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## Research Article

### Factors Affecting the Children in Conflict with The Law in Soccsksargen, Philippines

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#### ABSTRACT

The study aimed to evaluate the factors influencing children involved in legal conflicts in the SOCCSKSARGEN region. The local government of SOCCSKSARGEN is adopting various strategies to address the problem of Children in Conflict with the Law (CICLs) in South Cotabato, Cotabato Province, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City. One of the procedures entails establishing the Bahay Pag-asa, a rehabilitation center for children in conflict with the law (CICLs) and at-risk youth. The study participants were of juveniles involved in criminal activities residing at St. Marcelline in General Santos City. These children were placed in the institution to redirect their focus and provide them with a safe haven while their case is being decided. This study employed a quantitative-descriptive design. This study employed the survey approach to gather information about the demographic profile and factors influencing youth involved in criminal activities, such as family relationships, peer influence, and external environmental factors.

The conclusions drawn are based on the collected data. 1. Children in Conflict with the Law were of various ages, ranging from 9 to 21 years old, at the time of committing the crime. 2. The majority of these children were influenced by their family dynamics, which led them to engage in criminal activities. 3. The objective is to facilitate the reintegration of children in conflict with the law into society after their case is resolved. The aforementioned programs and services encompassed residential care services, including caring, healing, life skills intervention program, and teaching, as well as a juvenile justice program, technical skills program, and independent living program.

This study examines the impact of several influences in the community on youngsters involved in criminal activities. Additionally, it might be inferred that the societal standards in their previous place of residence had ingrained a certain psychological impact on them, causing their sense of wrongdoing to be hindered.

**Keywords:** *Children in Conflict with the Law (CICLs), Bahay Pag-asa Rehabilitation Center, Juvenile Justice Program*

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## **Introduction**

As schools in the United States transition away from the strict Zero Tolerance rules that dominated the past three decades, there is a chance to shift the emphasis of school punishment. Oftentimes, school discipline policies revolve around punitive methods that isolate students from their peers. Instead, then catering to the needs of these students, schools isolate them from their peers, teachers, and school communities. The objective of the education system is to furnish children and adolescents with a high-caliber education that will enable them to develop into industrious and engaged individuals in society. The implementation of Zero Tolerance and school punishment policies was supposed to safeguard pupils; but, in reality, these policies have demonstrated detrimental effects and unforeseen repercussions. Frequently, the implementation of severe disciplinary measures in the school environment often results in students being sent towards the juvenile or criminal court system. While the Zero Tolerance policy is a federal program, some states are now seeing the detrimental effects this policy has on kids, particularly those who are marginalized. Consequently, states are enacting laws that deviate from Zero Tolerance policies and instead prioritize alternatives like as restorative techniques. (Battjes and Kaplan 2023)

Suspension is linked to a multitude of adverse consequences, such as subsequent suspensions and diminished academic involvement. Several demographic and behavioral characteristics, including behaviors and race/ethnicity, have been identified as predictors of a child's likelihood of being suspended. However, the influence of family environment issues, such as family violence, has not been well investigated in this body of research. The study found a substantial correlation between family violence and suspension. Additionally, there was a significant indirect relationship between family violence and suspension through the presence of disruptive behaviors. Children who experienced higher levels of family violence were more prone to displaying disruptive behaviors, which in turn increased their likelihood of being suspended. For instance, male pupils and African American students

exhibited a higher probability of being subjected to suspension. These findings validate the necessity for school-based interventions that address the effects of violent exposure and racial inequalities when discussing the outcomes of children. (Loomis, 2020)

Children's development is not simply determined by their inherent traits, but is also shaped by their environment. Everyday interactions among children, whether within their family, friendships, school, or society, have an impact on the formation of their social identity. They actively engage in the process of acquiring knowledge and understanding by integrating their prior knowledge with new information. Juvenile offenders are considered to be influenced by both their personal characteristics and their surroundings. The environment has a substantial influence on individuals' cognitive and behavioral patterns, as well as their interpretation and acceptance of their experiences. Experience arises as a result of engaging in social interactions and employing language (De Ramos, C., et al, 2019).

In his 2006 study, Moffit identified two unique groups of offenders that are likely to emerge throughout adolescence. The first category is the adolescent-limited offender, which refers to adolescents who engage in criminal behavior only during their teenage years. He argued that it is essential to examine childhood behaviors in order to anticipate the emergence of adolescent offenders or individuals who will continue to engage in criminal behavior in the long term. The second type is known as the life-course persistent offender, who begins to exhibit antisocial or aggressive behavior during adolescence. Parackal and Panicker's (2016) research supports the notion that a significant portion of illicit behavior in teenagers is specific to the adolescent stage and is unlikely to persist into adulthood. Just like a toddler eventually stops having temper tantrums. Children are initially innocent, but many of them eventually exhibit delinquent behaviors that are often in violation of the law. This can be attributed to various factors, including emotional outbursts, minor theft, substance abuse, abusive or offensive behavior, and even involvement in more serious criminal activities. Research indicates that children have a deep understanding of

societal rules that help them resist engaging in delinquent behavior through establishing strong connections with their parents and other others (Children in Conflict, 2019).

