

Bridging Policy and Practice: Lived Experiences of Key Implementers in the Juvenile Diversion Program

¹Patrick A. Palen, ²Imelda C. Runas

Philippine College of Criminology

¹24-8133.palen@my.pccr.edu.ph, ²imelda.runas@pccr.edu.ph

Article Details:

Received: 25 August 2026

Revised: 3 September 2026

Accepted: 6 September 2026

Published: 29 September 2026

Corresponding Email:

24-8133.palen@my.pccr.edu.ph

Recommended Citation:

Palen, P. A., & Runas, I. C. (2026). Bridging Policy and Practice: Lived Experiences of Key Implementers in the Juvenile Diversion Program. *The International Review of Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(11), 68-81.
<https://doi.org/10.67167/vertex.727>

Index Terms:

Diversion program, key implementers, lived experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, perceived effectiveness

Abstract. This study explored the lived experiences of key implementers in barangay-level diversion activities for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) in Baybay City, Leyte. Guided by Republic Act No. 9344, or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, it examined the challenges encountered, coping strategies employed, and perceived effectiveness of diversion implementation as a basis for a proposed strengthening program. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed, involving 19 purposively selected implementers comprising eight Barangay Captains, eight Barangay Kagawads, and three City Social Welfare and Development personnel. Data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis, with triangulation used to validate the findings. Results showed that diversion was experienced as a community-based rehabilitative process involving counseling, community service, values formation, and skills training. Key challenges included inconsistent participation, limited parental involvement, monitoring and workload demands, and emotional pressures. Implementers addressed these through stakeholder coordination, parental engagement, continuous monitoring, counseling, and professional commitment. Diversion activities were generally perceived as effective in promoting accountability, behavioral improvement, educational reintegration, and positive social adjustment, with counseling emerging as the most influential component. The study concludes that effective barangay-level diversion requires sustained counseling, family and community participation, continuous monitoring, and coordinated stakeholder support to promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of CICL.

Introduction

Children in conflict with the law (CICL) remain a concern in contemporary criminal justice because juvenile offending requires responses that balance public safety, accountability, child protection, and rehabilitation. International juvenile justice frameworks have shifted from punitive approaches toward diversion, restorative justice, and community-based interventions. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules) (United Nations, 1985), Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), and United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines) (United Nations, 1990) emphasize rehabilitative and socially integrative responses to juvenile offending. These principles recognize that juvenile justice should address offending behavior while supporting children's development and reintegration.

Diversion has therefore become an important strategy in juvenile justice reform, providing alternatives to formal judicial processing and incarceration through counseling, education, restorative practices, family involvement, and community-based interventions. This approach is consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and effective institutions (United Nations, 2015). Recent evidence supports the potential of restorative diversion to improve justice outcomes. Beckman et al. (2023), for instance, found that youth who participated in restorative justice diversion programs were less likely to be rearrested than those processed through traditional justice mechanisms. However, variations in program quality, resources, training, accessibility, and implementation continue to create gaps between juvenile justice policies and their application at the community level.

In the Philippines, these principles are institutionalized through Republic Act No. 9344, or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, as amended by Republic Act No. 10630. The law establishes diversion as a key component of the juvenile justice system and emphasizes rehabilitation, accountability, and reintegration without resorting to formal court proceedings when appropriate. Implementation involves frontline actors, including Punong Barangays, City Social Welfare and Development Officers (CSWDOs), and members of the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC), who facilitate interventions such as mediation, family conferencing, counseling, and rehabilitation activities. Thus, effective diversion depends not only on legislation but also on the capacity of local implementers to translate policy into practice.

Despite this legal framework, challenges involving resources, monitoring, inter-agency coordination, family participation, and consistent implementation continue to affect local diversion efforts. Existing research has largely examined diversion through outcomes such as effectiveness, policy compliance, and recidivism, while comparatively limited attention has been given to the lived experiences of frontline implementers. This constitutes an important research gap because program outcomes alone cannot fully explain how diversion policies are experienced, interpreted, and implemented at the community level.

This gap is particularly relevant in Baybay City, Leyte, where City Ordinance No. 05, Series of 2015, or the Baybay City Children Code, provides a local policy foundation for child protection and the appropriate handling of CICL. However, concerns remain regarding BCPC functionality, resources and training, counseling and rehabilitation support, stakeholder coordination, and systematic monitoring and reporting. Accordingly, this study explores the lived experiences of key implementers involved in barangay-level diversion activities for CICL in Baybay City, Leyte. By examining their experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and perceptions of effectiveness, the study provides qualitative evidence that may inform improvements in diversion implementation, strengthen local juvenile justice institutions, and support more consistent rehabilitation, reintegration, and community-based crime prevention.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the gap between the intent of the diversion policy and its actual implementation by focusing on barangay-level diversion activities under Section 31(a) of Republic Act No. 9344 that were commonly implemented in Baybay City, namely counseling for the child and family, participation in community-based programs such as community service, and attendance in values formation or skills training sessions. The research questions are as follows: (1.) What are the lived experiences of key implementers in implementing barangay-level diversion activities such as counseling, community service, and values or skills training? (2.) What are the challenges encountered by the informants in implementing barangay-level diversion activities? (3.) What are the coping mechanisms applied by the informants in overcoming the challenges encountered? (4.) How do the informants perceive the effectiveness of barangay-level diversion activities in addressing the needs of children in conflict with the law? (5.) Based on the findings of the study, what program may be proposed to improve the diversion programs?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of key implementers involved in barangay-level diversion activities for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) in Baybay City, Leyte. Phenomenology was considered appropriate for understanding how participants experienced and interpreted diversion implementation from their perspectives (Salih, 2024). The study involved nineteen (19) purposively selected participants consisting of three (3) City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) personnel, eight (8) Barangay Captains, and eight (8) Barangay Kagawads from eight selected barangays with active diversion programs. Participants were required to have direct involvement in diversion implementation, at least three years of relevant experience, and willingness to provide informed consent. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached.

