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## Research Article

### The Impact of The Government's Rehabilitation Program on Children in Conflict with The Law in Iloilo City

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#### ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the effectiveness and outcomes of the government's rehabilitation program for children in conflict with the law in Iloilo City, Region 6. This study will utilize a quantitative approach to gather information about the demographic profile and the impact of the government's rehabilitation program on various stakeholders, including the social workers, barangay officials, house parents, guardians, and the CICL. These respondents were chosen to provide a comprehensive perspective on the rehabilitation program and its challenges, aiming to identify areas for improvement and growth. In collaboration and partnership with the government and non-government organizations, this rehabilitation center aims to promote quality education through intervention, diversion, and rehabilitation programs and services that seek to address the best interest, welfare, and development of the children in conflict with the law and children at risks, shaping them into becoming a self-reliant, productive and God-fearing individual, upon reintegration with their families and in the communities.

**Keywords:** *Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), Juvenile Delinquency, Bahay Pag-Asa" or "Balay Dalayunan, Children At Risk, Iloilo City, Region 6*

## Introduction

### Background of the Study

The development of children is influenced not only by their innate characteristics but also significantly by the surrounding environment. The daily exchanges that children engage in, be it within familial settings, friendships,

educational environments, or broader societal contexts, significantly influence the development of their social identity. They participate in the pursuit of knowledge and comprehension by synthesizing their existing understanding with newly acquired information. Juvenile offenders are regarded as being shaped by a

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confluence of their individual traits and the environmental factors surrounding them. The environment significantly shapes individuals' cognitive and behavioral patterns, along with their understanding and acceptance of their experiences. Experience emerges through the active participation in social interactions and the utilization of language. (De Ramos, C., et al, 2019).

The juvenile justice system has experienced four significant phases of development since the inception of juvenile courts more than a century ago. The historical periods encompass the Progressive Era (1899–1960s), the Due-Process Era (1960s and 1970s), the Get-Tough-on-Crime Era (1980s and 1990s), and the ongoing reaffirmation of the Kids-Are-Different Era (2005 to present). (Luna, 2017; National Research Council, 2013).

The juvenile justice system exists to hold young offenders accountable for their actions, with the goal of rehabilitating them rather than subjecting them to punitive measures in the adult criminal justice system (Abrams et al., 2020; National Research Council, 2013). The formation of juvenile courts in the late 1800s was a direct result of reform efforts. The Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents emphasized adult jails' inability to successfully meet the unique needs of young people (Dempsey, 2021).

In the last ten years, the Philippines has experienced a significant reduction in crime rates associated with juvenile delinquents. In 2018, the crime rate for individuals aged sixteen to seventeen experienced a notable 30% decrease relative to the statistics from 2017 (Macaraeg, 2019). Despite this decline, the prevalence of crimes committed by children in conflict with the law remains a significant concern. The 30% reduction decreased the number of cases from 7,131 to 5,044 (Macaraeg, 2019). In 2020, the PNP Women and Children Protection Center documented 15,892 arrests. Of these, 9,502 individuals were referred to the Department of Social Welfare and Development, 2,447 were returned to their families, 3,111 remained at large, and thirty-seven were in the custody of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism [PCIJ], 2022). Recent years have shown a rise in

aggression levels among juvenile offenders. In 2020, there were 1,506 CICLs involved in rape cases, 1,207 in drug-related offenses, 765 in theft, 1,452 in violations of RA 11332, and 10,079 in other crimes (PCIJ, 2022).

The Juvenile Justice Study.com (2013) states that while numerous studies on children's justice have been conducted, the majority of them lacked substantial quantitative data. While some research employed secondary data, statistics mostly focused on youngsters incarcerated. Some studies made an effort to outline the national situation, but they were unable to analyze the various local situations. Furthermore, the children's viewpoints were hardly emphasized. Although the research' recommendations appear to have a clear direction for national policies, specific suggestions that could be implemented locally were not made explicit. In light of these, we made the decision to start the three studies specifically to support the work being done by our partners locally, where the influence on the children's lives is more noticeable.