Studies suggest that individuals between the ages of 10 and 24 exhibit characteristics of adolescence, as their neurocognitive abilities continue to mature (Sawyer et al., 2018; Kazemian, 2021). Typically, children under the age of 12 have not developed the necessary level of maturity to comprehend the concepts of competency and capacity as defined by the legal system. Additionally, they may not derive significant benefits from the treatment options provided by juvenile justice interventions, particularly programs that are primarily designed for older juveniles (Abrams et al., 2020).

In general, studies on the development and maturation of the adolescent brain indicate that these processes extend into young adulthood, without a specific age at which neurological and psychological capacities fully mature (Casey et al., 2020; Casey et al., 2022). Consequently, certain states and jurisdictions are reevaluating the age limits for the juvenile justice system and adopting policies and procedures that align better with the acceptable age range.

The juvenile justice system has undergone four distinct periods of evolution since the establishment of juvenile courts over a century ago. These periods include the Progressive Era (1899–1960s), the Due-Process Era (1960s and 1970s), the Get-Tough-on-Crime Era (1980s and 1990s), and the current reaffirmation of the Kids-Are-Different Era (2005 to the present). (Luna, 2017; National Research Council, 2013)

The purpose of the juvenile justice system is to ensure that young offenders are held responsible for their conduct, with the aim of rehabilitating them instead of subjecting them to punitive measures in the adult criminal justice system (Abrams et al., 2020; National Research Council, 2013). The establishment of the juvenile court in the late 1800s was a direct outcome of reform initiatives. The Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents highlighted the inadequacy of adult jails in effectively addressing the specific requirements of young individuals (Dempsey, 2021).

In 1899, the first juvenile court was founded in Chicago, IL, with the purpose of rehabilitating individuals under the age of 16 who were categorized as "neglected, dependent, and delinquent" (Dempsey, 2021). Prior to that period, juvenile offenders above the age of 7 were treated and imprisoned under the adult criminal justice system. The juvenile court system was founded on the legal doctrine of *parens patriae*, which means "state as parent". Its purpose was to offer constructive social growth to young individuals who might lack such assistance in their households or communities.

As the juvenile justice system has continually changed over time, so too have the age boundaries of the juvenile system. Although all states have defined maximum ages (usually 16 or 17) for delinquency or status offenses prosecuted under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system, most states do not have a minimum age for prosecution (SBB, 2021a; SBB, 2021b). The age parameters of the juvenile justice system continue to be modified as legislators are informed by emerging research on adolescent development, which shows that the developmental process continues through young adulthood. Several states have increased their maximum ages to better serve those who offend at a young age and to not require that they face the adult justice system (SBB, 2021c).

To handle difficulties concerning children who participate in delinquent conduct, it is necessary to create a good environment and offer suitable stimuli in all places where children are present. This setting should foster the growth and development of children, while also safeguarding them from detrimental influences such as violence, pornography, alcohol, illicit substances, and other adverse aspects. It is crucial to strengthen the involvement of parents, families, educational institutions, communities, governments, as well as mass media and social media in protecting and completely advancing the welfare of children. (De Ramos, C., et al, 2019)

In the Philippines, numerous locations serve as breeding grounds for juvenile delinquents, while the challenging circumstances faced by the majority of the impoverished population remain largely unaddressed. Although

some of these youngsters have managed to break free from the cycle of poverty, it is important to note that poverty itself cannot be used as a valid justification for committing crimes. Numerous young individuals have been unsuccessful in escaping their difficult circumstances and are predominantly compelled to live in contravention of the law. The Philippine National Police (PNP) Statistics from 2012 to 2015 reveal instances of burglary, robbery, intentional mischief, and fraud. The Philippine National Police (PNP) further discloses that the high incidence of juvenile delinquency is predominantly attributed to poverty, as theft is a common criminal activity perpetrated by youngsters (San Juan & Mayuga, 2016).

As per the Revised Rule on Children in Conflict with the Law (2009) which is based on RA 9344, a child in conflict with the law is defined as an individual below 18 years old who comes into contact with the justice system because they are suspected, accused, or found guilty of committing a crime under Philippine laws. The majority of children in conflict with the law (CICL) have engaged in minor offenses such as vagrancy, truancy, begging, or alcohol consumption. Some actions are classified as "status offenses" when committed by adults, meaning they are not deemed unlawful. In addition, certain juveniles with criminal tendencies have been employed or manipulated by adults.