A researcher-made semi-structured interview guide, developed from the research objectives, Statement of the Problem, and relevant literature, was validated by two experts in juvenile rehabilitation, qualitative research, and related fields. Face-to-face individual interviews were conducted at mutually convenient and private locations, with participants' consent. Interviews were audio-recorded and supplemented with field notes. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, anonymized using participant codes, and securely stored. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, involving familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. The analysis focused on participants' experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, perceived effectiveness of diversion activities, and recommendations for program improvement. Triangulation was employed by comparing the perspectives of CSWDO personnel and barangay-level implementers to identify converging and differing views and strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion are presented according to the five research objectives of the study. Data from semi-structured interviews with 19 key diversion program implementers were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed following Braun and Clarke's framework. The analysis examined participants' lived experiences in implementing barangay-level diversion activities, the challenges they encountered, their coping mechanisms, perceptions of program effectiveness, and recommendations for program improvement. To strengthen the credibility of the findings, data source triangulation was employed by comparing perspectives across three participant groups: CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads.

This process enabled the identification of convergent and divergent experiences across implementation roles and provided a more comprehensive understanding of barangay-level diversion implementation for CICL.

1. Lived Experiences of the Participants in the Implementation of Diversion Programs

Theme 1.1: Fluid Youth Engagement and Behavioral Outcomes

This theme revealed the participants' experiences regarding the dynamic, unstable, and difficult-to-sustain nature of youth participation and behavioral change within diversion programs. Participants described how youth initially cooperate but fail to maintain participation throughout the program:

"So far, it is okay because the child really cooperates, initially. At the beginning, they really cooperate, especially when they are still in the momentum—when it has just happened, when their violation of the offense is still recent or when they have just committed the offense—they cooperate." (CSWDO-P1)

"No counseling took place in the end because the wife had already run away. So, nothing further could be done—only the husband and the child remained to be counseled." (Brgy. Captain-P9)

"When someone from the City Social Welfare and Development comes—they tend to listen. However, once that is over, they go back to their old behavior." (Brgy. Kagawad-P14)

The responses illustrate that youth engagement was not a fixed outcome but a fluctuating process. Initial cooperation was observed when the offense was recent and the diversion process was actively supervised; however, participation became less consistent as time passed. This suggests that compliance during the early stages of diversion may not necessarily translate into sustained behavioral adjustment. Rather, continued participation requires follow-up, reinforcement, and monitoring beyond the initial intervention.

Triangulation across CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads revealed converging accounts of inconsistent participation and difficulty sustaining behavioral improvements. CSWDO personnel emphasized declining attendance and monitoring demands, while barangay-level implementers described fluctuating engagement and recurring behavioral concerns. These shared observations indicate that implementation challenges extend beyond conducting diversion activities to maintaining the child's participation and progress over time.

This finding is consistent with Mendel (2024), who emphasized the importance of sustained youth engagement, supervision, family involvement, and community support in effective juvenile diversion. Similarly, Sheerin et al. (2023) highlighted the dynamic nature of youth behavior and the influence of interconnected family, peer, school, and community environments. Thus, diversion effectiveness should not be assessed solely by initial compliance or completion of activities but by sustained behavioral development and reintegration.

From a justice-system perspective, the finding highlights the need for stronger continuity of care, monitoring, family engagement, and community-based follow-up. For barangay-level diversion to fulfill its rehabilitative purpose, implementation should extend beyond the completion of prescribed activities toward sustained support that helps CICL maintain positive behavioral changes. Strengthening these mechanisms may improve program consistency, reduce repeated offending, and enhance the capacity of community-based juvenile justice interventions to promote rehabilitation and public safety.

Theme 1.2: Structured and Monitored Diversion Implementation

This theme captured the lived experiences of diversion implementers in carrying out structured and monitored diversion processes for CICL.

"It's okay because there is coordination with the barangay. Some barangays are oriented since we conduct orientations for them." (CSWDO-P1)

"We assess and discuss their situation—such as why they are not attending school or what issues are causing their misbehavior—and these matters are usually resolved." (Brgy. Captain-P8)

"The CSWDO required them to report to the barangay twice a week and also to their office to demonstrate behavioral improvement. We were also given the responsibility of monitoring them because they reside in our barangay." (Brgy. Kagawad-P16)

The responses illustrate that diversion implementation extended beyond the initial intervention through scheduled reporting, behavioral monitoring, and shared institutional responsibility. Triangulation across CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads similarly showed that assessment, counseling, coordination, monitoring, and follow-up formed recurring components of diversion implementation.

This finding indicates that structured and continuous monitoring is essential to sustaining diversion outcomes, particularly because rehabilitation requires consistent follow-through rather than one-time intervention. It is consistent with the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (2025), which emphasized monitoring, case management, referral, and coordination in diversion implementation. Mendel (2024) likewise highlighted sustained supervision and community support as important to successful youth diversion.

The implication is that barangay-level diversion programs require clearly defined monitoring responsibilities, regular CSWDO–barangay coordination, and systematic follow-up mechanisms to ensure continuity of rehabilitation. Strengthening these mechanisms may improve accountability, facilitate early identification of behavioral concerns, and reduce the risk of repeated offending, thereby contributing to more effective community-based juvenile justice and public safety.

