time, there is lack of income among the parents and also problems in their parenting. Sometimes this is because the child lacks guidance. In a broken family, the child is not given much attention, is simply tolerated, and is neglected. That is also why the child develops that kind of behavior." – SW3

It is evident from the responses stated above that one of the most difficult challenges in reintegration is the lack of family cooperation and support. The participants described parents and guardians who cannot be reached, avoid contact, refuse to participate, or fail to provide continued care after the child returns home. The data also show that weak family support is not limited to refusal to cooperate, but includes unstable family conditions, broken family arrangements, weak parental guidance, and limited caregiving capacity. HS1 gave support to the idea that some parents "are not cooperative" and "refuse to give support, " so that the child ends up "with no monitoring and no parental support" after being returned to the community. HS2 further stated that some children have "no proper family, " e.g. children of broken families or those abandoned by caregivers, which is why social workers have to find an appropriate family for them. Thus, reintegration becomes quite a challenge as the child might be placed back in a family environment that is itself unprepared to provide supervision, care, and support.

The same study also found that social workers are faced with parents who are disengaged, irregular, or hard to reach, which definitely makes rehabilitation and reintegration more challenging. Moreover, this received support from Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2018) which pointed out that family engagement barriers in juvenile justice consist of distrust, feelings of blame, lack of understanding of the process, and practical problems such as scheduling and transportation. These findings help explain why the participants in the present study experienced difficulty sustaining reintegration when family involvement was weak or absent (Donato, 2025; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP], 2018).

Lack of Behavioral Consistency. Social workers identified the child's behavior and capacity to sustain change after return to the family and community as one of the most difficult parts of reintegration. In some cases, children continued to show disobedience, resistance to guidance, escape behavior, or relapse into previous patterns despite the services already provided. The following statements support this finding:

"There are also some who return to their old ways. Children really differ from one another, because even if they have already undergone community service,

counseling here, counseling outside, and home visits, it still does not work for some. There are children who, no matter how many services you provide, still refuse to respond. In fact, we have one child here who has already stayed here for a year, keeps escaping, does improper behavior, and then returns again to the center. This March, the child has an ALS exam, and just recently attempted to escape again, fortunately the child was caught. That is why we sometimes ask ourselves where we may have fallen short.” – SW1

“With behavior ... behavior is really the biggest challenge there. There are times when you are able to gain the child’s trust and you become used to thinking that the child will not escape, but there are still instances when, even after you trust the child, the child still runs away. That became a lesson learned for us ... the children here really do have the tendency to escape.” – SW2

“I focus on the child’s behavior. Behavior is really the most challenging part for me ... I encounter both the child and the mother saying, ‘Ma’am, the child is still like that and still does not obey me,’ even if the child appears well-behaved in the center. Sometimes I feel that they only pretend to behave well so that they can be released.” – SW3

It is evident from the responses stated above that one of the major challenges encountered by social workers is sustaining positive behavioral change after the child has returned to the family and community. Participants reported cases of children who would still not obey, run away, repeat their old ways, or fight against the guidance even though they had been receiving counseling, community service, and home visits. For social workers, this is a problem because the changes they see in the children while they are at the center, the children do not always keep up those changes when they get back in the community. HS2 expressed this worry by talking about situations of reintegrated children, especially those with drug-related cases, that the officer may even ask, “What has happened to this child? Perhaps the child has gone back to it again.” This just makes it harder for social workers to get children to continue making good changes in behavior after reintegrating them, particularly when the child’s adjustment is not stable outside the facility.

Lack of Consistent Local Support. Social workers encountered difficulties when local and institutional support for reintegration was uneven or difficult to sustain. These included challenges in coordinating with some barangays, political factors affecting cooperation, limited resources, and placement constraints that affected the delivery of appropriate support for children in conflict with the law. The following statements support this finding:

“In the community, there are some barangays where political aspects are involved and parties differ, while for us as social workers, we should not be

part of that because we do not choose sides. There are really some that are difficult to approach.” – SW1

“With that coordination problem ... we have difficulty with barangays that are politically opposed ... when the child is referred there, it is unfortunate because the child may not be given proper support.” – SW2

