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GARDEN OF SECOND CHANCES: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF BAHAY PAG-ASA PERSONNEL IN HANDLING CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

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Abstract:

This study explored the lived experiences of the Bahay Pag-Asa personnel at Ozamiz City, a rehabilitation facility devoted to helping children who are in conflict with the law (CICL). Using qualitative phenomenological research design, the experiences of the eight dedicated personnel were captured and explored revealing four essences after a rigorous analysis using Moustakas' eight-step analysis. The study's findings show varied experiences of the personnel. These experiences which encompassed the essences, were poetically described as a "Garden of Second Chances" where essence one was illustrated as **Planting Seeds of Purpose (Joyful Experiences)**, essence two: **Weathering the Storms (Challenges)**, essence three: **Cultivating Strength (Coping Strategies)**, and essence four: **The Harvest of Renewal (Process of Thriving)**. The study highlighted the importance of a supportive work environment for personnel to thrive, especially in a high-stress setting. The children's transformation is characterized by better behavior, self-esteem, and life skills development. However, challenges like behavioral complexity,

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resource limitations, and safety need to be addressed. Coping strategies of the personnel included professional growth, mutual support, and established routines. Prioritizing emotional and physical health is also crucial for personnel to handle work responsibilities and create a caring atmosphere. It was recommended that the Department of Social Welfare and Development should collaborate with educational institutions and professional organizations to create comprehensive training programs for personnel, focusing on managing challenging behaviors, promoting positive behavior, and understanding the unique needs of children in conflict.

Keywords:

Children in Conflict with the Law, Bahay Pag-Asa, Phenomenology, Resilience, Personal Growth

Introduction

The Crime Incident and Reporting System of the Philippine National Police Directorate for Intelligence and Investigative Management (2019) outlines Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) as minors, usually under the age of 18, who participate in unlawful activities or display conduct perceived as antisocial or criminal. In 2018, 11,324 crime incidents involving minors were recorded, which is 21% fewer than the total of 14,409 incidents of children in conflict with the law in 2017. In recent years, children and teenagers have increasingly been involved in various crimes, with theft, physical injury, and even more severe offenses such as rape being prevalent. With this data, effective intervention and rehabilitation programs must be developed to address the behaviors of these young individuals, aiming to redirect them towards positive pathways and reduce the likelihood of future criminal activity. In the Philippines, CICL face various challenges and experiences that contribute to their criminal behaviors.

According to Bongbong et al. (2023), factors such as family structure and moral judgment significantly predict delinquency among Filipino adolescents, emphasizing the importance of intervention and support systems. Family dynamics, including the presence of abusive or neglectful environments, often lead to emotional and psychological trauma, which can manifest as delinquent behavior. Furthermore, the lack of moral guidance and positive role models can result in poor decision-making and susceptibility to peer pressure and gang involvement. In the Philippines, Child In-Conflict with the Law (CICL) are dealt with through a variety of systems and initiatives. Correctional facilities were established to help guide and mitigate the cases of Child In-Conflict with the Law in the country. One of these facilities is the Bahay Pag-Asa, a correctional and rehabilitation facility in the Philippines.

Moreover, Child In-Conflict with the Law are typically handled with leniency as they prioritize rehabilitation above punishment, whereas adult criminals are penalized with incarceration. The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, also known as Republic Act No. 9344, provides automatic provisions for minor offenders in the Philippines. This law states that, unless the child acts with judgment, a child over the age of fifteen who commits a crime before turning eighteen will be released from criminal culpability and placed in an intervention program. The minors will be moved to youth detention center, where they will get education and counseling services, and in certain cases, vocational training, rather than being housed in jails away from older inmates (Abot, 2018). As a result, youth facilities, often referred to as "Bahay Pag-Asa," have been established through funding and management by the Local Government Unit in order

to accommodate, safeguard, and assist both children who are in confrontation with the law and children who are at risk (Luna, 2021).

Raising, nourishing, and teaching children is a humanitarian duty that the family, society, and even the state must carry out. The foundation of this lays in the universal recognition of the fundamental rights and needs of children, as stated by the United Nations (1989). Children, by their very nature, are dependent on adults for direction, care, and protection because of their developmental immaturity in physical, mental, and intellectual elements.

The humanitarian role of families, communities, and governments in raising, protecting, and educating children is crucial due to their immaturity in physical, mental, and intellectual areas. According to Suryaningsi (2022), parents have a major responsibility to maintain their children's well-being, providing consistent attention and guidance. Drobac and Najman (2021) emphasize the importance of fostering a happy, encouraging, and supportive environment for children's development. This study aims to understand and improve the processes for nurturing and rehabilitating children, particularly those in legal trouble, by analyzing the lived experiences of those responsible for nurturing these children.

This study investigated the management of children at risk and children in conflict with the law at Bahay Pag-Asa, focusing on the personnel's struggles and obstacles. The findings could raise public awareness of the difficulties faced by these personnel and potentially encourage future assistance. Previous studies have mainly focused on the physical attributes and welfare services provided to children, leaving little information about Bahay Pag-Asa from the personnel's perspective.