In the Philippines, various sites function as breeding grounds for juvenile delinquents, while the difficult realities encountered by a significant portion of the impoverished populace remain predominantly overlooked. While a number of these young individuals have succeeded in transcending the constraints of poverty, it is crucial to recognize that poverty itself does not serve as a legitimate rationale for engaging in criminal behavior. A significant number of young individuals find themselves unable to transcend their challenging circumstances, often feeling compelled to engage in activities that contravene legal standards. Statistics from the Philippine National Police (PNP) covering the years 2012 to 2015 indicate occurrences of burglary, robbery, intentional mischief, and fraud. The Philippine National Police (PNP) elucidates that the elevated prevalence of juvenile delinquency is primarily linked to socioeconomic deprivation, with theft emerging as a prevalent criminal endeavor among youth (San Juan & Mayuga, 2016).

Garrio (2017) pointed out that the criminal justice system in the Philippines is marked by inadequate facilities, inhumane conditions, and inefficient case handling and resolution.

This system has frequently failed adult offenders and, even more so, children in conflict with the law (CICL). Children who have likely faced abuse, abandonment, and neglect in their homes and environments are now subjected to severe and dehumanizing conditions within the adult criminal justice system. This exposure not only perpetuates further abuse but also undermines their prospects for reintegration into families and communities, hindering their potential to become responsible and productive citizens.

Republic Act 9344, referred to as the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act of 2006, establishes the framework for juvenile justice in the Philippines. This legislative framework highlights the nation's recognition of the essential role of children and youth in its development. The Law underscores the State's steadfast dedication to fostering and protecting the comprehensive welfare of Filipino children, encompassing their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. Seven years later, Republic Act 9344 was revised by Republic Act 10630, enhancing the nation's juvenile justice and youth welfare framework by requiring local government units (LGUs) to create Bahay Pag-Asa Centers. Bahay Pag-Asa centers, translated as "House of Hope," are intended to offer a supportive environment for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICLs), emphasizing rehabilitation and assistance rather than incarceration with adult offenders. Bahay Pag-Asa functions as a round-the-clock child-care facility, developed, financed, and overseen by local government units (LGUs), frequently in partnership with recognized or accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Research indicates that individuals aged 10 to 24 display traits of adolescence, as their neurocognitive functions are still developing (Sawyer et al., 2018; Kazemian, 2021). Children under the age of 12 generally lack the maturity required to understand the legal concepts of competency and capacity. Furthermore, they may not gain substantial advantages from the treatment options offered by juvenile justice interventions, especially those programs primarily intended for older juveniles (Abrams et al., 2020).

It is essential to provide legal assistance and community-based preventive and recovery programs for children identified as at risk of entering the juvenile justice system, as well as those in legal trouble seeking diversion from custody. These programs should include appropriate social support services, life skills training, and educational opportunities to help prevent future criminal activities. It is essential that juveniles in custody receive adequate life skills training, civil or justice education, legal therapy, and both pre-release and post-release social support programs. These measures are necessary to equip them with the skills required for effective reintegration into society and to reduce the risk of re-offending. Establishing civic support for at-risk children and those involved with the law involves developing resources for municipal authorities and educating parents, teenagers, and community members about children's rights, juvenile justice, and crime prevention. The objective is to offer free legal care and advocacy programs for minors facing legal issues, as well as to provide their service providers with access to free legal advice (Hong Kun and Sophat, n.d.).

Bahay Pag-Asa centers implement comprehensive intervention programs starting at an early age to proactively prevent recidivism and delinquent behavior in adolescence and adulthood. These centers employ a comprehensive intervention strategy, taking into account individuals as whole entities. This approach includes mental health as well as physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The program includes various activities such as therapy, skill development, alternative learning, instruction, recovery, and family reintegration, as specified by the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council of the Republic of the Philippines in 2017. Programmatic techniques and systematic social protection initiatives aim to improve children's physical and social well-being, proactively deter juvenile delinquency, and interrupt or prevent re-offending, as indicated by Fabre et al. (2016).