“I could say that one of the challenges is limited resources ... we really try hard here so that they can continue schooling ...” – SW3

The paragraph suggests that social workers face difficulties not only in working with children and families but also with other factors in the environment such as political issues in some areas, getting local cooperation, lack of resources, and institutional constraints in providing placement and services. These factors hinder reintegration as social workers rely on community and institutional support for follow-up, service provision, and the child's adjustment post-return. HS2 supported this concern by explaining that there are cases where the child is turned over and “things are fine at first,” but after a few days, the local support system may “no longer monitor the child.” HS2 added that there should be continued coordination so the workers will know “if something happens to the child.” This shows that the challenge for social workers is not only the presence of services, but the consistency of local and institutional support after the child returns to the community. When support from these systems is weak or uneven, reintegration becomes harder to manage and sustain.

The challenges experienced by social workers in reintegrating children in conflict with the law are not caused by one factor alone. The data show that difficulties arise when family support is weak, when the child continues to struggle with behavior and adjustment, and when the community or institutions around the child are unable to provide steady support. This also explains why reintegration is most of the time unstable for the kids: a child may be willing to change in one setting, but it is difficult for (s)he to keep that change going when the family is not consistent, when old behaviors come back, or when support from the community is weak. Donato (2025) has made a similar observation where he asserts that parents' involvement may either help or hinder the process of rehabilitation of CICL, depending on the child-parent relationship and the family's ability to stay involved. This finding could be explained by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). At the microsystem level, the problem lies within the child's most immediate environment, especially their behavior, family relationships, and the daily guidance they receive at home. At the mesosystem level, problems arise if the connections among family, school, barangay, and social workers are weak or disjointed. At the exosystem level, the child's reintegration can be hindered by the inability of agencies, LGUs, and local support structures to attend to the child's needs, even though the child is not directly in control of

these conditions. At the macrosystem level, broader social and political realities, such as uneven community support and local political conflicts, also influence the reintegration process. When these systems are compromised, reintegration is not only more difficult but also less likely to be maintained; hence, social workers often struggle even after interventions have been made (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lim & Cometa-Lamberte, 2025).

One of the ways to face these challenges is that social workers will be able to do a better plan, increase the involvement of the family, and have a more in-depth coordination with the community and partnership institutions. This will lead to a more practical and responsive way of doing things because here reintegration works will be based not only on the child's needs but also on the limitations of the systems which are supposed to be supporting the child.

Intervention Strategies Used by Social Workers to Address Challenges and Promote the Successful Reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law

Social workers use various intervention methods to tackle the problems faced when reintegrating children involved in crime. These strategies are directed toward helping the child adjust after return to the family and community while also addressing difficulties related to behavior, family cooperation, schooling, and available support systems. In this process, social workers make use of approaches and services that can help strengthen the child's functioning, improve family and community support, and assist in making reintegration more stable and sustainable.

The subcategories that emerged from this category are: *Counseling-Based Intervention, Education-Based Intervention, and Referral-Based Intervention.*

Counseling-Based Intervention. As an intervention strategy, counseling was administered by social workers to address the needs and challenges of children in conflict with the law. These social workers utilized counseling to provide guidance and support to the children and, when necessary, to their families. Through counseling sessions, social workers aimed to help CICL deal with behavioral and adjustment-related difficulties, strengthen coping, and encourage positive change during reintegration. The subsequent remarks serve as evidence for this claim:

“Perhaps, counseling. I kept telling the child not to listen to the people around and to think about the future instead. I counseled the child almost every day because the child was already close to giving up. The child was released in April, and by June had already returned to school ... we were also happy because the child's reintegration turned out to be successful.” – SW1

“As for the child, continuous counseling is also needed, and the parents also need to be encouraged.” – SW3

It is evident from the responses stated above that counseling is used by social workers as a continuing intervention in supporting the reintegration of children in conflict with the law. In the participants' accounts, counseling is carried out as a sustained form of guidance when the child is discouraged, uncertain, or struggling to adjust+. The responses also indicate that counseling is not aimed only at the child, as one respondent commented that parents during the process also need to be encouraged. When taken together, these records reveal that counseling is a means for the child to cope with problems, keep the drive, and enhance the adjustment that comes with reintegration.

