

LIFE OF SOCIAL WORKERS: CHARACTERIZING THEIR EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES IN HANDLING CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to characterize the experiences of social workers handling children in conflict with the law. With social workers' intervention, the child who was in conflict with the law was taught to engage in beneficial activities to develop desirable social characteristics and behaviors. This descriptive-qualitative study describes the experiences of social workers handling children in conflict with the law. The findings of this study present the different challenges, ways of coping, and recommendations of social workers when handling children in conflict with the law. It revealed that Social workers handling children in conflict with the law face intricate challenges in addressing diverse behaviors within dysfunctional families, leading to emotional strain and a desire for breaks. The need for a personalized and holistic approach to address the unique backgrounds of these children is emphasized, requiring a delicate balance between authority, justice, and empathy while prioritizing self-care. Building genuine connections and acknowledging socio-cultural diversity is crucial for effective communication, emphasizing the habitual nature of coping mechanisms integrated into individuals' behavior. Passion, dedication, and the importance of Human Resource Development (HRD) in equipping social workers for challenges, especially with children in conflict with the law, emerge as critical elements in achieving personal and professional goals.

Keywords: social workers, Children in Conflict with the Law, challenges, coping mechanism, Philippines

Introduction

A practice-based profession and academic discipline, social work is characterized as advancing social development and change, societal cohesion, and people's empowerment and liberation (Pinto, 2020). Social workers play a significant role in reforming and implementing intervention programs for convicts by providing legal assistance, preserving family ties, and after-care rehabilitation providing legal assistance. The function of social work was seen as filling the gaps in support and assistance that exist in or are improperly provided by prison programs. As stated by Lim (2017), social workers interact with these vulnerable groups as pioneers in counseling young offenders and children at risk. Social workers have a responsibility to help rehabilitate juvenile offenders and youth who are at risk in order to prevent further loss of rights, promote social inclusion, and increase social stability (Sinha, 2020). These young people are under the care of social

workers, whose role is to lead by offering guidance and making interventions aimed at reducing the stress of adult life experienced by young people, such as from family and teachers (Lim, 2017). Inter-professional social workers encounter particular stressors, pressures, and problems such as rule ambiguity, marginality, and value conflicts. This causes conflict, exhaustion, and impediments to service delivery (Sweifach, 2015). Social workers may feel occupational burnout or vicarious trauma, even though they work hard with clients to assist them improve their lives despite moral conundrums. Professionals working with trauma victims frequently struggle with challenges manifested in heightened emotional and physical anxieties and personal efficacy (Wilson, 2016). In rehabilitation centers, social workers collaborate with officers, medical staff, educators, attorneys, and other disciplines. Social workers advocate for the needs of their clients with all these disciplines, requesting medical services on their behalf, writing court reports on their progress, and advocating for visits and psychological treatment.

As social workers interact in systems, they face challenges in practicing ethical social work. Social work and criminal justice include conflicting principles, such as worth and dignity vs retaliation. Particular stresses, pressures, and difficulties that social workers encounter in interprofessional contexts include marginalization, rule uncertainty, and value conflicts. These impede the provision of services and cause conflict and fatigue (Young, 2015; Sweifach, 2015 as cited in Lopez, 2021). Though social workers work tirelessly with clients to help them improve their life situations despite ethical dilemmas, they may experience job burnout or vicarious trauma. Professionals working with victims of trauma often have issues that are displayed through personal efficacy and increased emotional and physical concerns (Wilson, 2016). The social worker must not let personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, or mental health interfere with their professional judgment; the social worker is responsible for monitoring their professional fitness and seeking professional help when needed (Wilson, 2016). Seldom has the practice of social work in youth rehabilitation centers been examined, and scant research has been done on social workers' experiences in handling cases involving children in conflict with the law (CICL), how to effectively oversee the rehabilitation process, and how to deal with the difficulties in rehabilitating CICL.

This research examined the perspectives of social workers engaged in the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth at Polanco, Zamboanga Del Norte. Through the review of the academic literature, it was found that there is a dearth of study since there are so few social workers who operate in correctional settings. As a result, little is known about social workers' professional experiences. Additionally, the existing studies have not distinguished between the various experiences and where they are based on center-based and community-based approaches in addressing juvenile cases. This research will address the gap present by exploring the challenges experienced by social workers in handling children in conflict with the law (CICL) and examining the coping strategies they employ. The experience of social workers in handling a thesis of a child in conflict with the law, how to manage the rehabilitation process, and how to handle the problems in rehabilitating a CICL has not been thoroughly researched up until this point. In the Philippine setting, rehabilitation centers for youthful offenders are supervised by social workers. As a result, the social workers working in youth rehabilitation face difficult and overwhelming tasks. There is not much research on social workers' experiences in CICL rehabilitation centers in the Philippines. The current study aimed to investigate social workers' experiences dealing

with cases involving children in conflict with the law in Polanco, Zamboanga del Norte. This study utilized a descriptive-qualitative approach to delve into social workers' positive and negative experiences in CICL cases and rehabilitation. Specifically, it aimed to investigate the challenges faced by social workers during the initial contact with CICL and throughout the rehabilitation process at a rehabilitation center in Zamboanga Del Norte.

Methods

This study utilized a descriptive-qualitative approach to delve into social workers' positive and negative experiences in CICL cases and rehabilitation. Specifically, it aimed to investigate the challenges faced by social workers during the initial contact with CICL and throughout the rehabilitation process. This study was conducted at Polanco, Zamboanga del Norte, specifically in RRCY. The Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) in Polanco, Zamboanga del Norte, serves as a residential facility for children in conflict with the law, aiming to reintegrate them into society and promote their social functioning. The social workers in Polanco, Zamboanga del Norte, would participate in the study. The participants were chosen using the purposive and snowball sampling approaches based on the following criteria: (1) must be employed at RRCY, Polanco, Zamboanga Del Norte. (2) must be handling children in conflict with the law. Five total participants, five (5) respondents from RRCY in Polanco, Zamboanga Del Norte, comprised the chosen participants. Researchers selected participants to answer the guide questions and collected the data required.

The researcher asked the participants about their lives as a social worker, their positive and negative experiences and the challenges they encountered, the mechanisms they applied in overcoming the challenges and the recommendations they can offer to mitigate the challenges while handling children in conflict with the law. Furthermore, the researchers selected the participants based on their suitability and applicability to the study. The researcher used pseudonyms instead of their real names to conceal their identity. Before the interview, they were given a consent form to ask their willingness to participate and allow audio recording of their response. This study's primary data collection tool involved using a semi-structured interview guide.

This research utilized thematic analysis of data obtained from in-depth interviews. Following a six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), the researcher transcribed participants' responses, generated codes, identified themes, and refined them. After conducting interviews, audio recordings were transcribed and thoroughly analyzed. The researcher used a line-by-line coding approach to interpret participants' experiences, organizing codes into thematic categories. Themes were carefully examined, refined, and clarified to avoid overlap. The final findings were compiled in a detailed article/report, including discussions of each theme with supporting codes and excerpts from transcripts. Permission letters were sent to the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY), Social Workers, and Head of RRCY to request authorization for data collection. Once permission was granted, suitable participants were identified, and letters were sent outlining the study's objectives. Unwilling participants were not coerced and would be replaced. Throughout interviews, the confidentiality of respondents' responses was maintained professionally. Information exchange, especially on sensitive

matters, was handled tactfully. After data interpretation, interviews, and document collection, all materials provided by respondents were securely and properly disposed of.