Furthermore, this research aimed to enhance understanding of the experiences of personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa, focusing on their perspectives, strategies, and challenges in managing diverse personalities. It also sought to provide insights for improving care efficacy and quality in institutional settings, focusing on personalized treatments and support networks to create a more accepting environment for children's development and recovery.

Literature Review

Child In-Conflict with the Law

A Child in Conflict with the Law (CICL), as defined by R.A. 9344, is a child who is alleged to have committed, accused of, or found guilty of committing an offense under Philippine laws. A CICL is any person under the age of eighteen who comes into contact with the justice system on account of being suspected of committing an offense. A CICL must be cared for youth detention center that is activated by a Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) as per the law, social workers, educational/guidance counselors, psychologists, and mental health specialists. CICL should not be seen as criminally liable individuals, but rather as misguided kids in need of care and direction. Despite rehabilitation programs aimed at correcting Child In-Conflict with the law moral behavior, many return to crime or recidivism a year later, either due to inadequate rehabilitation during rehabilitation or poor reception from their families, as noted by Agarwal (2018).

Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) is defined in academic literature as young individuals who have committed criminal offenses, though the precise definition varies across jurisdictions depending on local laws and standards. This lack of uniformity may be attributed to the absence of a globally recognized standard for defining and addressing CICL. Maloko (2021) explored the biological and sociocultural factors influencing the deviant behavior of CICL as criminal offenders. This study draws upon theoretical frameworks within criminology to provide a foundational understanding of the issue. By investigating the sociological factors that drive juveniles to engage in criminal activities, the research underscores the importance of a holistic approach to understanding and addressing juvenile delinquency. Such an approach is essential to comprehensively evaluate the root causes of criminal behavior among young people, ultimately aiding in the development of effective interventions.

Children In-Conflict with the law is a persistent social behavior disorder affecting young people who commit crimes regularly. It often leads to mental disorders and behaviors resulting in bipolar disorder (Ogundele (2018). Exposure to traumatic events, such as natural disasters or conflicts, can increase a child's risk of PTSD. This can result in partial conduct disorder. Experts propose various hypotheses to explain this issue and develop preventative measures against delinquency (Saccoccia, 2024).

Rehabilitation Centers of Child In-Conflict with the Law

The Bahay Pag-Asa in the Philippines was developed in accordance with the R.A. Bahay Pag-Asa was founded in the province of Cagayan according to the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (9344). R.A. No. 9344 as amended 10630 in light of the following considerations raised by the legislators: the right of CICL to special protection and assistance from the state; and the enhancement of the Philippine Juvenile Justice System by means of the provision of short-term residential care for CICL, which will be financed and managed by the Bahay Pag-Asa Local Government Units (LGU). For children who are in danger or breaking the law, the LGU develops regional juvenile intervention programs. It is a child in conflict with the law (CICL) rehabilitation center. It has been run by someone through the City Social Welfare and Development Office for the past seven (7) years. They provide an activity-based intervention program to address the issues behind the child's criminal behavior. It refers to 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, 2021).

The Local Planning Management Team (LMPT) was established by Aurora's mayor to manage the Comprehensive Local Juvenile Intervention Program (CLJIP) for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). The program, which lasts three to five years, is executed and funded by the LGU's 1% IRA, in accordance with RA 9344. Local government units must create a model ordinance to implement the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act. The LMPT is responsible for initiating preliminary social actions, such as data gathering, planning, and system creation for juvenile information and referral.

Challenges of Personnel with Dealing Child In-Conflict With The Law (CICL)

The personnel dealing with CICL face various challenges. Programs that are effective are essential for lowering the delinquency rate because they address root causes like maltreatment, learning difficulties, mental illness, and substance addiction, and they take into consideration

other factors including poor academic performance and cognitive impairment (Zakaria et al. 2022).

As stated by Turner (2021), workers who engage with CICL confront multifaceted challenges requiring nuanced interventions. Central among these challenges is the imperative to implement effective strategies that diminish delinquency rates within this vulnerable population. Moreover, it is important to delve into the underlying factors contributing to delinquency, including experiences of maltreatment, learning disabilities, and issues on mental health and substance use. Additionally, several pervasive social influences such as low self-concept, family dysfunction, negative peer associations, and inadequacy of adult supervision also play pivotal roles in youth crime. Recognizing these multi factorial contributors is crucial for developing targeted and effective interventions. In tackling these challenges, workers should leverage a range of techniques aimed at fostering rehabilitation and social reintegration. According to Urbano (2023), workers in correctional facilities like Bahay Pag-Asa faces numerous challenges in managing CICL and Children at Risk (CAR). These challenges include establishing positive relationships with the children, handling the more challenging behaviors of CICL compared to CAR, preventing children from escaping, and communicating effectively with empathy.

Smith's 2021 study reveals a high turnover rate among youth care personnel at rehabilitation centers for Children In-Conflict with the Law due to client violence. The study, which involved 490 hours of observation and 65 interviews, revealed instances of physical and sexual violence, threats, and acts like biting, choking, hair pulling, punching, and kicking. Staff viewed CV as an unavoidable aspect of working with childcare clients, but it could be mitigated through behavior control and de-escalation strategies.