Studies closely related to this work, share a similar pattern. Brown and Perez (2024) observed that most of the interventions focused on justice-involved youth primarily involve counseling which is aimed at resolving behavioral and psychosocial issues. Similarly, Donato (2025) discovered that social workers handling Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) hardly limit their intervention to the child but often reach out to the child's parents considering that family participation has an impact on the child's rehabilitation. Likewise, Moore et al. (2025) stressed that young people have a deeper level of engagement in youth justice interventions only when the youth professionals build supportive and trusting relationships with them. These studies help clarify that counseling is significant because it creates a helping process through which the child may become more willing to continue schooling, respond to guidance, and adjust more positively to family and community life.

Education-Based Intervention. As an intervention strategy, education was employed by social workers to support the reintegration of children in conflict with the law. These social workers promoted the child's continuation or return to schooling through available educational opportunities such as formal schooling, Alternative Learning System (ALS), and other related support. Through this strategy, social workers aimed to help CICL resume their education, strengthen their future opportunities, and support their adjustment during reintegration. The following statements support this finding:

"Then, there is also helping them continue schooling. Even the children here are able to continue their studies because we have ALS here. Their schooling is really important, because there are children who have stopped schooling, but they are still able to return to school. ... That child said that the child felt ashamed to go out and return to school ... The child was released in April, and by June had already returned to school." – SW1

"For reintegration to become more successful ... the child either continues formal schooling or enrolls in ALS, since ALS is available here." – SW2

"The barangay also has programs ... they are referred to ALS here for CICL. So far ... there is also scholarship support ... there are scholarships available for the youth in our city. ... So far, I have already had several clients who graduated ... usually, when the parents cooperate strongly, the child is really

able to continue schooling.” – SW3

The responses indicate that education is treated by social workers as a key intervention in supporting the reintegration of children in conflict with the law. The stories of the participants definitely reflect that educational provision is made according to the child's condition. If it is somehow difficult to attend formal school, ALS and scholarship programs are considered as the child will still be learning. Hence, education is a tool that not only practically helps the child to get back on the right track but also to enhance the adjustment during reintegration.

Referral-Based Intervention. A strategy social worker used when the needs of children in conflict with the law and their families, during reintegration, were so pressing that other forms of intervention alone could not still bring out satisfactory results. Social workers connected children and their parents, when necessary, with programs, services and/or resources that could support or continue the work being started with them through referral. This method was implemented to address family problems, maximize the use of assistance already available, and facilitate a better and more enduring reintegration process. Below are some of the quotes that substantiate this finding:

“In our case conference, everything is discussed together. ... Once the child is referred to them, they also say, ‘Let us just help the child, sir.’ ... We are also connected with the City Health Office (CHO), so the child is able to avail of its services. There are also MRPs, or moral recovery programs. ... There are also life skills training programs.” – SW2

“First, you really refer them, not only the child but also the parents. There are also family programs there. You refer the parents because there are sessions on parenting effectiveness. ... The barangay also has programs ... they are referred to ALS here for CICL. So far ... there is also scholarship support ... there are scholarships available for the youth in our city.” – SW3

The responses indicate that referral is used by social workers as a concrete intervention for extending support beyond what can be directly provided inside the center. In the participants' accounts, referral is employed to connect the child and, when necessary, the parents to family programs, health-related services, moral recovery programs, life skills training, ALS, scholarship opportunities, livelihood assistance, and possible job opportunities. HS1 supported this argument by stating that social workers could suggest livelihood assistance, job openings that correspond to education levels of the child, or led the way to scholarships—simply depending on how difficult a family situation is.

Nelson and colleagues (2024) argue that if anything has shared this development in a recent publication where they revealed that competent referral practices for youth involved in the justice system are a matter of communication, collaboration, family engagement, referral procedures, and the availability of accessible treatment providers.

Likewise, Wasserman et al. (2021) have demonstrated that connecting juvenile justice and behavioral health through agreed referral pathways not only makes service destinations clear but also enhances the chances of youth getting the care they need while under supervision.