Despite various laws, youth crime is increasing in today's world. Children who are in conflict with the law have not only committed minor offenses, but also serious crimes. In recent years, the number of minors involved in criminal activities in SOCCSKSARGEN has increased significantly. From 2019 to 2023, the Philippine National Police recorded a total of 1,516 CICL cases in SOCCSKSARGEN. The most prevalent crimes committed are theft, robbery, carnapping (motorcycle), rape, and physical injury; non-Index crimes like drugs; anti-gambling laws; illegal possession of bladed, pointed, or blunt weapons, etc. In many situations, adolescent offenders are "street children" who have witnessed or been victims of violence in their immediate social milieu.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the problem of CICLs in SOCCSKSARGEN. Poverty is one factor. Many CICLs come from

poor families and do not have access to basic necessities such as food, education, and healthcare. Abuse and neglect are another factor. Many CICLs have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse at home or in their communities. CICLs are also vulnerable to recruitment by gangs and other criminal groups. These groups may offer CICLs a sense of belonging and protection, but they may also lead them into criminal activities.

The local government of South Cotabato, Cotabato Province, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, and General Santos City (SOCCSKSARGEN) is taking a number of steps to address the problem of CICLs. One of these steps is the establishment of the Bahay Pag-asa, a rehabilitation center for CICLs and minors at risk. In 2023, Barangay Katangawan, General Santos City recognized the Marcellin Foundation, Inc. as a fully operational "Bahay Pag-asa," aiming to safeguard and reintegrate minors who encounter the justice system due to accusations, suspicions, or offenses. The Bahay Pag-asa provides CICLs with education, vocational training, and other support services to help them reintegrate into society. The local government is also working to prevent children from getting involved in crime. This includes programs to address poverty, improve access to education, and reduce violence in the community.

Although it is true that juvenile delinquency is a significant issue in society, it is imperative that it be given the necessary and focused attention it deserves. Even individuals who are directly impacted are ultimately influenced by this matter due to the government's distribution of taxes and the overall security of communities (Saminsky, 2015). This is because a child possesses an innate capacity to develop and achieve their maximum potential, thereby making a constructive impact on the advancement of both the nation and society.

This research aims to examine the elements that lead to an impact the commission of crimes among children in the SOCCSKSARGEN region.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study might be based on various pertinent theoretical frameworks. One potential framework incorporates the following fundamental theories:

**The Social Learning Theory:** Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory posits that humans acquire behavior by observing, imitating, and modeling. Within the framework of juvenile delinquency, this theory can be utilized to comprehend how environmental elements, including familial dynamics, community pressures, and peer associations, contribute to the formation of behaviors that may result in judicial disputes. Analyzing the influence of social learning on the development of both positive and negative behaviors might offer valuable insights into strategies for prevention and intervention (Cherry, K., 2022).

This hypothesis posits that children are susceptible to external influences, particularly from their family and community, which can significantly impact their development.

**Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory** highlights the interdependence between individuals and their social settings. The microsystem, which consists of the family and school, the mesosystem, which encompasses the interconnections between microsystems, and the ecosystem, which represents the community, all have significant influences on behavior. Utilizing this theory facilitates the analysis of the influence of different environmental influences on children involved in legal conflicts. The study aims to investigate the impact of disruptions or deficits in these systems on delinquency and identify potential areas for intervention (Renn, K.A. & Arnold, K.D., 2003).

This hypothesis formed the foundation of the study, asserting that each member of the community has a distinct job to fulfill, which in turn has an impact on other community members, particularly the children.

**Strain Theory**, proposed by Robert K. Merton, suggests that society structures and inequities can create tension, which can then drive individuals to resort to deviant conduct as a way of dealing with this strain. Within the scope of this study, the framework has the capacity to examine the impact of socioeconomic circumstances, restricted opportunities, and social disparities on the stress endured by youngsters, which may ultimately result in their involvement in criminal activities (Nickerson, C., 2023).

**Routine Activity Theory**, formulated by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson, posits that criminal activities take place when a perpetrator with the intention to commit a crime encounters a vulnerable target in an environment without effective supervision. Applying this theory to the study entails analyzing the regular activities of youngsters involved in criminal activities, the individuals who may become victims of their actions, and the lack of supervision or protective elements (Purpura, P.P., 2013).

**The Labeling Theory**, developed by Howard Becker, proposes that an individual's self-concept and subsequent conduct are influenced by the reactions and labels imposed by society. Within the framework of the CICL (Children in Conflict with the Law), the study can investigate the effects of categorizing children as delinquents or offenders on their self-perception and future behaviors. This can contribute to a recurring pattern of deviant behavior (Nickerson, C., 2023).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The main objective of the study was to determine the factors that influence the commission of crime among children in conflict with the law in SOCCSKSARGEN.