Results and Discussions

Profile of the Participants

Table 1

Demographic Profile of the Participants

Profile	Sir Jay	Ma'am Ella	Ma'am Rosa	Ma'am Rose	Ma'am Pat
Sex	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	44	28	39	41	28
Number of years working in RRCY	4 years	5 years	2 years	7 years	5 years
Highest Educational Attainment	BS Social Work	BS Social Wok	BS Social Work	College Graduate	College Graduate
Marital Status	Single	Single	Married	Married	Single

Table 2

Codes/Meaningful Units, Subthemes and Theme Clusters

Codes/Meaningful Units	Subthemes	Theme Cluster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfying and Challenging • Very Challenging • Stressful • Burnout • Desired to leave • Challenge the new in the field • Involvement of client • Children's diverse backgrounds • Different cultures, behaviors, and beliefs • Different behaviors • Different behaviors and mannerisms • Dysfunctional family 3 • Bad Behavior • Teaching them values 2 	Socio-cultural Diversity	



Codes/Meaningful Units	Subthemes	Theme Cluster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disrespected by clients Physically aggressive Conflict of values and behavior Absence of values 		Challenges of Social Workers: Life Beyond Oneself
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs focus No best approach Extra guidance 	Focus and Guidance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absorbent sponge Devastating Helplessness Pessimistic Emotional changes Time No reformation outside RRCY 	Emotional State	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reformation outside RRCY 	Scope of Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unwilling to accept help Unwilling to accept the services of the center Non-participative 	Acceptance from CICL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build rapport Established connection Trust takes time 	Building Relationships	Coping with Challenges as Social Workers: Forging Ties and Well-being
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Approach Holistic Approach Familiarize, Coordination Assert Authority Get together In accordance with co-workers 	Bonding with co-workers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hopeful for change Rewarding Reciprocal learning Self-encouragement Rest and calm down Proud and learning from experiences Blessed They have a purpose Most satisfying Very satisfying Grow as a person 	Maintaining Optimism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-care Be mindful 	Self-care and Well-being	

Codes/Meaningful Units	Subthemes	Theme Cluster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hide when frustrated Also rehabilitated 		Recommendation for a Better Social Worker: Holistic Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological aid Awareness 	Availing Professional Help	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love the job Encouraged more More effort Passion Willingness to learn Self-Satisfaction Money cannot buy self-satisfaction Willingness to learn Self-development and Improvement 	Passion and Commitment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-care Teaching them permanent living skills Foster positive values 2 Positive communication and progressive discipline No judgement 	Development of Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unload and Pray Strong support system 2 Communication, coordination and collaboration Feed backing Good in decision-making Teamwork 2 Connect with friends and families Recharge 	Building Connection and Faith	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Livelihood training LGU system, accepting more social workers and with good community intervention 	Self-care and Well-being	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychological aid Awareness 	Availing Professional Help	

Life of Social Workers: Characterizing their Experiences in Handling Children in Conflict With the Law

Theme Cluster: Challenges of Social Workers: Life beyond oneself

This study used the term challenges as a general cluster to refer to the Challenges of Social Workers: Life Beyond Oneself. The participants encountered this in their daily experience dealing with children in conflict with the law. This is presented in the following

sub-themes: (1) Socio-cultural diversity, (2) Focus and Guidance, (3) Emotional State, (4) Scope of service (5) Acceptance from CICL.

Socio-Cultural Diversity. A socially conscious social worker understands how cultural influences impact these kids' growth and behavior and designs treatments to meet their needs. Social workers have many difficulties when dealing with children who conflict with the law. Values and behavior pose challenges for social workers handling children in conflict with the law because these young individuals often come from diverse backgrounds with varying moral frameworks, making it difficult to establish a universally applicable set of values. Striking a balance between instilling ethical values and respecting the individuality of each child's beliefs and behaviors poses a constant challenge for social workers working in this context.

Sir Jay's statement emphasized how difficult it may be to work with clients who behave differently. He also emphasized that the individuals' varied roots and views on parenting impact behavioral inclusion.

“We are catering to children or clients with different, different behaviors. Their parents have different backgrounds, and they have different behaviors, so managing these various behaviors is really challenging. Because there are those with good behaviors! There are still others who don't have good behaviors at all. So it's really difficult, to work on changing a behavioral, you know, behavioral problems. It's difficult even with our peers, our friends, and those with not-so-good behaviors, right? It's really different, isn't it.”

On the other hand, Ma'am Rose indicated that the issue goes beyond the particular circumstances of the children and addresses the difficulties encountered while handling cases, especially those involving minors.

“Then there are cases here that we have handled that we can truly say are very challenging, not just because they involve minors, but also challenging because of the family itself. These are cases where they arrived here due to distorted families, problems within their families. How will their lives be if they return to their families with the same issues, without any changes in their family? That is indeed a very challenging situation.”

Moreover, Ma'am Rose had a genuine desire to leave the current place. Also, she justified wishing to leave, mentioning the stress in her current place. She said, “We can really say that we just want to leave here, sometimes, because it's full of stress here, right? Full of stress.” Furthermore, Sir Jay expressed his experiences handling the client as possibly related to absorbing negative energy or dealing with challenging situations. He said, “We, maybe burn out already, when it's like that, it's like we absorb the negative vibes, so maybe.” Meanwhile, Ma'am Pat preferred to step back, possibly due to the emotionally challenging or distressing nature of handling such cases. She related, “Actually, I want to back off because you know, when I enter here, the cases are like rape, murder, things like that.”

Furthermore, Ma'am Pat expressed a sense of being new in a certain situation and the idea that people may treat you differently or test you when you are new.

“Still new, you're still new, I'm still new. It's like those things, especially here with children, they'll ask you, then it seems like you're still figuring things out because, of course, you're still new. You'll try to see where you stand, right?”

Moreover, she emphasized the continuous and dynamic nature of these changes. She reflects on the idea that time, whether annually or now, brings change, evolution, and transformation. She also emphasizes that clients also transform. The challenges they face also evolve. She expressed, “Annually or whatever time it is now, our time is changing, becoming new, evolving. Our clients are evolving. The challenges that come with that also evolve, you know.”

Difficulty provides opinions and ideas from social workers on their experiences managing cases, especially those involving children with a range of behaviors and difficult family circumstances. Together, the participant statements show social workers' difficulties while assisting clients who display a range of behaviors shaped by different upbringings and parental approaches. The difficulty of altering unfavorable behaviors in clients and the social workers' peer and friend networks is highlighted, as is the complexity of controlling such behaviors and treating behavioral issues. The scenario is particularly difficult since the participant is concerned that the family setting may not improve. The desire to quit the current workplace is expressed; it is motivated by stress and shows a need for relaxation. Additionally, it emphasized how social workers and their clients continuously evolve and adapt, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the issues they face in their line of work.

The participants stated that developing a relationship with CICL is essential for successful rehabilitation; nevertheless, it can be difficult when parents are reluctant or uncooperative, which makes it difficult for the social worker to understand and support them (IvyPanda, 2023; Frontline, 2020 as cited in Suerte, et al., 2023).

Working with children whose parents are highly conflicted is tough, draining, and frustrating for many social workers in child protection services (CPS). Part of the reason parents remain in a state of high conflict is their inability to come to an agreement or compromise regarding the child's place of residence, financial support, daily schedule, or parenting style (Jevne & Ulvik, 2012; Saini et al., 2012, 2018; Cashmore & Parkinson, 2011; Gulbrandsen, 2013; Weingarten & Leas, 1987, as cited in Sudland, 2019).