In Luna's study (2022), the research evaluated the delivery of social welfare services for CICLs at Bahay Pag-Asa. The findings demonstrated that the enhanced availability of social welfare services for youth reformists improved

the efficiency of support for CICL and led to increased satisfaction levels among Bahay Pag-Asa stakeholders (Luna, 2022). A study by Bongbong et al. (2023) examined house parents working with CICL. Establishing strong connections with children through trust, respect, effective communication, and empathy is essential for their growth and development, as well as for promoting harmonious relationships with their house parents.

The study titled "The Impact of the Government's Rehabilitation Program on Children in Conflict with the Law in Iloilo City" aims to analyze the effectiveness of this program for children in conflict with the law (CICL) and children at risk (CAR) throughout their stay in the facility. The local government of Iloilo City, Region 6, actively implements strategies through facilities such as "Balay Dalayunan" or "Bahay Pag-asa" in Bo. Obrero, Lapuz, Iloilo City. These facilities are exclusively designed for CICLs, in partnership with both government and non-government organizations. The primary goal of these programs is to promote proper education through intervention, diversion, and rehabilitation to serve the best interests of the children. The program aims to prepare these children to become productive, responsible, and God-fearing individuals upon their reintegration into the community or with their families.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research aims to examine the impact of the government's rehabilitation program on children in conflict with the law.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the effect of the government's rehabilitation program on recidivism rates among children in conflict with the law (CICL)?
2. How do children in conflict with the law (CICL) and stakeholders view the effectiveness and long-term impact of rehabilitation programs?
3. What challenges did the DSWD, barangay officials, guardians, house parents, and children face in the intervention programs?
4. What were the impacts of the intervention programs on the children's rehabilitation?

5. What lessons did the children learn from their rehabilitation at Bahay Pag-Asa?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study focuses on influencing policies and practices to improve rehabilitation for children in conflict with the law (CICL). The findings will help government agencies refine policies and enhance strategies for more effective rehabilitation programs. Social workers will gain insights into better program delivery and psychological support methods, while NGOs can use the results to advocate for stronger support systems, address gaps in existing practices, and collaborate with the government on innovative solutions. By identifying ways to enhance rehabilitation, the study aims to increase CICL's chances of successful reintegration into society. Additionally, it will provide a valuable evidence-based foundation for future research, shaping policies and practices in this critical area.

Moreover, it contributes to the growing body of literature on juvenile delinquency by providing insights into the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law (CICL). The findings will offer valuable perspectives on the effectiveness of current programs, enriching academic discourse and informing future studies. By examining the impact of rehabilitation on CICL, the research will provide empirical data to bridge gaps in existing knowledge, offering a deeper understanding of juvenile delinquency and its underlying factors. This contribution will not only support policy refinement and program improvement but also serve as a robust resource for researchers exploring innovative approaches to addressing juvenile delinquency and enhancing rehabilitation outcomes.

### **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study focuses exclusively on government rehabilitation programs implemented in Barangay Bo. Obrero, Lapuz, Iloilo City, due to its unique socio-cultural and geographic context, which offers an opportunity to gain localized insights into the effectiveness of such initiatives. The primary focus will be on children classified as children in conflict with the law (CICL) currently enrolled in these programs. By

examining psychological and social interventions, educational and vocational training, and reintegration efforts, the study aims to evaluate how these programs support CICL in becoming productive members of society.

Including the perspectives of social workers, barangay officials, house parents, and families ensures a holistic view of the rehabilitation process, uncovering specific challenges and benefits. Limiting the study to Barangay Bo. Obrero allows for an in-depth exploration of rehabilitation practices within a manageable scope, providing valuable insights that could serve as a model or point of comparison for other barangays and local government units.