Theme 1.3: Counseling as a Supportive and Development-Oriented Diversion Process

This theme highlighted how counseling was experienced by diversion program implementers as a supportive and developmental intervention that facilitated communication, emotional understanding, behavioral guidance, and positive behavioral change among Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Participants experienced counseling as a supportive process that enabled CICL to disclose personal concerns, understand their circumstances, and receive behavioral guidance.

"During counseling, they gradually open up. Through this, we are able to understand the child's underlying problems, including issues at home and personal struggles." (CSWDO-P1)

"Counseling and giving guidance to the youth truly make a difference compared to having no one to advise them." (Brgy. Captain-P6)

"It seems okay because most of those who underwent counseling have changed already and returned to school." (Brgy. Kagawad-P16)

The responses illustrate that counseling was experienced not simply as behavioral correction but as a means of understanding the personal and social circumstances underlying CICL involvement. Triangulation across CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads further showed that counseling was associated with guidance, improved behavior, educational engagement, and positive social adjustment.

The findings suggest that counseling functions as a central rehabilitative component of diversion, addressing both behavioral and developmental needs. This is consistent with UNICEF (2024), which emphasized child-sensitive interventions that provide guidance and psychosocial support, and with Dionaldo and Gallego (2025), who found that counseling contributed to behavioral change, self-discipline, resilience, and educational engagement among justice-involved youth.

The implication is that barangay-level diversion should strengthen counseling as a sustained, individualized, and child-sensitive intervention rather than treating it as a one-time compliance activity. Adequate counseling support, family involvement, and coordination with social welfare and community stakeholders may improve early identification of underlying concerns, reinforce positive behavioral change, and support the successful reintegration of CICL.

Theme 1.4: Counseling as a Complex and Inconsistent Experience

This theme highlighted the negative lived experiences of diversion program implementers regarding counseling as a complex and often inconsistent component of diversion activities for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Participants experienced counseling as an important but complex diversion intervention, with its effectiveness affected by inconsistent participation, limited behavioral responsiveness, and practical barriers.

"The problem is when they are unable to attend because you then have to go back and follow up on them. Some of them live far away, and transportation fare becomes an issue." (CSWDO-P3)

"That is the problem—they just let the counseling go in one ear and out the other." (Brgy. Kagawad-P12)

"From Tuesday to Friday, he was also supposed to report, but he never did." (Brgy. Kagawad-P16)

The responses illustrate how accessibility and financial constraints can interrupt counseling participation, requiring additional follow-up from implementers. Triangulation across the three participant groups further showed that counseling outcomes were influenced by varying levels of youth engagement, family support, monitoring, and community conditions. Some CICL initially cooperated but later became unresponsive or failed to sustain behavioral improvements.

These findings are consistent with Axford et al. (2023), who identified practical, familial, and psychosocial barriers affecting sustained youth engagement, and Manaois (2024), who reported parental non-compliance, limited supervision, and inadequate aftercare as challenges to diversion implementation. Tenajeros et al. (2026) likewise emphasized the influence of institutional, familial, and community conditions on intervention outcomes.

The implication is that counseling alone may be insufficient to sustain rehabilitation. Barangay-level diversion should therefore be supported by accessible counseling services, active parental involvement, systematic follow-up, and coordinated community monitoring. Addressing these barriers may improve participation, strengthen continuity of intervention, and reduce the likelihood of behavioral relapse or repeated justice-system involvement among CICL.

Theme 1.5: Community Service as a Restorative and Behavior-Shaping Diversion Program

This theme highlighted the positive experiences of diversion program implementers regarding the use of community service as part of the diversion program for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Participants experienced community service as a structured, community-based intervention that promoted responsibility, accountability, cooperation, and constructive participation among CICL.

"In community service, the children develop a sense of responsibility... they attend and complete their assigned tasks." (CSWDO-P3)

"Community service helps discourage them from repeating their actions. For example, someone from our area who underwent community service had an issue involving inappropriate behavior toward a girl. He rendered service in the barangay, and after that, he seemed to stop doing those things." (Brgy. Kagawad-P14)

"The positive impact I have seen from community service is that we are teaching the children to become responsible, and they also cooperate during the community service activities." (Brgy. Kagawad-P19)

The responses illustrate how community service provided CICL with opportunities to practice responsibility and accountability through meaningful participation. Triangulation across CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads similarly indicated that community service encouraged cooperation, task completion, behavioral adjustment, and constructive community involvement.

These findings support Kimbrell et al. (2023), who identified community service as a restorative intervention that promotes accountability, community involvement, and reintegration among justice-involved youth. Seacrest (2023) likewise emphasized that restorative approaches can strengthen responsibility and community relationships, while Solmayor and Embornas (2025) highlighted the importance of supervision, monitoring, family involvement, and stakeholder coordination in rehabilitation.

The implication is that community service should be implemented as a structured rehabilitative intervention rather than merely as a compliance requirement. Clear task assignments, appropriate supervision, parental involvement, and continuous monitoring can maximize its restorative value by developing responsibility, strengthening community ties, and supporting the positive reintegration of CICL.

Theme 1.6: Experiencing Community Service as a Difficult-to-Sustain Diversion Program

This theme reflected the negative lived experiences of diversion program implementers regarding the difficulties of sustaining community service diversion for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Participants experienced difficulties in sustaining community service, particularly in maintaining CICL participation, monitoring compliance, and providing adequate supervision.