In a statement, Sir Jay emphasized that it is challenging for them to handle clients because of their diverse range of origins and behaviors. He said, “We are dealing with children or clients with various behaviors, they came from different types of parents.” Meanwhile, Ma'am Ella also emphasized the interconnectedness of culture, behavior, and values; for her, it is challenging to work with clients from different backgrounds. She related, “You will encounter different cultures, behaviors, and beliefs when dealing with Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) or when dealing with your clients.”

Furthermore, she added that there are difficulties in handling the variety and diversity of behaviors of the client, especially when they pertain to drug usage. It suggested that people behave differently, especially while under the influence of drugs. Ma'am Ella, added, “And then, this is really about their behavior. It's different because their behaviors vary, especially in various cases, particularly in drug-related ones. Their behavior is different, and their mannerisms are also different here.” Moreover, she implied that it is hard to handle clients, especially those who grow up in dysfunctional families, feeling hopeless because of their experiences when she said,



“Hopeless children due to their experiences in a dysfunctional family, their parents, beliefs, teachings they received are different so that's really the challenge. The problem with our Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) begins in the family. As I mentioned earlier, their dysfunctional family background is actually our number one problem. When they return home, their environment remains unclear, with no clear mother or father. These are just my recommendations for the government, kidding. They come from a dysfunctional family with parents lacking responsibility and care.”

The social workers' remarks highlighted how crucial it is to acknowledge and consider socio-cultural variety when assisting children involved with the law. These young people come from various cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, presenting issues that need a socially conscious approach. The first social worker highlights how challenging it may be to manage clients with various behaviors, attributing these distinctions to different family backgrounds. Social justice is another essential aspect of social work. A strong leadership can be viewed as one of the outcomes of the anti-discriminatory practices in social work. Social justice also focuses on the outcomes of the social model that affect individual, family, community, and welfare rights. Hence, individuals who suffer from social injustices will receive help in the form of specific services individually and, at the same time, help in social responses. Social justice must be addressed and separated from social work. This is because it affects the clients and the social services being offered by the social workers. Thus, solely focusing on the client's needs and social workers' services is inadequate. In this regard, social workers would normally deal with individuals with severe behavior disorders based on showing the possible consequences of their actions to the victims and their families (Childress et al., 2018). Furthermore, social work practice aims to improve and change society. Such activities include political action, community organization, public education campaigning, and the administration of broad-based social services agencies or public welfare departments" (Barker, 2013, p. 253).

Sir Jay desired good behavior but acknowledged the challenge of addressing behavioral issues within themselves and others. He emphasized the difficulty in fostering behavioral change, particularly when dealing with companions or friends who might not exhibit positive behavior. The participant highlighted the significant challenge of influencing behavioral changes in themselves and others, emphasizing the difference it makes when individuals possess good conduct.

He related, “I hope for good behavior! But there are still others who don’t really have good behavior. It’s very difficult, to work on changing behavioral, you know, behavioral problems, it’s really tough even with our companions, our friends, if they don’t have good behavior, right? Isn’t it really different?”

Ma'am Rose seemed to express frustration or resignation regarding the teaching or emphasis on values and honesty. She might be implying that more than simply teaching these principles is needed or wondering about the next steps or actions to follow after imparting such values. She emphasized, “You teach values and honesty, then what’s next, like that.” This statement of Ma'am Rose questioned the inconsistency in behavior. It highlighted the contrast between how one might refrain from disrespecting at home yet is willing to display disrespectful behavior towards clients or outsiders. It prompted reflection



on the importance of consistent, respectful behavior, suggesting that showing respect should not be conditional based on the setting or individuals involved. It is clear in her statement, “Is it disrespectful if you don’t show respect at home, but when it comes to clients here, we are being disrespected.”

Ma'am Rose also discussed individuals who exhibit both verbal and physical aggression. It touches on the fact that despite having some family members who might excel in communication or speak well, others display aggressive behavior.

“Those who, verbally aside from that they are physically aggressive, sometimes their behaviors, you know, in news or crimes, aside from having other brothers who are, you know, good in terms of speaking but aside from that, physically aggressive, so they are really strong in everything, so behavior.”

This statement of Ma'am Rose discusses a struggle or challenge that arises due to a conflict between someone's values and behavior. This conflict might be the reason for the challenges they face. Additionally, it implied that laziness is a prevalent characteristic among them, possibly stemming from the mentioned conflict between their values and behavior.

They emphasize the challenge of cultivating good behavior in oneself and others, recognizing the difficulty when dealing with companions who may lack positive behavior, and expressing frustration about the efficacy of teaching values like honesty without adequate follow-through or implementation. Overall, both speakers highlighted the challenge of aligning taught values with practical behavior and the complexities involved in fostering consistent positive conduct.

Focus and Guidance. Maintaining focus and guidance is challenging and complicated for social workers who play a role with children in conflict with the law. Due to these children's varied origins and behaviors, social workers may adopt an adapted and comprehensive approach, focusing intensely on individual treatments. As stated in the remarks, social workers may deal with the complicated issues of addressing different cultural influences, behaviors, and beliefs.

In a statement, Sir Jay emphasized that providing a child with constant, focused attention is challenging, indicating that their growth and well-being depend on a caring environment and ongoing follow-up. He said, “They really need care, they need more focus, they should be nurtured and guided, and they need constant follow-up.”

Moreover, he even emphasized that there is difficulty in giving individuals the care they need without harming them and yet expressing their authority to guide and assist them properly. It is evident in his words, “There are times or residents who may not easily respond to your ways, you need to handle them with care. Some residents really require your attention; you shouldn't hurt them, but you need to assert your authority, you know.” He also added that while acknowledging the commitment to treating everyone fairly, this statement observed that some clients might need more time, attention, or direction than others.

Social Workers encountered difficulties while working with children who conflict with the law, emphasizing the need for a personalized and comprehensive strategy because of these children's various backgrounds and behaviors. They have difficulties caring for children who conflict with the law effectively. Concentrating on the need for constant support, attention, and nurture illustrates how complicated these people's requirements are



for development and well-being. Their duty becomes more complex when they acknowledge how difficult it is to balance providing care without harming others and standing in authority to give the right advice. The understanding that certain people might need more time, care, or direction emphasizes the dedication to treating everyone fairly while considering their unique and varied specifications.

However, it is imperative that children are personally managed or supervised, and in certain cases, disciplined when circumstances allow. As a result, this link enables social control to be embodied in a person in order to strengthen ties to social institutions (Gottfredson, 2018).

Emotional States. When social workers assist children who conflict with the law, they have a difficult task because of their emotional state: navigating the complicated juvenile court system. Working with young people who are involved with the law sometimes involves dealing with mental health issues, which can range from anticipation and guilt to anger and dissatisfaction.

According to Sir Jay's statement, a social worker is like a sponge, able to absorb and be responsive to a wide range of situations and challenges in life. He emphasized that being a social worker implies that there is an important impact on decisions, that they have a great deal of responsibility, and that they face emotional difficulty, especially when discussing court cases involving minors.

He expressed, "It seems like, here, we're like sponges, absorbing all kinds of issues and problems in their lives. We absorb everything, all their life problems, so we can, you know, absorb and understand. Above all, we are the person who can decide, because, you know, we follow the law. That's why when we decided to put back the child in the court there a significant pain for us, you know. Their sentences, their, you know, what do they call it, their judgments, their, it's just challenging for us."