Intervention Strategies for Personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa

Muhic's study (2022) suggests that prosocial thinking programs (PTP), can be used to foster a prosocial lifestyle. These programs teach social skills such as social perception, emotion identification, causal attribution, perspective taking, empathy, alternative thinking, consequence prediction, anger management, and interpersonal problem resolution. The PTP is based on a cognitive model of crime prevention and delinquent rehabilitation, aiming to provide antisocial children with the mindsets and capacities to adopt a prosocial way of living. However, most cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) programs require a high number of intervention hours, which can be challenging for non-hospitalized children, especially those who frequently travel. A modified PTP has strengthened the child's relationship with the team, enhanced training, and allowed the team to evaluate if they require specialist assistance. The curriculum is designed to help children think critically and make prosocial decisions, rather than engaging in violent conflict. The goal is to help them understand the benefits of prosocial decisions and motivate them to make them regularly.

Dubois (2021) highlights mentoring programs in the United States as a strategy to prevent negative consequences and foster resilience in children in conflict with the law. These programs aim to provide structured support from experienced individuals, adult volunteers, or higher-grade students, with roots in early 20th-century campaigns to prevent underprivileged boys from entering the criminal justice system.

Effectiveness and Impact on Learning of Bahay Pag-Asa Programs

The Bahay Pag-Asa programs have been found to effectively promote positive changes, personal growth, and improved interpersonal relationships among CICL graduates. The staff's guidance and direction have been emphasized, as well as the mentoring and guidance roles. The programs have successfully met the emotional, social, spiritual, and occupational needs of these graduates, fostering a supportive atmosphere. The respondents' testimony confirms the programs' effectiveness in significantly altering their lives. The findings emphasize the importance of tailoring interventions to individual needs, providing opportunities for spiritual and personal growth, emotional support, and community.

In a study by Urbano (2023) revealed that that Bahay Pag-Asa programs have positively impacted the learning process at CICL, enhancing personal development and empowerment. These programs have enhanced attitudes, assisted in acquiring new skills, and altered decision-making. The respondents emphasized the importance of developing critical thinking skills, empathy, and practical skills for daily living. Social activities like basketball and basketball-playing helped them grow as individuals. Personal growth areas included self-control, patience, and discerning between genuine and phony people. These skills are crucial for a contented and productive life after Bahay Pag-Asa. A poll showed that most CICL alumni from Malolos Tanglaw Center and Valenzuela Bahay Pag-Asa found the programs helpful for their recovery. These facilities offer sports, recreation, home life, healthcare, education, values formation, and skill development.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the experiences of the workers who oversee the many in-house characters that the children at Bahay Pag-Asa have. This study specifically sought to answer this grand tour/core question:

1. What are the experiences of the personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa in handling the children in-conflict with the Law (CICL)

Methods

The study used a qualitative phenomenological research design to understand the experiences of personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa, a rehabilitation center in Ozamiz City, Misamis Occidental. Phenomenological research focuses on the subjective experiences of participants, allowing researchers to explore how they interpret their experiences in their everyday lives. The study included eight personnel, including three females and five males, who work tirelessly to support and guide the rehabilitation center's CICL. The research aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and the subjective experiences of the participants.

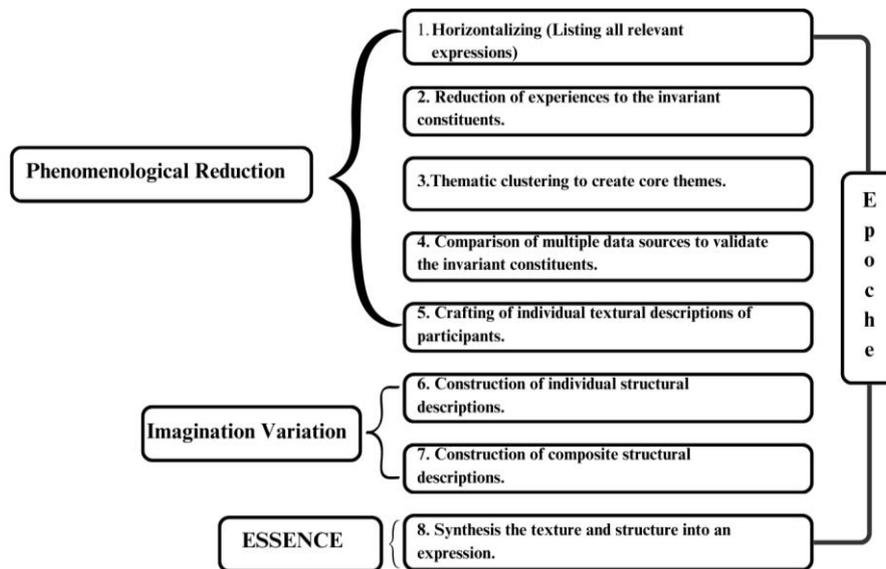
To help collect rich data from the research participants' experiences, researchers used in-depth interviews and open-ended questions. Researchers made an interview guide to help them get the necessary data from the participants. The researchers' questionnaire also underwent validity check through an expert from the institution.