"Monitoring has really become our challenge because sometimes we no longer know whether the child is complying... monitoring is lacking, and we can no longer trace what has happened to them." (CSWDO-P3)

"I am also afraid that I might be questioned as to why the child was made to clean, because child labor is prohibited, so I am hesitant about that." (Brgy. Captain-P9)

"They lack proper guidance for those assigned to community service because they are just left there and are no longer monitored." (Brgy. Kagawad-P14)

The responses illustrate how limited monitoring capacity can weaken continuity and accountability in community service implementation. Triangulation across CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads similarly revealed inconsistent attendance, incomplete compliance, and difficulties in sustaining follow-up and supervision.

These findings indicate that the rehabilitative value of community service may be undermined when implementers lack sufficient mechanisms and resources to track participation and behavioral progress. The participants' experiences further show that implementation challenges are not solely attributable to CICL behavior but are also shaped by institutional capacity, supervision, and community-level support. This is consistent with the cited literature, which identifies monitoring, coordination, family support, and institutional resources as important conditions for sustained community-based rehabilitation.

The implication is that community service requires a systematic monitoring and follow-up mechanism, with clearly assigned responsibilities among CSWDO personnel, barangay officials, and families. Strengthening monitoring capacity, clarifying appropriate community-service activities for minors, and ensuring adequate supervision may improve compliance, protect CICL from inappropriate or stigmatizing activities, and enhance the continuity and rehabilitative effectiveness of barangay-level diversion.

2. Challenges Encountered in Implementing Barangay-Level Diversion Activities

Theme 2.1: Inconsistent Participation and Temporary Compliance as Challenges in Sustaining Diversion Activities

Among the recurring challenges identified by the participants was the inconsistent attendance and weak engagement of some CICL participants during counseling sessions and diversion program activities.

"The real challenges are their absences during counselling sessions and case conferences, and the delays as well. For example, when I give them a journal to accomplish, they do not do it. That is also one challenge because it seems like they have no interest in the diversion program." (CSWDO-P2)

"That's really how it is sometimes they do not show up consistently. They may cooperate once and appear one time, but after that, they no longer do." (Brgy. Captain-P10)

"That is also one of the problems, they listen at the moment, but after the session, everything just goes in one ear and out the other." (Brgy. Kagawad-P13)

The responses reflect inconsistent participation and weak engagement, as absences, delayed compliance, and failure to complete assigned activities hindered continuity of diversion interventions. It also suggests that implementers had to rely on individual approaches because of differences in how children responded to interventions.

Triangulation across CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads revealed similar experiences of irregular attendance, temporary cooperation, weak compliance, and eventual disengagement. The findings imply that sustaining participation is essential to the continuity and effectiveness of diversion, requiring consistent follow-up, individualized engagement strategies, and responsive interventions. This is consistent with Ferrer (2024), who identified limited community participation and educational engagement as significant challenges in CICL program implementation.

The findings imply that barangay-level diversion programs should strengthen mechanisms that sustain CICL engagement beyond initial compliance. Regular follow-up, individualized approaches, family involvement, and continuous monitoring should be integrated into diversion implementation to address disengagement and reinforce behavioral change. Without these mechanisms, diversion activities may result in short-term compliance without producing sustained rehabilitative outcomes. This is consistent with Ferrer (2024), who identified limited participation and stakeholder engagement as significant challenges in CICL program implementation.

Theme 2.2: Parental and Family-Related Constraints in Diversion Implementation

Among the recurring family-related constraints identified by participants were weak parental commitment and dysfunctional family environments, which complicated the implementation and continuity of diversion interventions.

"If the family or parents are truly dysfunctional, it becomes very difficult." (CSWDO-P1)

"The usual problem is that the child is not cooperative, and sometimes the parents are not cooperative as well." (Brgy. Captain-P9)

"Many of these children become misguided because the parents themselves do not know how to properly guide their children and simply neglect them." (Brgy. Kagawad-P15)

The responses reflect how family conditions directly influenced the continuity of diversion interventions, with active parental support facilitating participation and completion, while dysfunctional or unsupportive family environments hindered rehabilitation. Triangulation revealed converging experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads regarding weak parental commitment, inadequate supervision, and inconsistent family participation.

The findings imply that diversion programs cannot rely solely on interventions directed at CICL. Strengthening family-centered interventions, parental guidance, and household supervision is necessary to sustain behavioral change and improve rehabilitation outcomes. This has implications for community-based justice implementation, as CSWDO and barangay personnel should integrate parents more actively into counseling, monitoring, and follow-up mechanisms. Aazami et al. (2023) and Abella et al. (2024) likewise emphasized the importance of family functioning, parental involvement, and supervision in supporting juvenile rehabilitation.

Theme 2.3. Monitoring and Workload Difficulties in Managing CICL Cases

Among the recurring operational difficulties identified by the participants were irregular monitoring and workload strain during case management and diversion program follow-up.

"We really cannot focus fully, especially when you are handling a CICL case and then, a few hours later, another case comes in." (CSWDO-P3)

"We have a hard time chasing after and monitoring them, even just for the curfew." (Brgy. Captain-P5)

"The main thing really is constant monitoring of the child. It really has to be constant because it is very difficult." (Brgy. Kagawad-P15)

The responses reflect how workload and competing case responsibilities constrained consistent monitoring and follow-up of CICL participants.

Triangulation revealed similar experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, particularly regarding repeated supervision, tracking difficulties, and limited capacity for continuous monitoring.

The findings imply that effective diversion requires adequate monitoring capacity, not merely the delivery of interventions. Strengthening case management systems, assigning dedicated monitoring personnel, and improving coordination between CSWDO and barangay implementers may promote more consistent supervision, diversion continuity, and rehabilitation outcomes. This is consistent with Omonya et al. (2024), who identified excessive workloads and resource limitations as barriers to sustained juvenile supervision and case management.