Furthermore, in the statement of Ma'am Ella, their decisions cause a great deal of suffering, particularly when they choose to put someone in jail. It is not very comforting for them because the children do not seem to be able to improve their circumstances. She said that it is a challenge for them to acknowledge the occasional emotional changes the clients experience. They find ways to acknowledge that bad days happen, and it emphasizes the necessity of sharing stories to give support and understanding. The following words represent her experience,

"Their judgment, well, it really hurts us, you know, when they're sent to prison. Because they themselves, they can't even help themselves...But indeed, sometimes we experience what we call emotional changes, there are days that are not okay, you know. There are days that are not okay, but of course, we share stories."

Moreover, according to Sir Jay, he expressed a sense of helplessness, indicating that there is little they can do in the given situation. He also implied that it is not easy when that law limits their abilities to step in or conduct specific actions. These professionals, who function like sponges, absorb many concerns and problems in these young people's lives, including changes in emotions and difficulties in the juvenile justice system. Sir Jay highlighted the importance of their decisions, particularly when returning children to court, revealing the emotional burden of dealing with court proceedings, decisions, and legal boundaries. Ma'am Ella added that the judgments, particularly those that lead to jail, cause tremendous pain because children appear to be struggling to change their circumstances.

Within the confines of the legal structure, both convey a sense of powerlessness. Social workers deal with a number of serious issues, including scarce resources, moral conundrums, and establishing connection with parents and children. These challenges have an impact on the sustainability and efficacy of initiatives, necessitating a critical analysis of current practices and regulations (Suerte, et al., 2023).

Scope of Services. Addressing the needs of children in conflict with the law presents a diverse problem within the scope of services in the field of social work. One major challenge is that effective interventions need a comprehensive awareness of each child's situation and the ability to navigate legal difficulties, treat emotional well-being, and manage limited time.

The statement of Ma'am Ella emphasized the disappointment felt when, once in the outside world, individuals return to the disrespect and concern urged by their parents. According to her, it is very hard to see a critical transition point when children reach the outside world, where the values and beliefs imparted by parents appear to disappear. She uttered,

“And then, I would say, the sad point is when, upon reaching the outside, one reverts back to the ways of the parents, and the parents, despite teaching respect, don't even see a trace of what we started. When we try to continue the understanding and discussions outside, it seems it cannot be sustained. That's the sad reality outside, isn't it?”

The provided statement illustrates complex problems that social workers encounter while addressing the needs of children who conflict with the law. This issue is broad within social work, necessitating a complete approach to service delivery. The phrase correctly emphasized that effective treatments need a full grasp of each child's situation. Furthermore, the sentence refers to the viewpoint of Ma'am Ella, who underlines a sad and unpleasant truth. She underlined the hardship of seeing an important transition phase in which children reject the beliefs and lessons implanted in them because of their parents.

However, in other nations, social workers operate under the tenets of what constitutes appropriate childrearing. Conflicts have arisen between social workers and certain families as a result. According to a different study, many immigrant families face challenges in raising their kids in industrialized nations since their parenting philosophies do not support children's rights. Parental resistance is a global feature in social work including children and family social work, as seen by the conflicts that social workers and guardians have in the UK (Harris (2012) & Forrester et al., 2012 as mentioned in Sichone, T.F. [2019]).

Acceptance from CICL. Obtaining approval from Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) is difficult for social workers responsible for their care. These young people frequently suffer from a wide range of personal problems, such as trauma, behavioral disorders, and social stigma. Acquiring their confidence and collaboration necessitates a smart and subtle strategy considering their situation.

In her statement, Ma'am Pat has inherent difficulties, especially when interacting with Children in Conflict (CI), who might be unwilling or resistant to help. She emphasized that some clients could have reached a breaking point where they are unwilling to accept assistance, whether because they are scared to admit they need support or feel self-sufficient. Moreover, she emphasized what might happen when clients do not acknowledge

and value the services provided to them. She also implied that these clients effectively turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the efforts being made on their behalf if they reject or are unaware of the services offered.

She uttered,

“The challenges that I can truly express here, and in handling Children in Conflict (CI), there are indeed some who are really reluctant to accept help. It's no longer a situation where they themselves, in their self-reliance, are open to assistance. If they don't accept the services at the center, they act as if they are blind and deaf to what they're doing, you know, that's part of the entry where they engage in mischief.”

The statement emphasized social workers' difficult task when trying to win over Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Ma'am Pat highlighted the inherent challenges of working with CICL, especially when clients are reluctant to ask for or accept assistance. She draws attention to the possibility that some people have reached a breaking point due to fear, a refusal to acknowledge that they need help or a sense of independence.

Furthermore, Ma'am Pat emphasized the consequences for clients who need to recognize and appreciate the services provided. The part about getting into mischief that follows implies a possible downward process if acceptance is not attained, highlighting social workers' crucial role in negotiating these intricate details to offer CICL real help. Consequently, in order to help social workers comprehend and manage their emotions and foster clear thinking, they need to receive sufficient training and emotional support (Ferguson, 2017 & Ruch, 2007 as referenced in Sudland, 2019). As a psychotherapist, Bion (1984) advanced a theoretical comprehension of containment. According to Buch, 2007 as referenced in Sudland, 2019, containment is the process by which a reliable person absorbs, analyzes, and returns their emotions in a comprehensible manner that enables them to confront, comprehend, and manage uncertainty and react appropriately in real-world situations.

Theme Cluster: Coping with Challenges as Social Workers: Forging Ties and Well-being

In the context of this study, the theme cluster “: Coping with Challenges as Social Workers: Forging Ties and Well-being” is stated using the following themes: (1) Building Relationships, (2) Bonding with co-workers, (3) Maintaining Optimism, (4) Self-care and Well-being, (5) Availing Professional Help. This indicated that despite the challenges the participants experienced, they were able to come up with coping mechanisms to help mitigate these challenges.

Building Relationships. Most participants face difficulties while dealing with children who conflict with the law. Moreover, even with those challenges, they were able to cope, and building relationships with children in conflict with the law is crucial for social workers as it helps establish trust, providing a foundation for effective communication and intervention.

The following statements from Sir Jay characterized the importance of building rapport with residents. To connect with the residents effectively, one should understand and know them deeply, to the point of knowing what is inside their hearts and minds. This indicates the goal of establishing a meaningful and empathetic connection with the individuals in question. It is evident in his words,



“Build rapport with our residents, so you should really get to know them, you know, connect with them, right? “Let’s truly understand their inner selves by building rapport; it’s indeed about rapport. Now, building rapport means gaining their inner selves slowly, it’s not something you achieve overnight. Their trust, too, is something you slowly gain. Your goal is like hitting two birds with one stone, and that stone is your rapport. So, your end result is gaining.”

On the other hand, Sir Jay also indicated the importance of establishing a connection with the residents, emphasizing that with such a connection, there would be extra effort and willingness to provide information. Building a relationship is essential for effective communication and cooperation; without it, there may be a lack of engagement or cooperation in sharing information.

The participants underscored the significance of fostering connections with residents, emphasizing the need for genuine understanding and deep knowledge of their thoughts and emotions to establish a meaningful and empathetic bond. Additionally, the participants stressed the necessity of establishing a connection with residents, stating that with such a bond, there would be extra effort and willingness to share information. This underscored the essential role of relationships in effective communication and cooperation, suggesting that lacking these connections may lead to a deficit in engagement or collaboration in information sharing.