Data Analysis

The researchers used Moustakas (1990) technique to analyze the experiences of personnel managing children at Bahay Pag-Asa. This method emphasizes understanding events from the perspective of those living them, focusing on the personal experiences, emotions, and views of

children in conflict with the law. The analysis process included epoche bracketing, imaginative variation, and a combination of significance and essence.

Figure 1:
Moustakas' Eight-Step Phenomenological Analysis



Results and Discussion

Garden of Second Chances

This garden is not just a place of beauty—it is a metaphor for redemption, resilience, and the tireless efforts of the gardeners, representing the administrators and staff of Bahay Pag-Asa. Each gardener brings a unique blend of skills, compassion, and determination to tend to the delicate plants growing there—plants that symbolize the children in conflict with the law (CICL).

The personnel and administrators of Bahay Pag-Asa are the epitome of commitment and kindness. They are in charge of rehabilitating and reintegrating children in conflict with the law (CICL), making sure that every child gets the assistance and attention they require. The personnel put in endless effort to establish secure and caring atmosphere where healing can start as soon as the child enters the facility.

The personnel of Bahay Pag-Asa serve as the landscape architects of change in the lives of the children they care for. Through their dedication, empathy, and unwavering belief in the power of second chances, they transform the sanctuary into a true Garden of Second Chances. Through their shared experiences of joy, challenges, and coping, the story of the gardeners reveals a powerful tale of cultivating hope.

Essence 1: Planting Seeds of Purpose

The gardeners arrived at the garden each day, energized by a shared mission: to nurture and transform neglected and fragile plants into thriving blooms. Each gardener carries the belief that, with care and attention, every plant has the potential to grow. With this, the gardeners are

the dedicated personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa, and the plants are the children in conflict with the law (CICL). As a sanctuary for neglected and fragile children, who often face uncertain futures Bahay Pag-asa provides a safe, supportive environment, while counselors help children process trauma and navigate emotions. Educators, like the gardeners, guide children, rekindling their interest in learning and equipping them with the necessary knowledge for a brighter future.

Theme 1: Transformative Outcomes for Children.

The gardeners take pride in watching the plants recover and flourish, as the once-wilted leaves begin to reach for the sunlight. These transformations serve as vivid reminders of the children's ability to grow beyond their past struggles. As the once-wilted leaves of the plants extend toward the sunlight, the gardeners are extremely proud of their recovery. This change serves as a potent reminder of each child's innate resiliency. Children may overcome their past hardships, much like plants do when given the time and attention they need to flourish. The gardeners are aware that children require understanding and help to overcome their obstacles, just as plants require time, care, and the proper conditions to recover. The children blossom together with the plants, demonstrating that development and rebirth are always possible despite adversity. The participants shared:

“CICL are successful in their journey at Bahay Pag-Asa. Their behaviors and discipline improved over time, and some developed social skills, like communicating well and being super cooperative.” -P1

“The most remarkable changes I have witnessed are the improvement in their behavior and the respect they show toward their peers and the staff. There are fundamental changes in their attitudes and communication.” -P3

“The children leave, and we can see real change in them. I know that we've impacted their lives. Knowing we have influenced them, and they are doing well is rewarding. Those little signs of improvement and growth make me feel like my efforts have been practical. I see them grow and develop, even in small ways. Every time they improve, even just a little, it reassures me that our effort makes a difference. Seeing their progress motivates me to keep going and continue helping them turn their lives around.” -P4

“Seeing him turn his life around and live responsibly makes me proud. Seeing them improve brings me joy.” -P6

This theme highlighted the children's positive experiences with vocational training, sports, and spiritual enhancement, but also their struggles with adapting to the structured environment and the need for more personalized attention. The programs led to increased self-awareness, improved social skills, and enhanced vocational abilities, though challenges like loneliness and homesickness were identified. The research emphasized the need for ongoing support, individualized interventions, and effective reintegration strategies.

Theme 2: Purposeful Contribution and Personal Fulfilment

Every seed planted is an act of hope. The gardeners feel immense satisfaction knowing their work is creating something beautiful and lasting. Every seed sown is a silent declaration of optimism that development and change are achievable. The gardeners are extremely proud of the fact that their modest and frequently invisible efforts go a long way toward creating something significant and enduring. They see the results of their efforts and the possibility of rebirth with every sprout that appears and blossom that opens. They get great satisfaction from

this process because they know that their hard work and attention to detail are creating something lovely for the future as well as for the present. The gardeners are aware that the journey of fostering life and watching it flourish is just as valuable as the finished product. As the plants flourish, the gardeners find immense satisfaction in witnessing the fruits of their labor. The participants expressed:

"I am happy because I can help them with their skills." -P2

"Can impart my knowledge and skills to them and knowing they have gained something valuable from me is fulfilling." -P3

"Being able to impart knowledge to them and help them in this way is a tremendous joy for me." -P4