Theme 2.4. Emotional Strain and Role Pressure Among Diversion Implementers

The core idea underlying this theme was that diversion implementation not only required operational and supervisory responsibilities but also involved emotional investment from implementers who continuously worked with children experiencing behavioral, family, and social problems. Participants experienced emotional strain and role pressure while managing CICL cases, particularly when repeated intervention efforts produced limited or inconsistent behavioral improvement.

"It is really frustrating because just when you want to focus closely on one case, another one comes up, you are only one person, you are still human, and you cannot solve everything." (CSWDO-P3)

"That is what pains us the most. We really get hurt because we already think of them as our own children, and despite doing everything we can, they still do not listen." (Brgy. Captain-P4)

"I feel as though I am falling apart, discouraged and almost ready to give up." (Brgy. Kagawad-P12)

The response reflects the emotional burden and role pressure experienced when implementers are unable to provide the level of attention, they believe each case requires.

Triangulation revealed similar experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, including frustration, discouragement, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of helplessness when CICL participants remained unresponsive despite sustained intervention efforts.

The findings imply that support for implementers is essential to sustaining effective diversion delivery. Providing institutional support, manageable workloads, peer support, and professional capacity-building may reduce emotional strain and help implementers maintain consistent engagement with CICL. This is consistent with Day (2022) and Watkinson et al. (2024), who identified workload pressures, competing responsibilities, and systemic constraints as sources of stress among youth justice practitioners.

3. Coping Mechanisms in Overcoming Challenges in Implementing Barangay-Level Diversion Activities.

Theme 3.1: Collaborative and Monitoring-Based Coping Mechanisms in Diversion Implementation

This theme reflected the coping mechanisms employed by diversion implementers to address the challenges encountered during barangay-level diversion activities. Participants addressed diversion challenges through continuous monitoring, follow-up, parental engagement, and stakeholder collaboration.

"I reached out to the Barangay CPC Council, especially the social service committee, because they are really our constant partners... we also created a group chat." (CSWDO-P2)

"We coordinate with the teacher and personally visit them." (Brgy. Kagawad-P12)

"What we really do is monitoring, we just monitor their activities and movements." (Brgy. Kagawad-P16)

The responses reflect how shared communication and coordination helped implementers maintain contact with CICL and support participation in diversion activities.

Triangulation revealed converging experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, who commonly relied on monitoring, home visitation, family engagement, school coordination, and stakeholder collaboration to address implementation challenges.

The findings imply that effective diversion requires coordinated community-based support rather than isolated efforts by individual implementers. Strengthening inter-agency coordination, family participation, and monitoring networks may improve case management, sustain CICL engagement, and support more consistent rehabilitation outcomes. These findings are consistent with Cunningham et al. (2023), who emphasized routine monitoring and caregiver involvement, and Shamrova et al. (2025), who highlighted supportive relationships with families, teachers, mentors, and community members as protective factors for positive youth development.

Theme 3.2. Adaptive and Rehabilitation-Oriented Diversion Program Approaches

This theme reflected how diversion implementers coped with challenges encountered during barangay-level diversion activities through adaptive diversion program strategies, rehabilitation-oriented practices, and a sustained commitment to supporting the development of Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Participants addressed diversion challenges through adaptive counseling, behavior-sensitive communication, motivational strategies, and continuous professional development.

"It has become something like, 'Oh, the child should undergo counseling,' but you really need to be skilled as a social worker... we also continue with our capacity development training." (CSWDO-P1)

"For me, it goes both ways. If I see that the child is aggressive or tough, then I also become firm with them. But if the child is well-behaved, then I approach them gently and kindly as well." (Brgy. Captain-P5)

"The response reflects how professional competence and continuous training helped implementers adapt their counseling approaches to the needs of CICL participants." (Brgy. Kagawad-P12)

The responses reflect how professional competence and continuous training helped implementers adapt their counseling approaches to the needs of CICL participants.

Triangulation revealed converging experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, who commonly relied on flexible counseling, behavior-sensitive approaches, motivational guidance, family dialogue, and rehabilitation-oriented practices to address behavioral and participation challenges.

The findings imply that effective diversion requires flexible and child-centered approaches that respond to differences in behavior, participation, and individual circumstances. Strengthening counseling competencies, continuous professional development, and adaptive intervention strategies may improve CICL engagement, address behavioral difficulties, and support more consistent rehabilitation outcomes. These findings are consistent with Carr (2024), who emphasized

individualized and responsive interventions for justice-involved youth, and Lev et al. (2022), who highlighted professional development and social support as important resources for sustaining effective practice among practitioners.

Theme 3.3. Moral Responsibility and Meaning-Making as Foundations for Sustaining Diversion Work

This theme reflected how diversion implementers sustained their involvement in barangay-level diversion activities through moral responsibility, emotional investment, personal fulfillment, compassion, and public service values. Participants sustained their involvement in diversion work through moral responsibility, compassion, public service values, and personal commitment to the welfare of CICL participants.

"Even if we are only able to change one child, that still creates an impact on society. And from my personal perspective, if we are not the ones who will pay attention to CICL, then who else will?" (CSWDO-P1)

"Our goal, personally for me regarding the youth, is to really give them proper attention so that their behavior here in the barangay can improve, so that they do not cause trouble." (Brgy. Captain-P6)

"My focus is really for the children to grow up peacefully because I also have my own children. The way I guide my own children is the same way I try to guide the children of other parents." (Brgy. Kagawad-P12)

The responses reflect how moral responsibility and a sense of social purpose motivated the participant to continue supporting CICL despite the difficulties encountered in diversion work.

Triangulation revealed converging experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, who commonly viewed diversion work as more than a formal responsibility. Participants emphasized compassion, concern for children's welfare, public service, and personal commitment as sources of motivation for sustaining their involvement in CICL rehabilitation.