Specifically, it sought to achieve the following:

1. Determine the demographic profile of Children In Conflict with the Law (CICL) in SOCCSKSARGEN in terms of:
  - 1.1. Age.
2. Determine the level of influence of the factors in the commission of crime of the respondents in terms of:
  - 2.1. Family relationship;
  - 2.2. Peer relationship; and
  - 2.3. External environment influence.
3. Identify the interventions and the processes done to mitigate the commission of crime, and to rehabilitate Children in Conflict with the Law in SOCCSKSARGEN.

### **Methods**

#### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive design. This study used a survey

approach to gather information about SOCCSKSARGEN's demographic profile and the factors influencing youth involvement in criminal activities. These elements include familial relationships, peer influence, and external environmental factors.

### **Respondents of the Study**

The participants of the study were juvenile delinquents residing in St. Marcelline, located in General Santos City. These children were placed in the institution to redirect their focus and provide them with a safe haven while their case was being reviewed.

### **Population and Sampling Scheme**

The study employed purposive sampling to select children who were in confrontation with the law. Purposive sampling is a method in which the researcher uses their own discretion to select specific individuals to participate in the study. This phenomenon occurs when the researcher carefully considers the criteria an individual must meet to be part of the population, believing the sample accurately represents the population (Black, K. 2010).

### **Research Instrument**

The researcher prepared a survey questionnaire and then validated it to assess its validity before to conducting the study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the initial section aimed to ascertain the demographic characteristics of the participants, while the subsequent section aimed to discover the variables and underlying causes that contribute to delinquency among CICL. The degree of application was assessed using a 5-point Likert Scale.

The following items were utilized:

- 5 – Strongly Agree
- 4 – Highly Agree
- 3 – Agree
- 2 – Slightly Agree
- 1 – Disagree

Further, it was interpreted using the following descriptions:

- 4.20 – 5.00 – Strongly Agree
- 3.40 – 4.19 – Highly Agree

- 2.60 – 3.39 – Agree
- 1.80 – 2.59 – Slightly Agree
- 1.00 – 1.79 – Disagree

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The researcher obtained a letter of authorization from the person in charge of RJJWC-DSWD XII and the Executive Director of the Marcellin Foundation Inc. The researcher ensured that the respondents were fully cognizant of their status as participants in the study, and that none of their responses would be used against them. The questionnaires were promptly collected immediately after the respondents completed and submitted their comments and answers to the survey. The data was synthesized and examined utilizing diverse statistical methodologies, including frequency distribution and weighted mean.

### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

Statistical studies were employed to scrutinize and comprehend the data obtained by the participants. The statistical analyses conducted were as follows: 1.) Calculate the percentage and frequency distribution to analyze the demographic profile of the respondents. 2.) Utilize the weighted arithmetic mean to identify the factors that influence adolescents in dispute with the law when they commit crimes.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The researcher utilized the Free-Priority and Informed Consent Protocol, wherein the respondents were assured that their responses were solely for research purposes and thus to help the children in conflict with the law be successfully integrated into the community. The researcher maintained the anonymity of the respondents by not getting their names or any identity that would specifically identify them. Then, after extracting the data, the researcher disposed of the questionnaires by shredding them.

### **Results and Discussions**

Berger and Luckmann, as stated by Przemieniecki (2017), assert that social interaction, through social systems, cultures, and interpersonal processes, shapes life and reality

every day. Surette (2015) further explained that people build realization from four sources of knowledge: personal experiences, human relationships, institutional relationships, and media. These have been important in establishing a social perspective because they focus on human relationships and how they influence people into reality.

Based on the study results and the demographics of the children in conflict with the law, as presented in Table 1, the age range of these children when they committed the crime was 15–22 years old, accounting for 61.11% of the respondents, with 36.11% being children aged 9–14 years old, and 3% being 21 years or older.

*Table 1. Age of Children in Conflict with the Law*

Age (yrs.old)	f	%
9-14	13	36.11
15-20	22	61.11
21 above	1	3

The age distribution of the children in conflict with the law, as depicted in Table 1, had significant implications for addressing the CICL in General Santos City. Given the prevalence of 15-year-olds and younger engaging in criminal activities, it is crucial for the city to provide

interventions and support systems (Maxwell & Corliss, 2020). eager (2017) further expressed that interventions for this age bracket must focus on offering guidance, mentorship, education, and skill-building activities to prevent them from engaging in criminal behavior.

### Factors Related with the Commission of Crimes by the Children

*Table 2. Factors Related with the Commission of Crimes by Children in General Santos City*

Factors Influenced CICL	f	%
Family Relationship	22	61.11
Peer Influence	12	33.33
External Environment Influence	2	5.55

Table 2 shows the factors that influence the commission of crimes by children in General Santos City. The family relationship was the highest factor affecting 61.11% of the CICL respondents, followed by the peer influence factor, which affects 33.33% of the respondents, and the external environment influence factor, which affects 5.55% of the respondents.