"I am proud whenever I see progress in their lives. It is really my work that makes me happy. It aligns with what I have learned and trained for." -P5

"A houseparent feels happy and proud when the children understand and apply your lessons." -P7

"We are dedicated to their success. Our passion lies in helping these kids reach their full potential." -P8

In their 2000 paper, Ryan and Deci (2000) discussed the role of intrinsic motivation and autonomy in individuals' commitment and resilience in their roles. They emphasize that purposeful contribution aligns an individual's tasks with the organization's mission, fostering a sense of purpose and commitment. In the context of Bahay Pag-Asa, a rehabilitation center for children in conflict with the law, personnel play a crucial role in creating a nurturing environment. Studies show that individuals who perceive their tasks as aligned with their personal values and the organization's mission are more motivated and dedicated. Personal fulfillment stems from intrinsic satisfaction from their work, as highlighted by personnel in Bahay Pag-Asa.

Theme 3: Supportive Relationships and Adaptive Collaboration.

The gardeners formed a tight-knit community, stepping in to help one another and adapting their methods to meet the unique needs of each plant. They fostered a strong sense of unity, grounded in mutual support and shared goals. Just as gardeners combined their expertise and resources to overcome challenges as a team, the personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa relied on one another to navigate difficult situations.

The staff's cooperative foundation allowed them to adapt and thrive in their roles, fostering open communication, shared problem-solving, and a willingness to adjust. Despite challenges, their sense of solidarity allowed them to move forward with hope and determination, demonstrating the power of collective support. The participants shared:

"When I share with our admin during those moments when this is what I feel or what happened, then they also give advice or ideas on what to do." -P1

"In my case, I'm not very strict. It is just a matter of fact that sometimes the policy here at the center, for me, is so that they do not get bored, I will let them watch TV maybe it is not on the schedule." -P2

“Maybe small problems or difficulties, but I manage to get through them because we all help each other out in the work. If we had better support in terms of materials and tools, we could create more learning opportunities for them, which would really help their development.” -P3

“It is important to have that outlet from stress, and I remember that whenever I feel stressed, I turn to my colleagues for support. Modern equipment could enhance the activities and programs we offer, making them more effective and engaging. It would also lighten our workload and allow us to focus more on building relationships and guiding the children.” -P4

Supportive relationships and collaborative efforts are crucial for managing and rehabilitating children in conflict with the law (CICL). These relationships, formed by staff, social workers, and educators, provide psychological and emotional support for constructive behavioral change, allowing CICL to express themselves and overcome obstacles (Thomas, 2020). Conversely, adaptive collaboration is the cooperation of several stakeholders, such as community organizations, mental health specialists, law enforcement, and family members, to meet the diverse needs of these kids. With each participant contributing specialized knowledge and resources, this partnership guarantees a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation, as stated by Bishop (2021). Staff can better support a child's successful reintegration into society and lower recidivism by tailoring techniques to each child's unique requirements.

Theme 4: Recognition of Tangible Rewards

When a plant blooms, its vibrant colors and strong roots validate the gardeners' efforts, fueling their determination to continue. Just as a gardener finds satisfaction in witnessing a plant bloom, validating their efforts and fueling their determination to continue, the personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa require recognition and appreciation for their tireless work. This recognition can come in various forms, such as competitive salaries, hazard pay, and other benefits that acknowledge the challenging nature of their work. Providing these tangible rewards not only demonstrates the value placed on their contributions but also helps to retain and motivate skilled personnel. They feel a sense of satisfaction as each bloom serves as a reminder that their persistence and patience have paid off. This apparent accomplishment strengthens their resolve to keep caring for the garden and strengthens their conviction that their work results in significant, long-lasting improvement. By valuing and appreciating the efforts of the gardeners, the institution can cultivate a positive and fulfilling work environment, further strengthening the support system for the children and fostering a culture of excellence in service. The participant revealed:

“Receiving bonuses and also salary increase.” -P1

“My salary because it can help me support myself and my family.” -P2

“One thing is my salary that I received because this salary aid me to provide for my family.” -P5

“I can say my salary and the hazard pay.” -P8

Recognizing tangible rewards for personnel in rehabilitation centers like Bahay Pag-Asa is crucial for maintaining morale, motivation, and high-quality performance in emotionally demanding work environments. These rewards, like bonuses and promotions, can increase motivation, performance, and job satisfaction among employees. In Bahay Pag-Asa, these

rewards affirm the value of staff's contributions, especially in dealing with the stress and emotional toll of rehabilitating youth offenders (Deci et al., 1991)

Essence 2: Weathering the Storms

The garden, like the lives of the children it represents, faces many trials. Harsh winds, pests, and droughts test the gardeners' patience and resolve. Like the children it represents, the garden faces innumerable difficulties that put its personnel's fortitude and tenacity to the test.

Despite severe storms, gardeners, who represent the committed personnel of Bahay Pag-Asa, continue to care for their plants despite social criticism, limited resources, and behavioral issues affecting children's development. They put their heart, soul, and patience into the garden, knowing that every plant grows differently and requires more care. The once-neglected soil, representing the lives of children in conflict with the law, starts to change under their care, enhanced by their affection and leadership.