The findings imply that a strong sense of moral responsibility and child-centered commitment can help implementers sustain their involvement despite challenges in diversion work. Strengthening a rehabilitative and child-centered orientation among implementers may enhance their motivation, resilience, and commitment to supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of CICL participants. This finding is consistent with Moore et al. (2025), who found that young people value justice professionals who demonstrate genuine care, empathy, respect, and commitment to their well-being, particularly when professionals view them as individuals with potential rather than merely offenders.

4. Perceived Effectiveness of Barangay-Level Diversion Activities for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL).

Themes

Theme 4.1: Perceived Effectiveness Through Behavioral Change and Reintegration

This theme reflected the participants' perception that barangay-level diversion activities became effective when CICL participants demonstrated observable behavioral improvement, reduced delinquency, educational return, accountability, and successful reintegration into the community. Participants perceived diversion activities as effective when CICL participants demonstrated observable behavioral improvement, educational or productive engagement, accountability, and reintegration into the community.

"Yes, it is effective when it is properly managed. For example, the child used to skip classes, but now has become an honor student." (CSWDO-P1)

"It is really effective because, as I mentioned earlier, they no longer act unruly. They have learned to show respect, not just as children but even as they grow older." (Brgy. Captain-P4)

"It is effective because there are really cases where the children have improved." (Brgy. Captain-P10)

The responses reflect how behavioral and educational improvement served as indicators of diversion effectiveness. The child's transition from frequent class absences to academic achievement demonstrates positive adjustment following intervention and suggests that addressing the child's needs contributed to the outcome.

Triangulation revealed converging experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, who commonly perceived effectiveness through improved behavior, increased respectfulness, educational participation, productive engagement, and reduced involvement in delinquent behavior. Participants also recognized that outcomes varied among CICL participants, indicating that rehabilitation was not always immediate or uniform.

The findings imply that diversion effectiveness is best assessed through observable and sustained changes in behavior and social functioning rather than program completion alone. Strengthening interventions that support educational engagement, accountability, positive behavior, and community reintegration may improve long-term rehabilitation

outcomes for CICL participants. These findings are consistent with Save the Children (2023), which emphasized rehabilitation, reduction of reoffending, and successful community reintegration as important outcomes of effective youth justice and diversion approaches.

Theme 4.2: Counseling as the Central Mechanism of Diversion Effectiveness

This theme reflected the participants' perception that counseling was the primary mechanism through which diversion activities became effective among CICL participants. Participants consistently identified counseling as the most effective component of barangay-level diversion activities because it promotes trust, reflection, guidance, parental involvement, and behavioral change among CICL participants.

"The most effective is counseling because it allows you to talk with the family and have a heart-to-heart conversation with the child... once their trust has been built." (CSWDO-P2)

"For me, counseling is really the most important." (Brgy. Captain-P4)

"Counseling, because from what I have observed in counseling sessions, they cover different topics." (Brgy. Kagawad-P12)

The responses reflect how counseling enables implementers to understand the underlying causes of a child's behavior, build trust, and encourage personal realization.

Triangulation revealed converging experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, who consistently identified counseling as effective in promoting emotional communication, behavioral reflection, parental guidance, values formation, and continuous support.

The findings imply that counseling serves as a central mechanism for achieving behavioral change and rehabilitation in diversion programs. Strengthening counseling services, trust-building approaches, family involvement, and continuous follow-up may improve CICL engagement, encourage accountability, address underlying behavioral concerns, and support sustained rehabilitation and reintegration. These findings are consistent with the Youth Endowment Fund (2023), which emphasized supportive and therapeutic interventions that address underlying causes of offending and promote positive behavioral adjustment through trusting relationships.).

Theme 4.3. Effectiveness Depends on Sustained Family, Community, and Program Support

This theme reflected the participants' perception that the effectiveness of barangay-level diversion activities depended not only on the diversion program itself but also on continuous support from families, barangay officials, community members, and partner agencies. Participants perceived diversion activities as more effective when supported by continuous family involvement, barangay participation, community guidance, monitoring, and coordination with partner agencies.

"The most important thing is informing the Barangay Council... so they are equipped with knowledge... and become willing to participate." (CSWDO-P2)

"For me, it is really very effective because even when their parents no longer pay much attention to them, we can still show them that there are people willing to help." (Brgy. Captain-P9)

"It is effective as long as you properly explain to them who the victims are, because the children themselves are the victims." (Brgy. Captain-11)

The responses reflect how informed and active participation among barangay officials can strengthen community support and sustain diversion implementation.

Triangulation revealed converging experiences among CSWDO personnel, Barangay Captains, and Barangay Kagawads, who commonly emphasized continuous monitoring, guidance, parental involvement, barangay participation, and community support as important conditions for sustaining diversion effectiveness.

The findings imply that diversion effectiveness depends not only on the interventions provided but also on the continuity of support surrounding CICL participants. Strengthening family engagement, barangay participation, inter-agency coordination, and follow-up mechanisms may sustain behavioral improvements, reinforce rehabilitation, and support successful community reintegration. These findings are consistent with Gonzales et al. (2025), who emphasized the importance of BCPC knowledge, training, monitoring, follow-up, stakeholder collaboration, and community-based rehabilitation in strengthening CICL diversion and reintegration efforts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that barangay-level diversion is fundamentally a community-based and rehabilitative process that seeks to facilitate behavioral change, accountability, and the reintegration of Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). The findings indicate that rehabilitation is not achieved through the completion of diversion activities alone but through sustained engagement, individualized intervention, family participation, and continuing support from the community and concerned institutions. Diversion implementation is therefore a dynamic process that requires attention to the developmental circumstances and needs of each CICL.