### Research Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach to systematically collect and analyze data about the demographic profiles of participants and the impact of rehabilitation programs on various stakeholders. Quantitative research is ideal for this study as it allows for objective measurement and statistical analysis of data, providing a clear understanding of trends, relationships, and patterns.

Through this approach, the study examines the experiences and perspectives of social workers, barangay officials, and the parents or guardians of children in conflict with the law (CICL). By focusing on measurable variables, such as the perceived effectiveness of interventions and changes in CICL behavior, the study offers empirical evidence to support its findings.

The tools utilized for data collection include structured surveys and questionnaires, which ensure consistency in responses and allow for the generation of quantifiable data. These instruments are designed to capture detailed

insights into the stakeholders' assessments of the program's psychological, social, and educational impacts.

Overall, the use of the quantitative method strengthens the study by providing reliable and generalizable data to evaluate the rehabilitation program's success and identify areas for improvement.

### Population and Sampling

**Social Workers:** Social workers are affiliated members of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). They help CICLs regain, maintain, or improve the abilities they need for daily life. They also provide counseling to help CICLs address emotional and social challenges.

**Barangay Officials:** Barangay officials are the locally elected leaders in a particular community who enforce laws and ordinances as applicable. They also play a role in maintaining and imposing public order within the barangay.

**CICL (Children in Conflict with the Law):** Children in conflict with the law (CICL) are juvenile offenders who are treated and rehabilitated in youth rehabilitation centers.

**House Parents:** House parents act as surrogate parents to CICLs, promoting the development of their physical, social, and emotional well-being. They are also responsible for implementing home-life services for the residents of the center.

**Guardians:** Guardians are individuals who may or may not be related to the CICL and work hand-in-hand to support the reintegration of the children into society. They are responsible for overseeing the behavior and progress of CICLs during their stay in the rehabilitation center.

Table 1. Category of the Respondents

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Social Worker	5	14.29%
Brgy. Officials	5	14.29%
CICL	15	42.86%
House Parents	5	14.29%
Guardian	5	14.29%
Total	35	

The profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender and highest educational attainment is shown on Table 2.

**Age:** Age was classified into two categories: young and old. Respondents who were 20 years old and below were considered young, while those above 20 years were categorized as old. The study revealed that 15 individuals, equivalent to 42.86 percent, were classified as young. On the other hand, 20 individuals, or 57.14 percent, were categorized as old.

**Gender:** When respondents were classified according to gender, most were male, comprising 71.43 percent or a frequency of 25. Females,

on the other hand, had a frequency of 10, which accounted for 28.57 percent.

**Highest Educational Attainment:** The findings of this study showed that most of the respondents only reached the high school level, with a frequency of 13 or 37.14 percent. This was followed by college graduates, with a frequency of 10 or 28.57 percent. Additionally, 5 respondents, or 14.29 percent, attended college but did not graduate. Meanwhile, both high school graduates and those who reached the elementary level had the same frequency of 3 or 8.57 percent. Only 1 respondent, or 2.86 percent, completed elementary education.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Age, Gender and Highest Educational Attainment

Category		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	Young	15	42.86%
	Old	20	57.14%
<b>Gender</b>	Male	25	71.43%
	Female	10	28.57%
<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>	Elementary Level	1	2.86%
	Elementary Graduate	3	8.57%
	High School Level	13	37.14%
	High School Graduate	3	8.57%
	College Level	5	14.29%
	College Graduate	10	28.57%
	Others	0	0.00%

## Results and Discussions

The results were consolidated and analyzed based on the categories of respondents: Social Workers, Barangay Officials, CICL, House Parents, and Guardians.