Theme 5: Emotional Resilience in Dealing with Behavioral Challenges.

Some plants resist growth, their leaves curling or their stems growing brittle. The gardeners must summon their patience and empathy to understand what each plant needs. Certain plants exhibit growth resistance, such as drooping leaves or weak stems, which is similar to how the children at Bahay Pag-Asa deal with their own emotional and behavioral issues.

The personnel become attuned to subtle cues, learning that each plant follows its own unique growth journey. Similarly, helping children build resilience often involves understanding and responding to their individual needs, fostering trust and growth through consistent care and empathy. The participants shared:

"I realized that being too lenient is not always helpful. I did not know how to express anger constructively and felt like we can't help a child, especially when they refuse to listen. I feel like we are not making any progress with a child, especially when things are getting worse." -P1

"The child tries to run away." -P2

"We (personnel) feel inadequate." -P3

"There were times that a child or CICL escaped, and it is inevitable that someone will run away so that is why I am nervous." -P4

"The real challenge is when a child escapes." -P6

"The most difficult part is when they reach a point where they stop believing in what we say, especially when the kids no longer want to listen and there are times when I doubt if I can still help the child." -P7

"Disciplining them is really a challenge and their behavior tends to repeat no matter how much you try to explain to them." -P8

Bahay Pag-Asa faces emotional challenges working with children in conflict with the law. Mendoza (2017) highlighted the importance of fostering emotional resilience among personnel to help them cope with job-related stress and challenges. Emotional resilience would allow

personnel to maintain their mental well-being, remain committed to their work, and continue supporting the children's rehabilitation.

Theme 6: Resource Limitations and Operational Hurdles

Watering cans leak, tools break, and there is never enough fertilizer. The gardeners must be resourceful, often improvising to make do with limited resources. Similar to how a garden requires the proper equipment and supplies to flourish, Bahay Pag-Asa's rehabilitation program has its own set of difficulties. The resources they depend on are not always reputable. They might need to be a little creative, either figuring out how to mend broken equipment or coming up with different ways to guide the children without hefty resources. Making the most of what they have and coming up with innovative ways to keep the Bahay Pag-Asa working properly are key. These narratives are given by the participants.

"There is a lack of equipment. There is a shortage of hygiene supplies and materials for both groups. Monitoring their well-being and education is another significant issue. The center also handles more than just the children; it deals with external cases too and there are administrative responsibilities and a wide variety of other tasks that make the job more complex. Another challenge is juggling multiple tasks." -P1

"The basic needs of the children like proper storage for their clothes, like drawers, and adequate sleeping arrangements, such as beds and blankets. The old one (building) had smaller rooms, and the doors were barred, like a prison." -P2

"The center has not been accredited yet." -P3

"We have limited resources. The children are limited to three meals per day. They don't have snacks because the budget only covers three meals and not snacks. The building is already old, which means it is outdated." -P5

"The lack of necessary resources for the children." -P6

Bahay Pag-Asa's personnel managing children in conflict with the law face resource constraints and operational challenges, affecting the quality of rehabilitation services. Overcrowded facilities, limited funding (De los Reyes, 2019), and a lack of trained personnel (Cruz, 2018) lead to heavy caseloads and reduced capacity for individualized support. Furthermore, Magno (2021) also stated that absence of comprehensive rehabilitation programs, bureaucratic delays, and difficulties in coordinating with local government units hinder the timely reintegration of CICLs into society, significantly undermining Bahay Pag-Asa's mission.

Theme 7: Safety and Security in a High-Stress Environment

Predators and storms threaten the garden's progress, mirroring the high-stress situations faced by the staff as they protect and guide the children. The garden is frequently threatened by predators and unpredictable weather, putting the fragile plants at risk of being uprooted or damaged. Gardeners remain constantly alert, reinforcing protections and creating safe conditions to shield their plants from harm.

Bahay Pag-Asa personnel balance safety with providing necessary attention to children. However, conflicts, emotional outbursts, and handling complex behaviors can lead to high-stress situations. Many children have trauma and neglect histories. Despite peaceful resolution

training, personnel feel unsafe during heated situations, highlighting the psychological and physical dangers associated with their jobs. The participants revealed:

“I am a little afraid because they might kill us and there were times that a child or CICL escaped, and it is inevitable that someone will run away so that is why I am nervous.” -P4

Safety and security are vital in the high-pressure environment of Bahay Pag-Asa, a facility for children in conflict with the law (CICL), as they are essential for the well-being of both the children and the personnel. These children often come from traumatic backgrounds, including neglect or abuse, and may display behavioral challenges that require a secure, structured, and supportive setting.

In such an environment, safety measures must be thorough, addressing both physical security and emotional health. The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 (Republic Act No. 9344) emphasized that the protection of children should be prioritized, with rehabilitation programs designed to meet their needs, focusing on their development and safety rather than punishment.