The study further concludes that the effectiveness and continuity of diversion are influenced by behavioral, familial, organizational, and emotional conditions. Inconsistent participation of CICL, limited parental involvement, monitoring demands, workload constraints, and the emotional pressures experienced by implementers demonstrate that rehabilitation is shaped by the broader environment in which diversion is implemented. These findings imply the need for stronger case-management mechanisms, systematic monitoring and documentation, active family engagement, realistic allocation of monitoring responsibilities, and appropriate support for implementers handling complex or emotionally demanding cases.

The experiences of the participants also demonstrate that effective diversion depends on collaboration, adaptability, and professional commitment. Continuous follow-up, stakeholder coordination, parental engagement, and behavior-sensitive interventions enabled implementers to sustain rehabilitation efforts despite implementation difficulties. This implies that barangay-level diversion should be supported by a clear and standardized operating framework that defines the responsibilities of the CSWDO, BCPC, parents or guardians, and other stakeholders while allowing sufficient professional discretion to respond to the individual circumstances of CICL. Regular capacity-building in counseling, case management, restorative approaches, communication, and juvenile justice policies is likewise necessary to strengthen implementation competence.

A major implication of the study concerns the central role of counseling in diversion effectiveness. The findings suggest that meaningful behavioral adjustment is more likely when interventions are relationship-centered and developmental rather than predominantly punitive. Counseling provides a mechanism for trust-building, self-reflection, emotional support, behavioral awareness, and accountability, while family counseling may address family-related concerns affecting participation and rehabilitation. Accordingly, counseling should be strengthened as a core diversion intervention, supported by regular follow-up, proper documentation, periodic assessment, and referral to qualified professionals when the needs of CICL exceed barangay-level capacity.

Finally, the findings imply that sustainable diversion requires institutional rather than solely individual commitment. The LGU, through the CSWDO and BCPC, together with schools, law enforcement agencies, families, community organizations, and other stakeholders, should provide the personnel, resources, coordination mechanisms, and administrative support necessary for consistent implementation. Within this context, the proposed PROJECT KASALIG offers a practical framework integrating counseling and guidance, active parental engagement, systematic monitoring and follow-up, educational and skills support, and inter-agency linkages. Its implementation may be further supported by appropriate policies, capacity-building, resource allocation, and, where warranted by local needs and available resources, the development of a Bahay Pag-asa or other appropriate facility for CICL requiring services beyond barangay-level capacity. Future research may further examine the applicability of these findings across other settings and evaluate the feasibility and outcomes of PROJECT KASALIG following implementation.

Acknowledgement

The researcher sincerely expresses gratitude to the PCCR Graduate School for the guidance and support extended throughout the completion of this study. Appreciation is likewise extended to the study participants for their valuable contributions, and to the researcher's family, friends, and girlfriend for their unwavering support and encouragement. To all who contributed to the realization of this work, the researcher extends heartfelt gratitude. Any remaining errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Funding

This research received no external funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency, and no organization provided financial support for the conduct of the study, authorship, or publication of this article.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

References

- Aazami, A., Valek, R., Ponce, A. N., & Zare, H. (2023). Risk and protective factors and interventions for reducing juvenile delinquency: A systematic review. *Social Sciences*, 12(9), 474. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12090474>
- Abella, A. J. E., Bongcawil, R. A., & Doña, M. M. (2024). Evaluating the intervention programs of juvenile delinquency: A comprehensive analysis. *Asian Research Journal of Arts & Social Sciences*, 22(6), 21-34. <https://doi.org/10.9734/arjass/2024/v22i6541>
- Axford, N., Berry, V., Lloyd, J., Moore, D., Rogers, M., & Axford, N. (2023). Engaging youth at risk of violence in services: Messages from research. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 144, 106744. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106744>
- Baybay City Government. (2015). City Ordinance No. 05, series of 2015: Baybay City children code. <https://baybaycity.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/City-Ordinance-No.-05-S-2015.pdf>
- Beckman, K. J., Jewett, P. I., Gacad, A., & Borowsky, I. W. (2023). Reducing re-arrest through community-led, police-initiated restorative justice diversion tailored for youth. *Crime & Delinquency*, 70(10), 2780-2802. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00111287231158569>
- Bertalanffy, L. von. (1968). General system theory: Foundations, development, applications (Rev. ed.). George Braziller.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Carr, C. (2024). A trauma-informed socially just approach to working with juvenile justice-involved youth utilizing expressive arts therapy [Master's thesis, Lesley University]. Lesley University Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/expressive_theses/876
- Congress of the Philippines. (2006). Republic Act No. 9344: Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2006/ra_9344_2006.html
- Congress of the Philippines. (2013). Republic Act No. 10630: An Act strengthening the Juvenile Justice System in the Philippines, amending for the purpose Republic Act No. 9344. https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2013/ra_10630_2013.html
- Cunningham, K. A., Gubner, N. R., Vick, K., Herting, J. R., & Walker, S. C. (2023). Redesigning juvenile probation to align with behavioral health and positive development principles: A quasi-experimental study. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 50(1), 6-21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548221082997>
- Damo, P. M., & Marcelino, R. (2024). Redirecting paths: A diversion program for children in conflict with the law. *Lunday: Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 6(1). <https://lunday.bulsu.edu.ph/index.php/lunday/article/view/109>
- Day, A.-M. (2023). "It's a hard balance to find": The perspectives of youth justice practitioners in England on the place of 'risk' in an emerging 'child-first' world. *Youth Justice*, 24(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14732254221075205>
- Day, A., & Malvaso, C. (2024). 'Back to basics': A practice approach to reforming youth justice. *Child & Youth Services*, 46(3), 536-560. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2024.2372790>
- Dionaldo, E. F., & Gallego, M. G. O. (2025). Exploring the interventions and behavioral changes of children at risk (CAR) and children in conflict with the law (CICL) in Barangay Labangal, General Santos City. *International Journal of Science, Architecture, Technology and Environment*, 2(5). <https://doi.org/10.63680/nqplnu84v565gynu>
- Ferrer, O. G. (2024). Children in conflict with the law management programs in Aparri, Cagayan. *Journal of Biodiversity and Environmental Sciences*, 25(4), 12-20. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14650904>
- Gonzales, K., Numbanal, Z. D., Lim-ang, G. P., Dulnuan, C. J. N., Bistol, J. B., Tagtag, S. L., Ballitoc, D. I., & Labasan, G. P. (2025). Barangay councils' knowledge and capability in handling cases of children in conflict with the law. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 12(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jss12010001>
- Keenan, C., Strange, L., Neyroud, P., & Corr, M.-L. (2023). An evidence review on youth diversion programmes. Youth Endowment Fund. <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/NCB-YEF-Diversion-Evidence-Review-for-Publication.pdf>