The community views the government's rehabilitation program as having a significantly positive impact on reducing recidivism rates among CICL, as shown in Table 3. The data indicates a mean score of 4.53, suggesting that the program is perceived as highly effective in tackling repeat offenses. The elevated rating indicates a robust community conviction that the rehabilitation programs not only diminish criminal activity but also promote significant change in the lives of CICL.

Participants acknowledged that the program successfully enhances the well-being and holistic development of CICL, facilitating their reintegration into society as contributing members. This viewpoint underscores the significance of organized interventions that tackle not only punitive actions but also the psychological, social, and educational requirements. The findings highlight the program's effectiveness in meeting community expectations and contributing to the overarching aim of decreasing juvenile delinquency, emphasizing the importance of ongoing government support for holistic rehabilitation approaches.

**Table 3. The Impact of the Government's Rehabilitation Program in Reducing Recidivism Rates Among in Reducing Recidivism Rates Among CICL**

Category	Mean	Description
Social Worker	4.88	Very Satisfactory
Brgy. Officials	4.40	Very Satisfactory
CICL	4.71	Very Satisfactory
House Parents	4.22	Very Satisfactory
Guardian	4.44	Very Satisfactory

The findings in Table 4 illustrate the respondents' perceptions of the efficacy and long-term impact of rehabilitation programs for children in conflict with the law (CICL). While house parents and guardians reported slightly lower satisfaction rates compared to other stakeholders, the overall perception remains highly positive. With a mean score of 4.25, the data indicates that CICL and stakeholders find the programs to be very satisfactory in promoting meaningful change.

The government's efforts are recognized as effective in fostering confidence and support-

ing the holistic recovery of CICL. These programs are seen as instrumental in equipping CICL with the tools needed to reintegrate into society successfully and improve their quality of life. The slightly lower satisfaction reported by house parents and guardians highlights potential areas for enhancement, such as strengthening support systems for those directly involved in the rehabilitation process. Nevertheless, the findings underscore the significant strides made in implementing rehabilitation programs that address both immediate and long-term needs of CICL.

**Table 4. The Perception on Rehabilitation Programs in Terms of Their Efficacy and Long-Term Impact**

Category	Mean	Description
Social Worker	4.56	Very Satisfactory
Brgy. Officials	4.46	Very Satisfactory
CICL	4.66	Very Satisfactory
House Parents	3.90	Satisfactory
Guardian	3.68	Satisfactory

Table 5 highlights the respondents' perceptions of the challenges encountered during their participation in the intervention programs and their satisfaction with how these challenges were managed. The challenges identified by social workers, barangay officials, guardians, house parents, and children included limited resources, psychological, social, and emotional issues, coordination with stakeholders, time constraints, knowledge and training gaps, and the sustainability of program implementation.

Using a rating scale (5 - Strongly Disagree to 1 - Strongly Agree), respondents indicated that the challenges were generally well-addressed

by the implementing agencies, with an average rating of 4.05. This suggests that while challenges were present, the efforts of the agencies to manage them were largely effective, meeting the expectations of the stakeholders involved.

The results point to a commendable level of responsiveness from the agencies but also highlight areas for improvement, particularly in addressing resource constraints and providing additional training for stakeholders. These findings underscore the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptive strategies to further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of intervention programs.

Table 5. On The Challenges Encountered During Their Participation in The Challenges Encountered during Their Participation in the Intervention Programs

Category	Mean	Description
Social Worker	4.72	Strongly Disagree
Brgy. Officials	4.58	Strongly Disagree
CICL	4.33	Strongly Disagree
House Parents	3.34	Disagree
Guardian	3.28	Disagree

Table 6 presents the respondents' perceptions of the effects of the intervention programs on children's rehabilitation, which received a very satisfactory overall rating (m = 4.65). This high rating reflects the respondents' strong agreement that the government's intervention programs in rehabilitation centers have significantly contributed to the positive transformation of children in conflict with the law (CICL).