Theme 8: Leadership and Multi-Tasking Demands

The head gardener shouldered the burden of organizing the team, addressing immediate threats, and planning for the garden's future, all while ensuring the plants received the care they needed. The head gardener, much like the manager at Bahay Pag-Asa, bore the heavy burden of managing a group of people while watching out for the welfare of children in their charge.

The personnel had multiple jobs to balance, requiring constant attention to detail and flexibility. They faced challenges like conflict resolution and dealing with children's unforeseen circumstances. Despite these challenges, they remained focused on creating a secure environment for development and recovery. Bahay Pag-Asa's leadership relied on teamwork, shared responsibility, and open communication. They aimed to provide a nurturing environment for children and personnel, ensuring a path towards transformation for every child under their care. The participants shared:

“Dealing with case management for every client is the most challenging.” -P3

“Being the manager in the center is the most challenging part of my job. The hardest thing about being a center manager is dealing with people.” -P5

Bahay Pag-Asa personnel, facing high-pressure environments, rely on effective leadership and multitasking skills to manage the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law. Their experience enhances their ability to handle crises and implement policies effectively, fostering discipline and personal growth. This helps them manage the burden of managing resources efficiently.

Essence 3: Cultivating Strength

Faced with adversity, the gardeners found ways to endure and thrive. They innovated, collaborated, and drew strength from one another. A garden may suffer from unforeseen storms or pests, yet a skilled gardener adapted, protected, and nurtured the plants to help them recover. Similarly, the personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa faced numerous challenges in their work. Supporting children who displayed difficult behaviors and experienced trauma was both

mentally and physically demanding. There were days when they felt overburdened, distressed, or exhausted.

However, much like a gardener learned to adjust and overcome hardships, the personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa developed coping mechanisms to manage these difficulties. Their resilience allowed them to persevere and even grow despite the struggles they encountered. Their strength also relied on teamwork. The personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa understood that the challenges were too great to face alone, so they leaned on one another for support and guidance. They were not just individuals completing tasks; they formed a team dedicated to building a safe and supportive environment for the children.

Theme 8: Structured and Professional Coping Strategies

The gardeners created routines and prioritized tasks to manage their workload effectively, staying focused on the long-term goals of the garden. Similarly, the personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa employed professional and structured coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges of their work. Just as a gardener needed a strategy to maintain a flourishing garden, personnel recognized the importance of establishing order in handling their demanding responsibilities. With a shared sense of purpose and well-established professional practices, the personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa not only cultivated the children's potential but also sustained their ability to perform their roles effectively. The participants shared:

"I jot down or write down the priorities that should take precedence over the less significant ones." -P1

"I was trained to deal with these situations, so I try to stay grounded and understand that these children are going through a lot, and they need patience and support. I try to understand where their problematic behaviors are coming from. I try to explain to them that their past doesn't define them, and that they can change. I want to be an inspiration for them, showing them that no matter where they come from, they can still achieve their goals." -P6

"What I do is I just ignore it and keep myself busy encoding paperwork, encoding for marketing—I'll just keep myself busy with that. I channel my frustrations to the routine tasks in the center like cleaning, doing laundry, and cooking breakfast." -P7

"We are equipped to do safe care, maintain a work-life balance, and we also have theoretical knowledge about personality, the environment, and the community." -P8

Personnel handling children in conflict with the law (CICL) should employ structured coping strategies to maintain emotional resilience, ensure effective service delivery, and uphold child-centered approaches. These strategies include regular training in trauma-informed care and legal procedures, professional support systems, adherence to established protocols, collaboration with multidisciplinary teams, and reflective practices (United Nations, 1985). These measures help navigate complex cases, prioritize the child's well-being, manage occupational stress, prevent burnout, and enhance problem-solving skills and emotional stability, ensuring objective and empathetic handling in challenging situations.

Theme 9: Supportive and Collaborative Work Environment

Tending the garden is a collective effort. Gardeners share tools, ideas, and encouragement, leaning on each other during difficult times. Bahay Pag-Asa's staff collaborates by sharing resources, tools, and strategies, fostering cooperation and unity among gardeners. This collaborative approach ensures the garden's success, fostering a positive environment beyond plants. The shared experiences and collective problem-solving foster trust and respect, benefiting both individual and group growth. The participants revealed:

"I really like the nature here, the pace of work. For me, this work is like a second home." -P1

"We work together—house parents, social workers, and everyone involved. The workplace is not toxic. We work well together. The atmosphere is supportive, and I can focus on doing my job without unnecessary stress." -P4

"Unite together with my co-workers." -P7

Bahay Pag-Asa, a government-run rehabilitation center in the Philippines, emphasizes the importance of a supportive and collaborative work environment for its personnel. This environment is crucial for the effective delivery of services, mental well-being, and success of rehabilitation programs. Collaboration among professionals in juvenile justice settings improves decision-making, increases resource accessibility, and enhances the quality of interventions provided to youth (Pecora et al., 2006).

Theme 10: Emotional Strength and Well-being.