The outcome was consistent with several research that indicate a correlation between family dynamics and antisocial behavior. Specifically, factors such as a family history of criminal behavior, strict parenting, and familial conflict were found to be associated with this behavior. According to a study conducted by Gorman-Smith (2015), the data suggests that children are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior when they are exposed to violence in their familial interactions. Further evidence has confirmed these findings, as described in the World Youth report (2015), which states

that children who receive adequate parental supervision are less likely to engage in criminal behavior. Family situations that are dysfunctional, marked by conflict, inadequate parental supervision, poor internal bonds, and premature independence, are strongly associated with adolescent delinquency.

Children from underprivileged homes, who have restricted access to legal employment and face a higher likelihood of social marginalization, are overrepresented among individuals who commit offenses. The hardships encountered by ethnic minorities and migrants, including individuals who have been forcibly displaced and those seeking refuge, in specific regions of the globe, are notably distressing. Countries undergoing transitions face unique challenges in this aspect, as the accompanying instability and turmoil contribute to an increase in the number of children and

adolescents who are ignored by their parents, subjected to abuse, and exposed to domestic violence.

On the other hand, peers appear to exert significant influence. The World Youth Report [9] supports this perspective, asserting that participation in a delinquent gang, similar to other natural social groups, can play a crucial role in the process of maturing into adulthood. Through these primary associations, individuals gain a sense of safety and security, acquire knowledge of social interaction, and can manifest qualities such as loyalty or leadership.

While "adult" society places high value on factors like social status, private welfare, race, and ethnicity, all members of adolescent groups essentially occupy an equal position, with similar opportunities for advancement within the hierarchical structure. In these groups, well-being hinges entirely on personal attributes such as strength, will, and discipline. Delinquent groups often serve to counterbalance or compensate for deficiencies in family and school environments.

Community norms play a pivotal role in shaping delinquent activities among minors. In support of this assertion, a study emphasizes that the negative influence of a repeat juvenile offender exerts a formidable impact on nearby children.

The research found a strong correlation between the type of crime committed by the observed juvenile and the crimes adopted by

neighboring youth who subsequently engage in delinquent behavior. For instance, if a juvenile committed a property crime for a repeat offense, other children within a one-kilometer radius were significantly more likely to also engage in property crime. The same pattern held true for drug and violent crimes. Researchers posit that this influence may contribute to the development of certain areas known for particular types of crimes. In the case of drug offenses, the study revealed that for every 10% increase in drug crimes in proximity to a youth's home, the odds of that youth eventually participating in illegal drug activity nearly doubled. Criminologists attribute this phenomenon to the well-organized neighborhood structures conducive to drug crime (Mennis, J., 2011).

Table 3 presented the distribution of responses and the average score regarding family related aspects. The table shows that the highest average score was achieved in the relationship between the children and their father (4.46) and mother (4.33), as well as their relatives' influence on their tendency to engage in wrongful activities, which the respondents strongly agreed with. On the other hand, the lowest score was obtained in relation to the absence of guidance from their father (2.66) and mother (3.00), which the respondents agreed with, and slightly agreed (2.46) with the idea that their parents' criminal behavior influenced their own actions due to a lack of guidance.

*Table 3. Distribution of Responses and Mean Score in terms of Family Relationship Factor*

<b>Family Relationship Factors</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
My parents do not have time for me, that's why I'm doing this crime.	3.75	Highly Agree
I don't have a family or relatives, that guide me in our home that's why I am involve in this crime.	3.38	Agree
I don't have a good relationship with my parents and relatives.	3.41	Highly Agree
My mother has no time for me, that's why I'm doing this crime.	3.95	Highly Agree
My father has no time for me, that's why I'm doing this crime.	3.72	Highly Agree
My relationship with my parents and my relatives is not good that's why I'm doing wrong things.	3.89	Highly Agree
My relationship with my father and my relatives is not good, that's why I'm doing wrong things.	4.33	Strongly Agree
I don't have a father that's why no one prohibits me to do a crime.	2.66	Agree



Family Relationship Factors	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I only have a single parent that's why no one prohibits me to do a crime.	3.77	Highly Agree
I don't have a mother that's why no one prohibits me to do a crime.	3.13	Agree
My relationship with my mother and my relatives is not good, that's why I'm doing wrong things.	4.46	Strongly Agree
My mother is too strict, that's why I am involve with this crime.	3.87	Highly Agree
I am free and my father does not even care, that's why no one controls me to do this crime.	3.26	Agree
My parents are too strict, that's why I am involved with this crime.	3.01	Agree
I am free and my mother does not even care, that's why no one controls me in this crime.	3.00	Agree
My father has also an experience in doing crimes, that's why no one guides me.	2.72	Agree
My mother has also an experience in doing crimes, that's why no one guides me.	3.59	Highly Agree
My parents have also experience in doing crimes, that's why no one guides me.	2.46	Slightly Agree

