



## THE LIFE-SAVING STORIES: AN ANECDOTE OF POLICE OFFICERS IN RESCUING CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to look into the experiences of police officers at General Santos City's Police Station 7 in rescuing children in conflict with the law. This study utilized a quantitative case study with 4 police officers as the research participants. The study had three formulated questions which were the experiences, coping mechanisms, and the insights or lessons learned by the police officers in rescuing the children in conflict with the law. The beginning stories of the police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law had formulated the following emergent themes: crucial, piteous, and eagerness to help. The middle stories of the police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law had formulated the following emergent themes: dedication to the service, love with children, and happiness. Lastly, the ending stories of police officers in rescuing the children in conflict with the law had formulated the following emergent themes: fulfillment, understanding, and passion.

**Keywords:** criminal justice, life-saving stories, anecdote, police officers, rescuing children, Philippines

### **1. Introduction**

*"People frequently tell Save the Children that their goals are unattainable and that there will always be children who suffer. We are aware. Only if we decide it is impossible will it be. Nothing can be said to be impossible if we choose not to try." (Eglantyne Jebb)*

The line above speaks about the battle of rescuing a child, which is one of the mandates of the public servant here in our country, the Philippines. The duties of a police officer require a lot of pressure and danger; they face numerous work-related challenges: the administration, corruption, and threats to national security are only a few of the many difficulties the Philippine National Police (PNP) must overcome. Effective policing, broad security sector changes, and a strong leadership pipeline prepared to handle these issues are essential since police officers are responsible for keeping the nation and its people

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safe and secure. There are numerous work-related challenges police officers have to face. Exploring this critical issue that often tends to be overlooked is significant. The key findings of this study may have implications for the work performance of police officers. It is important to highlight such experiences to understand the challenges and struggles faced by police officers when rescuing children in conflict with the law (Mendoza et al., 2020).

Furthermore, while police officers may not want to share terrible information with others, they often must convey bad news, such as death, which is a complex message. In addition, due to the risk, it is an unavoidable scenario for police officers to lose a colleague, which is the worst experience police officers may have had in their careers. In addition, police officers work irregular shifts and holidays, which means they miss quality time with their families, which is a significant concern in police officers' work-life balance (Blake, 2022).

Thus, this research emphasizes these specific interactions between police and youth and explores the life-saving experiences of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law, including the hopes and aspirations of police officers. I closely focused on the relevant experiences of General Santos City police officers who have handled cases of CICL. This research pursues the exploration of experiences; hence a qualitative method is highly suitable for this study. The research focal point is discovery, insight, and understanding from the participants' perspectives; engaging in systematic inquiry is considered appropriate in this study.

Gathered information from various sources focused on juvenile encounters and the effect of police personnel on youth's perspectives and impressions of police officers. In general, police officers experience work-related struggles. This research is based on the theory of Experiential Learning, a process of knowledge construction that involves a creative tension between the four modes of learning concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, reflective observation, and active experimentation.

I intended to investigate police officers' experiences in rescuing children in conflict with the law, particularly in General Santos City Police Station 7 personnel and other police who are identified to have experiences rescuing CICL. This study will examine their coping mechanisms, aspirations, and hopes. A desire to learn more about one's course and improve one's practice leads to searching for searchable questions, some of which are best addressed through a qualitative research design.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Experiences of Police Officers in Rescuing Children in Conflict with the Law**

The Philippine National Police performs excellent functions in the country. With the community's active support, The PNP's duties include upholding the law, preventing and controlling crime, preserving peace and order, and ensuring internal and public security. With these essential functions, police officers may have a variety of experiences that occur in their workplace. Police and youth encounters often occur in a unique setting.

It also gives a different set of challenges and opportunities for law enforcers. The first encounter happens for many youths in schools, neighborhoods, or social service settings. Police officers are in a powerful position to assist these youth in achieving social competence and reducing problematic behavior. The influence of police officers on youth is positive, especially in promoting positive and productive outcomes when police and youth interaction occurs (Brunson & Pegram, 2018; Deterding & Waters, 2021; Gibbs et al., 2018).

Moreover, a study of Children in Conflict with The Law (CICL) in the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and Pag-Asa (Hope) Youth Center in Iligan City examined children's experiences in conflict with the law. The study's findings showed that youth offenders commonly committed slight physical injuries, rugby sniffing, slight destruction of properties, smoking in public places, possessing bladed instruments, drug use, theft, rape, robbery, and murder (Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Muhajirah, 2020; Palomares, 2018).