The programs were recognized for facilitating essential skill acquisition, fostering social and personal development, and enhancing mo-

tivation and trust. Additionally, the respondents highlighted improvements in stress management and emotional well-being among the children. These findings underscore the effectiveness of the intervention programs in addressing not only behavioral and psychological needs but also equipping children with tools for long-term personal and social success.

This high level of satisfaction validates the programs' design and implementation while emphasizing their critical role in supporting the holistic rehabilitation of CICL and their reintegration into society.

Table 6. Effects of the Intervention Programs on the Children's Rehabilitation

Category	Mean	Description
Social Worker	4.72	Very Satisfactory
Brgy. Officials	4.64	Very Satisfactory
CICL	4.79	Very Satisfactory
House Parents	4.60	Very Satisfactory
Guardian	4.52	Very Satisfactory

Table 7 highlights the respondents' perceptions of the valuable lessons children in conflict with the law (CICL) gained after undergoing rehabilitation in Balay Dalayunan, which received an overall very satisfactory rating (m = 4.64). The findings indicate that the rehabilitation program has been instrumental in fostering significant personal and social development for the CICL.

Key lessons learned by the children include an enhanced understanding of the consequences of their actions, improved emotional regulation, effective communication skills, the

ability to set personal goals, and strengthened social skills. Furthermore, the program has helped the children develop a deeper sense of self-worth and personal growth.

These outcomes not only benefit the CICL but also positively influence the community by promoting a better understanding of rehabilitation's transformative potential. The results affirm the effectiveness of Balay Dalayunan in equipping CICL with essential life skills and fostering their reintegration into society as responsible and self-aware individuals.



Table 7. Valuable Lessons Did the Children Learn After Undergoing Rehabilitation in Balay Dalayunan

Category	Mean	Description
Social Worker	4.84	Very Satisfactory
Brgy. Officials	4.62	Very Satisfactory
CICL	4.81	Very Satisfactory
House Parents	4.34	Very Satisfactory
Guardian	4.58	Very Satisfactory

### Conclusions

As referred to in the results and discussion, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Respondents, including social workers, house parents, CICL, guardians, and barangay officials, rated the government's rehabilitation program as Very Satisfactory in reducing recidivism, indicating its success in preventing reoffending.
2. Most respondents expressed high satisfaction with the rehabilitation program's effectiveness and long-term impact, with house parents and guardians providing satisfactory ratings, suggesting the program's success in reducing crime among CICL over time.
3. Respondents largely disagreed with encountering challenges during the intervention programs, indicating minimal issues or difficulties for participants at Bahay Dalayunan.
4. All respondents rated the intervention programs as Very Satisfactory in rehabilitating CICL, affirming the government's success in facilitating positive change.
5. Respondents rated the educational curriculum at Bahay Dalayunan as Very Satisfactory, highlighting its effectiveness in fostering the educational development of CICL post-rehabilitation.

### Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the government's rehabilitation program for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) in Iloilo City:

1. Strengthen Stakeholder Collaboration: Foster stronger partnerships among government agencies, NGOs, local communities,

and other stakeholders to provide comprehensive support for CICL.

2. Enhance Resources: Improve rehabilitation facilities, provide regular staff training, and ensure access to updated educational materials to deliver higher-quality programs.
3. Establish Post-Rehabilitation Support: Develop structured post-rehabilitation initiatives, such as mentorship programs and community-based support systems, to aid CICL in their reintegration journey.
4. Promote Community Engagement: Encourage active community participation to reduce stigma, promote acceptance, and create a supportive environment for CICL.
5. Expand Skills Development: Introduce and diversify vocational training and life skills programs to equip CICL with tools for independence and productivity after rehabilitation.
6. Implement Regular Monitoring and Evaluation: Conduct systematic assessments to evaluate program effectiveness, identify areas for improvement, and ensure continuous enhancement of rehabilitation efforts.

These measures aim to create a holistic and sustainable approach to rehabilitating CICL and fostering their reintegration into society.

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