The family is the initial social context a child encounters. Factors that increase the risk of delinquency or involvement with the law among children in their family setting encompass inadequate parental supervision, family conflicts, a history of past problematic behavior within the family, and parental endorsement of problematic behavior (Farrington & Jonkman, 2021). Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber conducted a comprehensive review in 1986, identifying poor parental supervision, parental rejection of children, large family size, low parental engagement with children, parental conflict, and antisocial parents as predictors in families associated with delinquency (Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

Farrington & Welsh (2007) further classified family factors into six categories: (1) criminal and antisocial parents and siblings; (2) large family size; (3) childcare methods (such as poor supervision, inadequate discipline, cold attitude, rejection, and low parental involvement with the child); (4) violence (physical or sexual) or neglect; (5) conflicts within disturbed parents and families; and (6) other parental characteristics (such as young age, substance abuse, stress or depression, and a working mother).

Setiawan et al. (2020) conducted research in the Indonesian context on children who engage in conflicts with the law, particularly as perpetrators of terrorism, and found significant family contributions when a child commits unlawful acts. Factors such as family violence, improper treatment and parenting of children, and parents serving as role models or even encouraging children to engage in deviant acts play a role in influencing kids to commit acts in conflict with the law.

Beyond being a risk factor, the family also serves as a protective factor. The family acts as a protective factor against children who engage in conflicts with the law by mitigating risks and addressing the child's issues. By providing attention, love, affection, protection, and security, the family facilitates the child's learning of social aspects, rules, norms, and values. Through such support, children learn to control their behavior and develop personal and social skills. Family attachment is another protective factor, offering opportunities for pro-social activities such as family gatherings, discussions, and the freedom to express personal problems. Additionally, the family acknowledges and rewards positive behavior. Parents, particularly during adolescence, emphasize the crucial role

of supervision (Farrington & Jonkman, 2021; Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

In addition, Table 4 displayed the allocation of replies and average score with regards to the peer influence aspect. The data indicates that the participants concur in engaging in criminal activities due to the presence of their friends, which provides a sense of security (2.92). Additionally, they report being enticed to commit

the crimes (2.67) and feeling pressured by their friends.

However, they have differing opinions regarding engaging in criminal activities solely due to their envy of their friends' possession of new gadgets (1.25), their desire to show off to their peers (1.50), and their affiliation with a syndicate (1.50).

Table 4. Distribution of Responses and Mean Score in terms of Peer Influence Factor

Peer Influence Factors	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I am happy if I am with my friends in doing crime.	2.33	Slightly Agree
For the sake of friendship, I am doing the things that my friend did.	2.42	Slightly Agree
I am doing crimes if I am with my friends because I feel safe with them.	2.92	Agree
I am contented while doing this crime.	1.59	Disagree
To gain a friend, I am doing a thing that is against with the law.	1.92	Slightly Agree
I rather choose to do a crime with a group.	1.83	Slightly Agree
I am happy with the gang.	1.75	Disagree
I have a big trust with my friends, that they will do their part too in performing without crime.	2.66	Agree
We are doing crimes as a past time.	1.67	Disagree
I am doing this crime to defend my friend.	1.84	Slightly Agree
I am doing this crime as reciprocity for my friend.	2.07	Slightly Agree
I am doing this crime because I was pressured by my friends.	2.67	Agree
I have no choice that's why I stayed too long at the syndicate.	1.50	Disagree
I become a member of syndicate that performs crime.	1.91	Slightly Agree
I have friends who is a member of a syndicate, that's why I am influenced to join.	2.42	Slightly Agree
I was forced to do this crime, because of the syndicate.	2.08	Slightly Agree
My friends recruit me in this organization, but I am not aware that this is a syndicate.	1.41	Disagree
I am doing this to fill my addiction, for example, drugs.	1.59	Disagree
I did this crime because I have no choice.	1.42	Disagree
I did this crime because I saw that crime hold the things that I really wanted to have.	1.42	Disagree
I did this crime because I want new dress/clothes.	1.33	Disagree
I did the crime to experience being rich.	1.83	Slightly Agree
I was tempted to do crime	2.67	Agree
The reason why I committed this crime because I envy my friends of having new and latest gadget.	1.25	Disagree
I did the crime to boast with friends.	1.50	Disagree

In terms of peer influence factors, Table 4 shows the distribution of responses and mean score. The data indicated that the respondents consented to commit crimes due to the safety and companionship of their friends (2.92), the

temptation to commit the crime (2.67), and the influence of their friends. On the other hand, they disagree on committing the crime just because they envy their friends for having new gadgets (1.25), to boast with friends (1.50), and

because they are members of a syndicate (1.50).