In order to build a trustworthy relationship, social workers communicate with their clients. This is essential to providing high-quality care and motivating patients to be open about their problems. The relationship between a social worker and their client is characterized by mutual trust, respect, and understanding. Building rapport with clients is essential in social work because it facilitates the trust that the client and the social worker need in order for the client to feel comfortable sharing personal information and experiences. It also facilitates the social worker’s understanding of the client’s needs and situation (Gradschools, n.d.).

Bonding with Social Workers. Building strong bonds with co-workers is crucial for social workers as it enhances team cohesion, fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment.

In the statement of Ma’am Ella, she emphasized the existence of coping mechanisms that individuals engage in, suggesting that they consistently employ these strategies as part of their regular behavior or routine. It implied a habitual or constant application of these coping mechanisms as a regular practice. She shared, “Then there are coping mechanisms being done like we always get together.” She added that social workers understand and empathize with each other because they are aware that they, too, experience emotions that are sometimes difficult to control. It suggests acknowledging the presence of emotions that cannot always be restrained. Furthermore, the statement alluded to the recognition that individuals may have different behaviors or attitudes, emphasizing a shared understanding among social workers about the complexities of human emotions and behavior. It is also evident in her words, “We understand each other because, as social workers, we are aware that we also have emotions that are sometimes uncontrollable, and there are even behaviors that vary, you know?”



The Social Worker's statement highlighted individuals' utilization of coping mechanisms, indicating that these strategies are consistently integrated into their regular behavior or routine. Additionally, it mentions that social workers have a mutual understanding and empathy for each other due to their awareness that they, too, encounter emotions that can be challenging to manage. Social workers deal with many stressful situations, and coping with stress can benefit the social worker in many different aspects. Social workers work quickly and efficiently while having high caseloads that can be stressful (Quezada, 2022). Relationships that are solid and healthy are crucial for your entire life. Your physical, mental, and emotional health are influenced by the social relationships you have with coworkers, neighbors, family, and other people (NHI News in Health, 2018)

Reflective supervision encourages self-awareness and efficient implementation strategies, while collaborative work and communication among social workers in the workplace can improve services for CICL clients. Assessments and evaluations are carried out on a regular basis to pinpoint problem areas and offer recommendations for advancement. In order to guarantee client-centered methods and examine personal effect and decision-making processes, supervision offers a safe environment (Jennings, 2020 as cited in Suerte et al., 2023).

Maintaining Optimism. Maintaining optimism is crucial for social workers dealing with children in conflict with the law as it fosters a positive and hopeful outlook, which can inspire change. Optimism enables social workers to approach challenges with resilience, encouraging a belief in the potential for rehabilitation and positive transformation in the lives of these children.

Sir Jay highlighted the importance of self-encouragement and self-motivation. It highlighted the idea that adults should also apply the same encouragement and positive reinforcements given to children to themselves. It stressed the need for individuals to actively motivate and uplift their spirits, acknowledging that self-encouragement is crucial for personal growth, resilience, and well-being. He said, "We need to encourage ourselves because these encouragements to children should also be applied to ourselves. We really need to encourage ourselves."

As a Social worker, Ma'am Ella highlighted the recognition of behavioral variations in individuals. It suggests that during periods of rest or when someone is calmer, initiating a conversation or engaging in meaningful communication is more suitable. This notion underlined the importance of timing and sensitivity in interactions, suggesting that certain conversations or discussions are best approached when someone is relaxed or in a more receptive state of mind. She stated, "Behavioral differences, but during those times of rest and calming down, that's when it's appropriate to engage in conversation, that's all."

Ma'am Rosa, on the other hand, expressed gratitude and a sense of feeling fortunate or blessed about being assigned to a particular place or task. It indicated a recognition of the positive aspects or opportunities that come with the assignment, conveying appreciation for the circumstances or responsibilities given, as she uttered, "We're also very blessed that we're assigned here." Her statement also highlights the fulfillment and satisfaction of seeing a child under their care being discharged or released, as it signifies successful reintegration into their family and community. It implied that their goal is to provide immediate care and ensure a smooth transition back to the child's support network and familiar environment, fostering a sense of belonging and stability. She shared, "Most

satisfying is when we discharged children, that moment when we turn them over to their family and community.”

Optimism is encapsulated as well in Ma'am Ella's words, “Okay, on the positive side of course, it feels really good in my work here when the clients return to their home.” This shows a positive aspect of her job satisfaction as a social worker. She might be conveying that one of the most rewarding parts of her work is the feeling she gets when clients, presumably the individuals she assists, returned home or left the facility feeling a sense of improvement, progress, or positivity.

The social worker underscored the significance of self-encouragement and self-motivation, emphasizing the need for adults to apply the same positive reinforcements to themselves as to children. This approach is seen as essential for personal growth, resilience, and overall well-being, recognizing the variability in individual behavior. The importance of timing and sensitivity in communication is highlighted, suggesting that meaningful conversations are best initiated when individuals are relaxed or in a receptive state of mind. Another social worker expressed gratitude for being assigned to a specific place or task, recognizing the positive aspects and opportunities that come with it. She found fulfillment in seeing a child successfully reintegrate into their family and community, emphasizing the goal of ensuring a smooth transition and fostering a sense of belonging. The satisfaction derived from assisting individuals, particularly those in conflict with the law, in their rehabilitation is also highlighted. The unique experiences and challenges at the rehabilitation center contribute to professional growth and enhance the quality of support provided to those in need. Another social worker expressed the rewarding aspect of her job satisfaction, finding fulfillment when clients leave the facility with a sense of improvement, progress, or positivity. This reflected her joy in facilitating positive changes and experiences for those she works with.

Social workers' approaches to CICL management can be characterized as comprehensive, client-centered, and community-focused. Social workers employ a holistic approach, taking into account each CICL's unique needs, circumstances, and potential. In order to address the emotional, social, and behavioral issues of the CICL, they place a high priority on developing a therapeutic connection with them and offering advice, support, and individual counseling. In order to establish a conducive atmosphere for the rehabilitation and reintegration of CICL, social workers also understand how important it is to involve the community and cooperate with nearby resources. They aggressively advocate for diversionary programs as a substitute for jail, emphasizing both the legal and individual growth of CICL. Despite having limited resources, social workers are dedicated to maintaining moral principles and facilitating reintegration outcomes for CICL (Suerte et al., 2023).

Self-care and well-being. Maintaining self-care and well-being is crucial for social workers handling children in conflict with the law as it helps prevent burnout and emotional exhaustion, ensuring sustained effectiveness in their roles.

Sir Jay stressed the importance of self-care for girls, advocating for practices that involve grooming, relaxation, and taking breaks from work. It encourages focusing on work, personal well-being, and rejuvenation. It suggested that amidst the demands of life, there should be allocated time for self-care to maintain balance and take care of one's physical and mental health.



As for Ma'am Ella, she pointed on the importance of mindfulness as a strategy, particularly when dealing with strong emotions such as anger or frustration. She highlighted the significance of setting aside these emotions and calming themselves before engaging in a conversation, especially when interacting with children. The statement suggested the speaker's practice of managing their emotions before communicating, showing an understanding of the need to approach situations with a clear and composed mindset. The inclusion of humor with the phrase "just kidding" adds a light-hearted tone to the discussion. She said that,

"For me, just be mindful, it's a strategy when you're dealing with emotions, like when you're angry or upset, there's a time when you're really angry, but I set aside my emotions and calm myself before talking to the child. But that's what I do, I set aside my emotions, just kidding, then I'll go...I don't really show it. I prefer to be alone. That's how we all cope, we hide, we all hide when we're angry, when we're stressed, we hide."