- Kimbrell, C. S., Wilson, D. B., & Olaghere, A. (2023). Restorative justice programs and practices in juvenile justice: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis for effectiveness. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 22(1), 161-195. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12613>
- Lipsky, M. (1969). *Toward a theory of street-level bureaucracy*. Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin.
- Manaois, T. W. L. V. (2023). Intervention and diversion program implementation for the children in conflict with the law in Pangasinan. *International Research and Innovation Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.62293/IRIJ-128cj>
- Mangwiro, V. P., Tanga, P. T., & Ekobi, G. A. (2024). Challenges faced by the diversion programmes on young offenders. *EUREKA: Social and Humanities*, 4, 90-102. <https://doi.org/10.21303/2504-5571.2024.003557>
- Moore, K., Ahern, E., O'Meara Daly, E., Houghton, S., McAuliffe, H., & Rogers, E. (2025). Youth justice services: Relationships, rehabilitation and the reality of the young people involved—A meta-synthesis of the qualitative literature. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 28(3), 631-649. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-025-00534-6>
- Omonya, K. S., Otiso, W. N., & Mwirigi, C. (2024). Optimizing juvenile probation: A concurrent triangulation study on supervision practices and recidivism in Kenya. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(9), 2186-2200. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRIS.2024.8090180>
- Pressman, J. L., & Wildavsky, A. B. (1973). *Implementation: How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland; or, why it's amazing that federal programs work at all*. University of California Press.
- Republic Act No. 9344, Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006. (2006). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2006/ra_9344_2006.html
- Saadati, S. A., & Saadati, N. (2023). Youth offenders and rehabilitation: Insights from legal practitioners and social workers. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Society, Law, and Politics*, 2(1), 31-38. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.isslp.2.1.5>
- Sabatier, P. A., & Mazmanian, D. A. (1983). *Implementation and public policy*. Scott, Foresman.
- Salih, D. (2024). Phenomenology of juvenile delinquency. *Journal of Management and Development Studies*, 10(2), 24-41. <https://jmds.upou.edu.ph/index.php/journal/article/view/77>
- Save the Children Australia. (2023). *Putting children first: A rights-respecting approach to youth justice in Australia*.
- Shamrova, D., Tolchinsky, J., Boppre, B., Alberton, A., & Williams, J. (2025). The perspectives of Black youth on risk and protective factors for peer involvement in the juvenile legal system. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 43, 543-560. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-025-01031-z>
- Sheerin, K. M., Brodell, R., Huey, S. J., Jr., & Kemp, K. A. (2023). Applying ecological systems theory to juvenile legal system interventions outcomes research: A measurement framework. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1177568. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1177568>
- Solmayor, J. T., & Embornas, A. A. (2025). From rescue to aftercare: The case management of children in conflict with the law (CICL) in General Santos City, Philippines. *Langkit: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 14(1), 87-105. <https://doi.org/10.62071/jssh.v14i1.667>
- Taladtad, R. F. (2025). Effectiveness of the rehabilitation programs implemented by MIMAROPA Youth Center. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation*, 6(1), 915-919.
- Tolentino, H. J., & Lasco, G. (2024). To be visible yet remain unseen: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of embodied drug use and recovery of Filipinas. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 127, 104081. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2024.104081>
- United Nations. (1985). United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ("Beijing Rules") (G.A. Res. 40/33, annex). <https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/j3unsmr.htm>
- United Nations Children's Fund. (2018). *Diversion not detention: A study on diversion and other alternative measures for children in conflict with the law in East Asia and the Pacific*. <https://www.unicef.org/eap/reports/diversion-not-detention>
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2024). *Justice for children in conflict with the law*. United Nations. <https://www.unodc.org/en/crime-prevention-criminal-justice/module-13/key-issues/4--justice-for-children-in-conflict-with-the-law.html>
- Watkinson, G., Marshall, D., & Kewley, S. (2024). 'If you just look at risk, people look horrific': Youth justice practitioners' perspectives of Child First practice. *British Journal of Community Justice*, 19(2), 30-45. <https://doi.org/10.48411/wfe6-b179>

Walker, J., Thompson, C., Wilson, G., Laing, K., Coombes, M., & Raybould, S. (2008). Family group conferencing in youth inclusion and support panels: Empowering families and preventing crime and antisocial behaviour? Youth Justice Board for England and Wales.

Youth Endowment Fund. (2023). Arrested children: How to keep children safe and reduce reoffending. <https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk>

Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.