Several studies have aimed to establish the link between peers, delinquent behavior, and involvement with the law. The Rochester Youth Development Study (1994) by Terence Thornberry and colleagues and the U.S. National Youth Survey (1996) by Delbert Elliott and Scott Menard, as well as Thornberry's work in 2003, concluded that there exists a reciprocal influence between forming bonds with delinquent friends that lead to mischief and engaging in mischief that results in associations with delinquent friends (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Krohn et al., 2015).

Sara Battin and colleagues conducted a study in 1998 through the Seattle Social Development Project, which revealed an increase in offenses committed by young individuals after joining gangs. Rachel Gordon and colleagues from the Pittsburgh Youth Study (2004) found significant increases in drug sales, drug use, violence, and property destruction after a boy joined a gang, followed by a decrease in frequency after leaving the gang. Additionally, Thornberry's work in 2003 in the Rochester Youth Development Study and Uberto Gatti's longitudinal-experimental study in Montreal in 2005 found that children tend to commit more offenses after joining a gang (Farrington & Welsh, 2007).

Fitriani & Hastuti (2016) conducted research in an Indonesian context on correctional students at a special child development

institution, highlighting the influence of peer attachment on juvenile delinquency. Teenagers who form strong attachments to peers tend to engage in various negative behaviors, including conflicts with the law, such as consuming alcoholic beverages and engaging in physical altercations.

Risk factors associated with children engaging in conflicts with the law and peers include feelings of alienation and low social commitment, attitudes supporting problematic behavior, early involvement in problematic behavior, and peers' involvement in problematic behavior. Conversely, protective factors in relation to peers and delinquency include belief in moral order, social skills, and religiosity (Farrington & Jonkman, 2021).

Table 5 displayed the distribution and average score regarding the impact of the external environment. The data revealed a strong consensus among the respondents regarding their involvement in criminal activities. They expressed a high level of agreement (4.5) in acknowledging their participation in crime due to the prevalence of criminal activities in their area, their desire for attention, and their lack of employment opportunities.

On the other hand, children in conflict with the law disagreed (1.0) with the notion that their locality lacked security primarily because their neighbors were also engaged in criminal behavior and they committed crimes for the sake of fame.

*Table 5. Distribution of Responses and Mean Score in terms of External Environment Influence Factor*

<b>External Environment Influence Factor</b>	<b>Weighted Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
I already witnessed a crime in our place.	2.5	Slightly Agree
My place is known for many crimes.	4.5	Strongly Agree
Many of the kids in our place that has the same age with me influenced me to a crime.	3.0	Agree
I did the crime because our place lacks security.	1.0	Disagree
I am always involved in trouble at our school.	3.0	Agree
I only did the crime to get the attention of others.	4.5	Strongly Agree
We have many neighborhoods who is also committing the crime.	1.0	Disagree
I did this crime because everyone in our place does.	3.0	Agree
I only did this crime for revenge.	3.5	Highly Agree
I only did the crime to avoid being the victim.	3.5	Highly Agree

External Environment Influence Factor	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
I only did the crime for fame.	1.0	Disagree
I did this crime because no one catch us.	2.0	Slightly Agree
The place that I am living is quiet that's why it is very easy to do a crime.	4.0	Highly Agree
I only did crime to bully the other people.	3.0	Agree
I committed crime because I am not good at school.	3.0	Agree
I just follow the trend of my friends and classmates and neighbors in committing his crime.	4.0	Highly Agree
I committed crime to scare my victim.	2.5	Slightly Agree
I committed this crime because I don't have any options.	3.0	Agree
I did this crime because y family is poor at our place.	3.5	Highly Agree
I don't have a choice because I don't have a job.	4.5	Strongly Agree

Table 5 shows the distribution and mean score for external environmental influence. Table 5 reveals that the respondents strongly concur that they committed the crime due to the high crime rate in their area (4.5), to attract attention from others (4.5), and due to their lack of employment (4.5). Conversely, children in conflict with the law disagreed on the reasons for their lack of security (1.0), the fact that their neighbors were also committing crimes (1.0), and the desire for fame (1.0).

Researchers have conducted numerous studies to establish a connection between society and the manifestation of delinquency or other deviant behaviors in children and adolescents. Sampson and colleagues conducted an investigation in 1993 and a subsequent study in 1997, which revealed a nuanced relationship between poverty and crime, as well as between social disorganization and violence (Krohn et al., 2015).

Krohn et al. (2015) identify various societal factors associated with violence, such as concentrated poverty, housing mobility, high population displacement, family disorders, high housing and population density, weak local social organization, limited social resources, weak intergenerational bonds within families and communities, weak societal group control, low participation in community events and activities, and the likelihood of violence.