Personal growth and development was also evident in the life of Ma'am Ella, "I rose through helping at RRCY. So I also underwent rehabilitation, not just rehabilitating them, but I also rehabilitated myself. So that's it, it was a very short period but it was very fulfilling, that's okay."

Their experiences underscored the importance of practicing mindfulness, especially when dealing with intense emotions like anger or frustration, emphasizing the need to take a moment to calm oneself before engaging in conversations, particularly with children. Additionally, the social worker participant notes a tendency within their group or community to conceal emotions, expressing a preference for solitude when dealing with stress or anger. While dealing with and assisting in RRCY, the participants also undergo personal growth and development, resulting in fulfillment and accomplishment.

The profession of social work can benefit from teaching healthy coping techniques. Having social workers who are both physically and emotionally healthy benefits clients, coworkers, and organizations. Social professionals will be more capable of handling demanding circumstances. Social workers will grow and succeed with the use of effective coping mechanisms. Setting coping skills like self-care as a top priority inside the organization can help decrease attrition, boost retention, save costs associated with both, and free up money for other requirements. Social professionals work in challenging environments every day. Taking care of one's physical, mental, and spiritual well-being is something that social workers are urged to learn about. Creating effective coping mechanisms involves several steps. Social workers' ability to cope well will be of enormous use to the field (Quezada, 2022).

Availing Professional help. Professional aid is crucial for social workers handling children in conflict with the law as it provides a structured support system and access to specialized expertise.

Ma'am Rose responded to a query about their stress level. She indicated that her stress level is manageable, attributing this to her involvement in attending to other activities, specifically engaging in providing psychological first aid. Additionally, the participant mentioned having personal techniques or strategies that assist in coping with stress, suggesting that she has methods to alleviate stress and maintain a balanced mental state amidst her responsibilities. She answered, "Stress level? Oh, it's perfectly fine



because I also have something else I attend to, doing psychological first aid and I also have some techniques.”

Ma'am Patt, on the other hand, highlighted the importance of self-awareness regarding areas of unknown knowledge or expertise. She emphasized the significance of recognizing one's weaknesses or areas where one lacks understanding. The statement suggested that individuals can prioritize and focus their efforts on improving those areas by acknowledging these weak spots. It underscored the value of self-awareness in identifying personal limitations and the intention to address them for growth and improvement in social work or similar contexts. She said, “We are aware of something that we don't know, aware of our weak spots, that's where we focus, right? Where we are weak, that's it.”

In response to a question about stress levels, the social worker mentioned that she manages stress effectively, crediting her engagement in various activities, particularly providing psychological first aid. Additionally, she noted employing personal techniques to cope with stress, indicating that she has methods to alleviate stress and maintain mental balance amid her responsibilities. Another social worker emphasized the importance of self-awareness in areas of unknown knowledge or expertise, stressing the significance of recognizing weaknesses or areas lacking understanding. The statement suggested that acknowledging these areas for improvement allows individuals to prioritize and focus efforts on enhancing those areas, highlighting the value of self-awareness for personal growth in social work or similar contexts.

Theme Cluster: Recommendation for a Better Social Worker: Holistic Development

In this context, the theme cluster Recommendation for a Better Social Worker: Holistic Development is described using the following themes: (1) Passion and Commitment, (2) Development of values, (3) Building Connection and Faith, and (4) Human Resource Development.

Passion and Commitment. Having passion and commitment is essential for social workers handling children in conflict with the law as it fuels the resilience needed to navigate the complex challenges of their work.

Sir Jay emphasized the importance of loving one's job, suggesting that everything in work begins with a genuine passion for what you do. He stressed that everything falls apart without this enthusiasm and loses meaning. He reflected on their experience, specifically mentioning their fondness for social work since childhood, highlighting that the foundation of pursuing a career should be rooted in genuine affection for the field. As Sir Jay stated that:

"Love the job, love your job, okay, it all starts with loving your job, okay, if you don't have the interest, then it's all over! Not everything is like that anymore. If you don't have the interest, you won't want to engage, you won't like it, everything will disappear, so for me, I think loving our job because first and foremost, we enter or take this course and get this job because we love this course, this job. This is also my experience when I was still a child, I really liked social work."

Meanwhile, Ma'am Rose contemplated staying within a particular center or place that might be convenient or feasible for them. She also believed that having children



present in that setting could bring about a more significant impact or benefit. She mentioned the challenge of the situation and suggested that by providing more encouragement, they can offer greater assistance or support to those involved, likely referring to aiding or working with children in this context. Ma'am Rose said, "Maybe I'll just stay here in the center where it's also feasible maybe if the child is here, that would really be the challenge, you know, maybe the more we encourage, the more we can help them." It implied that the involvement or presence of these people could lead to a stronger commitment or dedication to supporting CICL-related initiatives or aid programs. She further said, "Maybe while they're here, perhaps there will be more effort in helping the CICL."

Additionally, Ma'am Patt indicated the importance of aligning life choices with personal passions, such as selecting a course or career path. She suggested that one's passion should guide decision-making, especially regarding work. Loving what you do daily is crucial. She cautioned that without this passion for work, life becomes a struggle where one merely manages to get by with meager wages, barely covering expenses, highlighting the significance of finding fulfillment in what one does. Ma'am Patt shared,

"And if you have desires in your life, for example, when choosing a course or anything else, you should connect it to your passion because what your passion is, that's what you should follow. In everyday life, your work, you will love it. It's really like that because if you don't love your work, you'll struggle every day, just receiving a few wages for the expenses, that's all."

Ma'am Patt expressed that when someone has a deep thirst for knowledge and understanding, that desire initiates the process of learning. She suggested that possessing passion for what you do leads to a deep sense of personal fulfillment and satisfaction in your work. The following statements highlighted the eagerness and passion for acquiring knowledge. It also emphasized that the true learning journey begins when one earnestly desires to understand and explore various subjects or concepts.

"Once you thirst for learning, you crave to understand things like that, that's where it comes in, right there, that's where it begins when you really want to learn."

"If you have passion, right, you'll really attain self-satisfaction in your work."

"The positive side of that as a worker is, your self-satisfaction isn't paid in money."

Ma'am Patt added that working entails being open to challenges and continuous learning. Each day presents opportunities for growth and development, and by embracing these challenges, one can constantly improve. The experiences of the participants accentuated passion and dedication's importance to personal and professional goals. All the speakers—Sir Jay, Ma'am Rose, and Ma'am Path agree that the cornerstone of significant and satisfying accomplishments is having a sincere passion for one's profession. Sir Jay emphasized the importance of having a passion for one's profession, and Ma'am Rose considers the consequences of being dedicated to a cause, particularly when dealing with children. Ma'am Patt emphasized the significance of making life decisions that align with one's passions and emphasized that true fulfillment stems from having an intense passion for one's work. Furthermore, all the participants support lifelong learning, thriving on challenges, and discovering a unique value in one's profession beyond financial gain.



Social workers are essential when it comes to helping children involved in legal disputes because they offer them alternative learning opportunities, help them form healthy social connections, and help them adopt healthier behaviors. Social workers provide treatments that support positive behavior, improve skill development, and aid in the rehabilitation and effective reintegration of these children into society by embracing the fundamental ideas of the Social Learning Theory. Social workers' capacity for making decisions is further strengthened by ongoing education from elders, seminars, and training courses (Suerte, 2023).