This finding may be explained by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which describes how a child's development is influenced by the various systems around the child. In our study, social workers are the ones who bridge these systems to help with reintegration. At the microsystem level, they engage in counseling and provide guidance to the child and family. At the mesosystem level, their work involves enhancing the relationship between the child's home, school, and community. At the exosystem level, they facilitate the connection of the child and family to services such as ALS, scholarships, livelihood assistance, and other programs. So, the social worker's role is not just about the child; they also work within and across the child's surrounding systems to ensure the reintegration is well-supported, stable, and sustainable.

Summary of Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary of findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations of the study on social workers' practices in the reintegration of children in conflict with the law are the following sections. It shows the primary discoveries of the respondents related to their assessment, coordination, monitoring, problems, and intervention methods, also the conclusions, and recommendations were made based on the study results.

The interview responses of the participants revealed that these are the key findings of the study:

1. How do social workers assess children in conflict with the law in preparation for their reintegration?

Preparing children in conflict with the law for reintegration, social workers carry out a thorough assessment through Screening the Cases Prior to Admission, Assessing Behavioral Functioning, Assessing Family Support, and Documenting Case Information.

2. How do social workers coordinate with family, guardian, and society to facilitate the reintegration of children in conflict with the law?

In facilitating the reintegration of children in conflict with the law, social workers Coordinate with the family, guardian, and society through Securing Family Participation, Providing Family Counseling, Conducting Case Conferences, and Coordinating Community Support.

3. How do social workers monitor the progress and adjustment of children in conflict with the law during and after reintegration

Social workers track the progress and know the status of the children who are and were in conflict with the law through Conducting Home-Based Aftercare Monitoring, Observing the Child's Behavior, and Gathering Stakeholder Feedback

4. What challenges do social workers encounter in carrying out the reintegration of children in conflict with the law

Social workers have faced the following challenges in carrying out the reintegration of children in conflict with the law *including Lack of Family Cooperation, Lack of Behavioral Inconsistency, and Lack of Local Support.*

5. What intervention strategies do social workers employ to address these challenges and promote the successful reintegration of children in conflict with the law?

Social workers employ intervention strategies to address these challenges and promote the successful reintegration of children in conflict with the law through *Counseling-Based Intervention, Education-Based Intervention, and Referral-Based Intervention.*

Conclusion

The study found that social workers' practices in the reintegration of CICL are centered on assessment, coordination, monitoring, and intervention throughout the reintegration process. These practices show that social workers handle reintegration as a continuing responsibility that begins with understanding the child's situation and continues as the child returns to the family and community. Reintegration becomes more manageable when the child's needs are properly assessed, when the family and community are involved, and when the child's adjustment is monitored after return.

The study also found that social workers respond to the difficulties of reintegration through interventions that help guide the child, support the family, and connect them to available services. Their practices show that reintegration does not depend only on the child's release from Bahay Pag-asa, but also on the support that follows after the child goes back to the community. Overall, the reintegration of CICL requires the sustained involvement of social workers, together with the cooperation of the child, family, community, and service systems surrounding the child.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher endorses the following recommendations:

1. Social workers should strengthen assessment and case documentation to ensure that reintegration plans are based on the child's case status, behavior, family situation, and available support.
2. Bahay Pag-asa and CSWDO social workers should strengthen aftercare monitoring through scheduled home visits, school coordination, barangay follow-up, and stakeholder feedback after the child returns to the community.
3. Parents or guardians should actively participate in the reintegration process by attending counseling, cooperating with social workers, and providing consistent guidance and support to the child.
4. Barangay officials, BCPC members, schools, and community stakeholders should strengthen coordination with social workers to help monitor and support reintegrated CICL in the community.
5. The CSWDO, LGU, and partner agencies should improve access to support services such as counseling, ALS, scholarships, skills training, livelihood assistance, and referral services for CICL and their families.
6. Policy makers and local administrators should strengthen programs on CICL aftercare and community-based rehabilitation by ensuring that barangay and BCPC structures are functional and responsive.
7. Future researchers should include the perspectives of CICL, parents or guardians, barangay officials, teachers, and other stakeholders to gain a wider understanding of reintegration after the child returns to the community.

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