Societal disorder and the unrestricted circulation of illicit commodities such as cigarettes, alcohol, and narcotics are two additional risk variables that might contribute to juvenile delinquency and criminal activity. On the other

hand, elements that help prevent child delinquency and behaviors that go against the law in society include providing opportunities for and valuing children's involvement in positive and helpful activities. It is important to mention that although having a positive attitude towards helping others can help prevent the development of depressive symptoms, it may not have the same effect in preventing violent behavior throughout adolescence (Farrington & Jonkman, 2021).

#### SPECIFIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OFFERED FOR THE CICL

The Marcellin program for Children at Risk (CAR) and Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), as stated by the social worker in charge, is multifaceted, encompassing various services to address the unique needs of these individuals. The Residential Care Services form a crucial part, comprising three components: caring, which attends to the basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical care; healing, involving psycho-social and spiritual interventions, including psychological exams, psychiatric and counseling services, and conferences with relevant individuals; and teaching, ensuring the continuation of education through formal, non-formal, or technical means. The Life Skills Intervention Program, integrated into residential care, aims to unlearn negative values, address hurt and abuse, and reinforce positive values to prepare them for independent living; thus, Table 6 shows the recipients of the

specific programs and services. Residential care services, which include caring, healing, life skills intervention programs, and teaching, account for the majority of these programs and services, with a total of 43 recipients.

The juvenile justice program also caters to 21 recipients; the technical skills program caters to 32 recipients; and the independent living program caters to 14 recipients.

*Table 6. Recipient of the Specific Programs and Services*

<b>Programs and Services Offered</b>	<b>No. of Recipients</b>
1. Residential Care Services	
A. Caring	43
B. Healing	43
C. Life Skills Intervention Program	43
D. Teaching	43
2. Juvenile Justice Program	21
3. Technical Skills Program	32
4. Independent Living Program	14

The Juvenile Justice Program provides legal and para-legal services for children in conflict with the law (CICL), their parents, and the community. It aims to advocate for the rights of children. The Technical Skills Training Program equips clients with the necessary skills to reintegrate into society and live independently. This program is designed for adults in the community who are at risk due to familial circumstances.

The Independent Living Program is designed for students in the Marcellin Residential Care Program who have become 18 years old. It provides support for students who live with family or in boarding homes, with a focus on financial aid for education and sustainability agreements that are clearly defined in contracts. Marcellin's comprehensive approach caters to the varied requirements of individuals in CAR and CICL, fostering their welfare and facilitating their effective assimilation into society.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the data gathered, the following were concluded:

1. Children in Conflict with the Law were in vulnerable ages which ranged from 9 years old to 21 years old upon their commission of crime;
2. Most of the children in conflict with the law were affected by their relationship with their family, causing them to commit the crime; and

3. In order to assist children in conflict with the law to be integrated in the society when their case is over. These programs and services were residential care services (caring, healing, life skills intervention program, and teaching), juvenile justice program, technical skills program, and independent living program.

This study, therefore, reflects how these children in conflict with the law were affected by various factors in their community. It can also be conveyed that the norms of the society were they once lived had etched a certain psychological effect to them that their perception about wrongdoings was deterred.

Based on the data gathered, the following were recommended:

1. Given the significant influence of family relationships on CICL involvement, implementing preventive family interventions is crucial. Develop and promote programs that enhance parenting skills, family communication, and conflict resolution within households. Collaborate with local community organizations and social services to offer support to families facing challenges.
2. Recognizing the vulnerable age range of CICL, it is recommended to implement early intervention programs in schools and communities. These programs should focus on identifying and addressing behavioral issues, providing counseling services, and

offering mentorship programs to guide at-risk children toward positive life choices.

3. Conduct community outreach programs to raise awareness about the factors influencing CICL involvement. Provide education on the importance of community support, early identification of at-risk behaviors, and the role of various stakeholders, including schools, law enforcement, and local authorities.
4. Strengthen and enhance existing juvenile justice programs to ensure a fair and rehabilitative approach for CICL. Advocate for restorative justice practices that focus on the rehabilitation and reintegration of the child into society rather than punitive measures.
5. Implement skill development initiatives within the community to empower CICL with practical skills for employment and personal development. Collaborate with vocational training centers, local businesses, and non-profit organizations to provide training opportunities for CICL, enhancing their chances of successful reintegration.
6. Develop and implement crisis intervention services to address immediate needs of CICL, including psychological support, counseling, and access to mental health services. Ensure that the community has accessible resources to handle crises effectively and prevent further escalation of issues.
7. Foster collaboration among various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, and the community. A coordinated effort is essential to address the multifaceted factors influencing CICL and implement comprehensive solutions.
8. Establish a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of interventions. Regularly assess the effectiveness of programs, identify areas for improvement, and adjust strategies accordingly. This will contribute to the ongoing refinement of initiatives to better meet the needs of CICL in General Santos City.

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