Development of Values. Developing strong values is essential for social workers handling children in conflict with the law as it forms the ethical foundation guiding their decisions and actions.

Ma'am Rose, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of teaching individuals how to build a sustainable life outside the rehabilitation center. The concern lies in preparing individuals for life after discharge, highlighting the risk of resorting to illegal activities like theft due to a lack of job opportunities or support systems. It stressed the significant challenges individuals face, especially concerning family and income stability, pointing out that without these factors, individuals may struggle to sustain themselves and may face difficulties in reintegration into society. She stated that:

“Teach them how to establish a permanent living, what life is like outside because after discharge from here, if there's no job available, they'll resort to stealing so, those challenges are very real, you know, for the brothers and the family because, you know, without a proper income and without family, there's nothing.”

Ma'am Rose suggested a proactive approach to cultivating and fostering the positive attributes or values present within individuals. It implied a deliberate effort to encourage and develop these inherent positive traits, possibly in a context where individuals are guided or supported to enhance their strengths and virtues. She said that there are opportunities presented by the custody or supervision where the individuals are under. It suggested a concerted effort to use this time effectively to instill and nurture positive behavior and values. The context likely involves a setting where individuals are under some form of supervision or care. During this period, there is a deliberate intention to promote and encourage positive conduct and values in them. She said, “They are under custody, so to speak, we maximize the time they're here to instill good behavior or foster good values.” Their approach, refrained causing physical harm to their environment. Instead, they prioritize positive communication and the implementation of progressive disciplinary methods. She uttered personal growth and development, particularly in managing or handling situations using more advanced mechanisms or strategies within their environment. This suggested a commitment to a supportive, communicative, and progressive approach in dealing with others, especially when discipline or correction is necessary. It is evident in her words, “Also for us, to avoid inflicting physical harm, because here with us, it's all about positive communication, progressive discipline. I've advanced here in terms of mechanisms.”

On the other hand, Ma'am Rosa underscored the importance of avoiding a judgmental mindset within the context of RRCY. It highlighted the need for open-mindedness and refraining from forming harsh or critical opinions about others. This



attitude contributes to creating a more supportive and understanding environment within the RRCY setting.

One of the most important things a social worker who works with CICL should do is to help them establish their values. Empathy, compassion, and a strong sense of justice are among the values that provide the ethical basis required to successfully handle the difficulties of dealing with CICL. When it comes to directing the activities and choices of social workers, especially those who deal with CICL, the idea of the formation of values is essential. It requires an ongoing process of realizing one's values and beliefs that shape how one behaves. To build an ethical framework for successfully addressing the issues related to CICL, social workers must impart values like compassion, understanding, and a strong sense of justice. The focus is on assisting children in developing their moral compass and giving importance to ideals that protect their rights and dignity.

The implemented program aims to help children discover their strengths and interests, providing direction and guidance toward a fulfilling life by identifying potential career paths and helping them make informed decisions about their future. The program's success will be measured by its effectiveness in helping children achieve their goals and lead fulfilling lives (Allen & Kelly, 2015).

Building Connection and Faith. Building connections and faith within themselves is crucial for social workers handling children in conflict with the law as it strengthens their resilience and emotional well-being in challenging situations.

Sir Jay emphasized three things: unloading or letting go of burdens, connecting with something or someone, and most importantly, establishing a strong connection with a higher power, likely referring to God. The repetition of "pray" emphasizes prayer's significance in connecting with the divine and seeking guidance, comfort, and support. It underscored the importance of faith and spirituality in finding solace and direction in life, as he said, "Unload, connect with, and most importantly, deeply connect with our Almighty Father, pray and pray."

He also stressed the importance of a robust family support system. There is the enduring significance of family and encouraged returning to the family for support. He also highlighted the opportunity to learn from the family unit, suggesting that familial connections provide crucial lessons and support for personal growth and stability. He said, "I also recommend having a strong support system within the family. It's really about family, going back to your family, having a support system there, learning from that."

For, Ma'am Rosa, shared a sense of self-reliance or a limited support network in her experience. It suggests that the speaker perceives they can only rely on themselves or a small, limited group of individuals for support. This could imply a lack of broader external support or a feeling that they need to manage challenges largely on their own or within a very tight-knit circle, as she said, "We're the only support system we have." This calls on the importance of effective communication, coordination, and collaboration. These elements are fundamental in various settings, such as work environments or team-based projects. It stressed the significance of clear and efficient communication, synchronized efforts, and harmonizing to achieve common goals or objectives. Further it highlighted the crucial significance of providing and receiving feedback. It is evident in her words, "We really have communication with our companions, that feedback is very important." A collaborative also ensures the best decision for a child's welfare. This approach is not about individual preferences but what serves the child's best interests. She emphasized,



“We're very solid in decision-making. It's not just about me making the decision, not you, not even them alone, but all of us. We're open. This is so that we can achieve the best decision for that child because it's not just about anyone, it's not just about any random person. If we make a decision that doesn't benefit them because I didn't coordinate with others, that's where coordination, communication, and collaboration with the team come in.”

Ma'am Rosa and Ma'am Patt accentuated the collaborative nature of their work, stating that they are not working alone but as part of a supportive team. They recognized that certain situations require collective effort rather than being solely the responsibility of a single social worker. Ma'am Rosa stated,

"We are dealing with the families of the CICL, sometimes they have quite stubborn attitudes. Whatever challenges we face here, if we all work as teammates, we can achieve the well-being of the residents. That's our main goal here: the welfare of the residents so that they can return to a good environment with their parents, and the families feel empowered enough to manage themselves so they don't go back to their previous situations."

Ma'am Patt shared, "I am not working alone here, you know. There's a helping team. And there are things that I can't handle alone; I call others because it's not just about being the social worker alone. No. Here, we are a team." Similar, Sir Jay said, "Connect with our friends, connect with our family, to unload whatever negative vibes we've absorbed." But recharging oneself is also significant in their lives. He expressed that for their rejuvenation, they find traveling an effective way to recharge their energy, refresh their mind, and find inspiration. Traveling serves as a means of relaxation and a way to revitalize themselves emotionally and mentally. He said: "To recharge, that's recharging! For me, I travel."

One of the most important things a social worker who works with Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) should do is to help them establish their values. Empathy, compassion, and a strong sense of justice are among the values that provide the ethical basis required to successfully handle the difficulties of dealing with CICL. Prioritizing principles that uphold these children's rights and dignity will help social workers create a supportive and understanding atmosphere. Developing deep connections, trust, and confidence in a higher power are all included in connecting and strengthening one's faith. It entails building strong ties with others and inspiring faith in common ideals, whether spiritual or personal. Promoting religious beliefs is essential because it gives social workers who work with children who conflict with the law (CICL) the drive to fight for their well-being consistently. Sir Jay highlights the value of prayerful communication with a higher power, emphasizing religion's role in looking for direction and assistance.

In the office, social workers may provide better care for CICL clients through collaborative work and communication, and reflective supervision fosters self-awareness and efficient implementation strategies. Assessments and evaluations are carried out on a regular basis to pinpoint problem areas and offer recommendations for advancement. In order to guarantee client-centered methods and examine the personal impact and decision-making processes, supervision offers a safe environment. Active listening and assistance in managing stress connected to one's work are key components of reflective supervision (Jennings, 2020 & Frases, 2016 as quoted in Suerte et al., 2023).