Amid the challenges, the gardeners take time for themselves—finding peace in the sunrise over the garden, joy in a newly sprouted bud, and strength in their shared mission. The personnel at Bahay Pag-Asa understand the importance of nurturing their own well-being, much like gardeners who find solace in their connection with nature.

These small yet meaningful acts of self-care help prevent burnout and sustain their emotional resilience. They understand that taking care of themselves is not a luxury but a necessity—one that allows them to continue supporting the children under their care, just as a gardener must tend to their own well-being to nurture a thriving garden. The participants revealed:

"I relax and go for a joyride to relieve stress. Sometimes, I go out or watch a movie to have fun. I just use my cellphone, scroll through social media, or watch videos to relieve stress." -P3

"It is all about going home to my comfort zone, where I can relax and unwind. Sometimes, I just want to relax, like playing Mobile Legends, drinking coffee, or doing some exercise." -P4

"I try to stay positive to reduce stress. When you try too hard, it can make things worse, especially when emotions are running high. It is important to stay calm, because if I start speaking out of frustration, it might hurt the child or make them feel worse." -P5

"When you are stressed, it is hard to think clearly, so taking some time for yourself to unwind really makes a difference." -P6

"I handle stress by managing it effectively, like redirecting it into something positive. I might go on vacation, read books, or watch Netflix. Even if stress is irritating and it comes and goes, it is ultimately about having a positive mindset on how you maneuver through stress." -P8

In the face of challenges, gardeners focus on nurturing their emotional well-being and resilience. They draw strength from moments of peace and inspiration found in the garden—whether it’s the calm of a sunrise, the delight of seeing a fresh sprout, or the satisfaction of fostering growth. These simple yet meaningful experiences rejuvenate their spirit and deepen their dedication to their shared vision. By blending hard work with gratitude and mindfulness, they sustain their energy and remain passionate about their purpose.

Cullen (2015) asserts that emotional health is similarly vital since it enables these professionals to control their feelings when working with children who are experiencing psychological discomfort, which frequently results from abuse, neglect, or violent situations. A supportive work environment that promotes peer collaboration, offers psychological support, and encourages self-care can bolster emotional well-being and help maintain high levels of professional empathy, which is crucial when working with vulnerable children, as noted by Herman (1997).

Figley (2002) highlights the emotional impact of witnessing traumatic situations on CICL staff, which can lead to burnout or compassion fatigue if not addressed. Emotional health and personal resilience are crucial for CICL staff to manage their mental health and deliver quality care. Appropriate organizational support and individual coping strategies are essential to prevent burnout and protect the well-being of professionals and children (Knight, 2019).

Essence 4: The Harvest of Renewal

Over time, the Garden of Second Chances begins to flourish. While some plants grow into towering trees and vibrant flowers, others take longer, needing more care and patience. The gardeners reflect on their journey, realizing that the garden’s growth mirrors their own transformation. The gardeners experience a journey of personal and professional renewal as they see the children's development. Their mental health and job happiness can be improved by working in encouraging situations where progress is visible. Their commitment to building resilience and optimism in the community they serve is strengthened by the sense of joy they get from watching kids flourish.

As they work together to implement individualized intervention plans and support strategies, employees cultivate professional relationships that contribute to their own growth. The teamwork not only enhances the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts but also creates a nurturing environment for gardeners, leading to increased resilience and job retention. The gardeners at Bahay Pag-Asa help children get over emotions of loneliness and despair by guiding them through their rehabilitation process, much like a gardener gently tends to plants, allowing them to grow over time. These programs provide children the confidence and fortitude to face their obstacles directly, allowing them to reap the rewards of their hard work in the form of renewed self-esteem and aspirations (Frazier, 2021).

The gardeners recognize that every challenge they faced strengthened their resolve, and every small bloom was a testament to their unwavering commitment. Children who participate in a variety of programs—from skills training to therapeutic exercises—develop emotional regulation skills and a sense of agency, much like gardeners who tend to their gardens with love and attention. Nurturing these young people not only fortifies their will but also gives them a sense of direction, which enables them to thrive in spite of previous hardships (CICL).

The garden becomes a sanctuary — not just for the plants but for the gardeners themselves. It stands as a living symbol of **hope, renewal, and the power of second chances**. Youth resilience can be greatly increased by circumstances that promote emotional well-being, which enables them to absorb their experiences and foresee a better future. The process of caring for plants is similar to the emotional development that these young people go through; while they tend to their garden, they also develop self-worth, accountability, and a feeling of community, which eventually results in personal restoration and empowerment (Gonzalez, 2023).

Conclusion

Bahay Pag-Asa personnel demonstrate remarkable perseverance and dedication in handling CICL, balancing professional responsibilities with personal and family obligations. Despite obstacles, they remain focused and resilient. Their journey emphasizes the importance of faith, support networks, and optimism. Faith guides them, while strong support systems provide emotional and practical assistance. A positive outlook strengthens their ability to confront difficulties and turn them into opportunities for growth. Their dedication not only transformed CICL's lives but also fostered personal and professional growth. Their work demonstrates the strength of the human spirit, and the profound influence compassionate individuals can have on others.

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