Human Resource Development. Human resource development is essential for social workers handling children in conflict with the law in rehabilitation centers as it ensures continuous skill enhancement and professional growth.

Ma'am Rose mentioned the importance of livelihood support and training for individuals under RRCY (presumably rehabilitation or prison). She emphasized the necessity of providing training or opportunities for acquiring livelihood skills because when these individuals return to the outside world, they would not have access to everything for free. Encouraging them to undergo training helps prepare them for self-sustainability, as they will need to work and support themselves once they are no longer in the facility's care. She said, "And then there's that, they really have livelihood, like livelihood training, because when they go back outside, RRCY won't provide everything for free, they really need to work." Ma'am Rose discussed the system within their Local Government Unit (LGU), suggesting that the increase in social workers in their offices is a response to the growing needs of Filipino families. She stressed the importance of this intervention as community issues often originate within families. She also expressed gratitude and concluded by emphasizing the adequacy of their statement. She related the following words,

"The system in our LGU, perhaps due to the budget or anything else, is really increasing the number of social workers in their offices to truly address and meet the needs of the Filipino families. That's necessary, and the proper intervention in the community is needed because issues often stem from their families. That's it, and I thank you. That's enough!"

The statement above emphasizes the critical role that Human Resource Development (HRD) plays in promoting the development and welfare of persons working for an organization, especially social workers who assist Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). HRD provides social workers with the knowledge, abilities, and emotional fortitude needed to manage the difficulties brought on by CICL successfully. This benefits social workers as well as the clients they serve.

Ma'am Rose emphasized the usefulness of HRD even further by promoting training and assistance for livelihood for those seeking rehabilitation. The goal of this strategy is to get them ready for self-sustainability when they return to society. She also talked about how the Local Government Unit (LGU) plans on hiring more social workers and stresses the value of this intervention in meeting the rising demands of Filipino families, stressing that family issues are frequently the root of social issues. This multifaceted approach is a complete strategy for successful social work and community support, integrating individual capacity building with community-level interventions.

The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act, R.A. 9344, stipulated that Bahay Pag-asa must be founded in the Province of Cagayan, which is how the Bahay Pag-asa was established in the Philippines. The lawmakers' considerations led to the amendment of R.A. No. 9344 on 10630, which improved the Philippine Juvenile Justice System by granting CICL the right to special protection and assistance from the state and by establishing financing and management for the provision of short-term residential care by the Bahay Pag-asa Local Government Units (LGU). Regional juvenile intervention programs are developed by the LGU for kids who are in danger or breaking the law. It is a children in conflict with the law (CICL) rehabilitation center. It has been running for around seven

years, and the City Social Welfare & Development Office currently employs someone to administer it. They provide an activity-based intervention program to address the issues behind the child's criminal behavior. It describes methodical child social protection initiatives that employ programmatic techniques to support children's physical and emotional well-being, discourage juvenile criminality, and prevent or halt repeat offenders (Luna, 2020 as cited in Suerte, et al., 2023).

Conclusions

The challenges faced by social workers in assisting clients with diverse behaviors, particularly those involving children in conflict with the law, were, therefore, intricate and multifaceted. The complexity of altering negative behaviors and addressing concerns within dysfunctional families reflected the dynamic nature of social work issues. Managing cases involving children in conflict with the law added an emotional strain, prompting a desire for breaks and potential changes in the workplace for social workers. The need for a personalized, comprehensive, and holistic approach to address children's unique, socio-cultural diversity, backgrounds and behaviors in conflict with the law becomes evident through social workers' testimonials. It is difficult to balance authority, justice, and empathy while maintaining your self-care and emotional well-being. Genuine connections with residents are crucial for effective communication and collaboration, underlining the importance of rapport-building over time to gain trust.

The social workers stressed the habitual nature of coping mechanisms integrated into individuals' regular behavior, emphasizing the need for a composed mindset, self-encouragement, positive reinforcement, and mindful communication in challenging situations when dealing with their clients. Because of the impact it brought to the social workers while handling children in conflict with the law, it is very crucial for them to avail professional help, self-care and well-being to have the will to continue pursuing their job and profession as social worker to serve the community.

In achieving personal and professional goals, passion and dedication they are emerged as critical elements, as reiterated by social workers handling children in conflict with the law. Social Workers advocate for lifelong learning, embracing challenges, and finding intrinsic value in the social work profession beyond financial gain. In addition, the social workers emphasized the strong support system in their field of work. Connecting with friends and family is a big support system because they can recharge and still serve the community while maintaining optimism with their utmost effort. Teamwork, communication, collaboration and coordination with all the social workers in the field must enhance team cohesion, fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment. Human Resource Development (HRD) is highlighted as a crucial tool in equipping social workers, especially those dealing with children in conflict with the law, with the knowledge, skills, and emotional resilience needed to navigate challenges successfully.

The overall consensus among the participants is that addressing the root causes of social issues at the community level is essential, pointing towards a holistic and comprehensive approach in social work. The experiences of social workers handling children in conflict with the law, including the challenges, coping mechanisms and recommendations, provide a wide understanding of social workers' profession. The roles and responsibilities they need to perform and attain for the betterment of the community



and society is a challenging job to do. Still, they are doing their best to provide efficient and effective service to aid every client in need, especially the children in conflict with the law in the rehabilitation center.

The experiences of the social workers recommend that they may access resources, ongoing training, and a welcoming workplace that includes frequent debriefing sessions. A resilient and productive workforce is fostered by promoting social workers' teamwork, giving them access to specialized resources, and recognizing the importance of their work. Acknowledgment and admiration for their hard work add to their sense of worth and mission to enhance the lives of CICL. Enhancing the Local Government Unit's (LGU) assistance for social workers managing Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). For social workers who deal with children in conflict with the law (CICL) to be empowered, the LGU may need to prioritize collaboration with other organizations, proper supervision, continuous professional development, and sufficient resources. Social workers' well-being depends on recognizing their difficulties and creating a stigma-free workplace. Supporting social workers who work with children who conflict with the law (CICL) is essential in the community. Making awareness campaigns can be given a priority to promote genuine communication, and lessen stigma. A holistic strategy required cooperation between social workers, law enforcement, schools, and leaders. Offer community-based education to improve awareness of the problems associated with teenage crime. Encourage citizens to take an active role in establishing safe areas and CICL rehabilitation. Social workers may use local resources to their advantage through this involvement, which promotes a more responsive and inclusive community action. Social workers who specialize in working with children in conflict with the law (CICL) have an array of knowledge and experience that may be extremely beneficial to criminal justice professionals.

Fostering interdisciplinary collaboration through regular joint training sessions, integrating trauma-informed approaches, providing ongoing training on child development and restorative justice principles, and creating a supportive environment with mental health resources and debriefing sessions are among the recommendations made for criminal justice professionals working with social workers handling Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). The active engagement of parents in the rehabilitation process of children in conflict with the law (CICL) is pivotal. By participating in intervention measures and collaborating closely with social workers, parents become integral to their child's recovery. Social workers facilitate workshops, support groups, and counseling sessions, providing valuable guidance on coping methods and effective parenting techniques. Establishing a proactive partnership with social workers empowers parents to contribute to their child's successful reintegration into the community. Remaining informed about legal requirements and local resources enables parents to offer essential assistance. Fostering a non-judgmental atmosphere is crucial for effective rehabilitation. The collaborative efforts of parents and social workers enhance the overall well-being and prospects of the child, making the intervention process more successful.

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