Furthermore, apprehension is the primary stage of the juvenile process. Through statutory power, Philippine National Police is set to arrest, investigate and detain children in conflict with the law as the first point of contact with the child. The PNP, particularly the Women and Children Protection Department (WCPD), is guided by the PNP manual on Handling CICL, a principle that child offenders must be handled differently than adult offenders. Detentions are done immediately after arrest. CICL will be detained in youth detention homes founded by local governments whenever detention is necessary. The legal process of finally determining the innocence or guilt of the accused child is called adjudication. However, there are also instances when some cases were already decided, but it took some time for release papers to be served (Kubiak et al., 2017; Naganag, 2022; Nisar & Rasheed, 2020).

In addition, police officers encounter a wide range of aberrant and delinquent behavior among the general public. From minor offenses to serious crimes against children and youth, most police encounters with juveniles are in response to minor infractions. A law enforcement function maintains order (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Bachman & Schutt, 2020; Jain, 2021).

On the other hand, police officers are typically the first point of interaction for young people with the criminal justice system. Officers' decisions about handling these encounters are influenced by their on-the-spot assessments of young people's proclivity for delinquency, rehabilitation prospects, and overall moral character. Because most police-citizen interactions occur in public places, officers must make these decisions with limited information, frequently relying on racial and ethnic stereotypes (Sanchez, 2020; Starcher & Stolzenberg, 2020; Watson & Kimble, 2017).

Furthermore, according to research, officers use their discretion inequitably, exposing youth of color to various harms. Furthermore, aggressive policing strategies like stop-and-frisk disproportionately affect young people and people of color. Officers, they claim, are a constant, inescapable, and unwelcome presence in the lives of black and Latino adolescents, particularly males, who are disproportionately stopped, searched,

and killed by police in many urban areas. One of the most common experiences of police officers is high burnout in the police profession. According to a recent study, the police personnel displayed a high level of PsyCap; most were not bullied in the workplace, and most experienced a moderate level of burnout. Male and female police personnel experienced the same burnout (Arcega & Caballero, 2019; Brunson & Pegram, 2018; McMullin, 2021).

For instance, the levels of PsyCap, workplace bullying, and burnout were experienced by police personnel in the same intensity regardless of their district of assignment. The police personnel's increased level of PsyCap was associated with common workplace bullying and burnout. Furthermore, the increased workplace bullying was associated with the increased burnout of police personnel. The study aimed to assess the burnout and secondary trauma experienced by forensic interviewers at the Child Advocacy Center. The research findings highlighted that 84% of the forensic interviewers reported having experienced funding constraints (Arble et al., 2018; Bailey, 2021; Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020).

Additionally, burnout is often experienced due to a lack of necessary financial resources for advocacy and investigation, which are the main contributors to stress and burnout among forensic interviewers. The heavy caseload has also increased burnout predictors, consistent among other criminal justice workers. His researcher also noted that older forensic interviewers experienced less burnout; a more significant possibility is that older forensic interviewers have developed a better-coping strategy over time (Caruso, 2021; Heflin-Brand, 2020; Kartika, 2020).

Likewise, the role of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law has been explored in various studies. These studies highlight the critical role played by the police in identifying and rescuing children who are victims of crime, exploitation, or abuse. However, police officers face challenges and limitations in their efforts to rescue and rehabilitate children in conflict with the law. To effectively respond to cases involving children in conflict with the law, police officers require specialized training in child development, adolescent psychology, and effective communication techniques. One study emphasized the need for police officers to receive specialized training to ensure that they can effectively interact with children and youth. Another study explored children's experiences in conflict with the law in the Philippines and found that police officers often use violence and abuse, leading to further harm to children. It is, therefore, crucial that police officers receive training on child-friendly procedures and uphold the rights of children in all their interactions (Autesserre, 2021; Hilal & Litsey, 2020; Soravia et al., 2021).

In addition, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found that police officers often lack the resources and capacity to respond effectively to cases involving children in conflict with the law. Therefore, governments need to provide police officers with the necessary resources and training to ensure that they can effectively respond to cases involving children in conflict with the law. Police officers play a vital role in rescuing and rehabilitating children in conflict with the law. However,

specialized training, resources, and capacity are necessary to ensure they can effectively respond to cases involving children in conflict with the law (Mangwiro & Chitereka, 2021; Masake & Libebe, 2021; Mortensen, 2020).

Moreover, studies have also highlighted the importance of police officers' collaboration with other professionals, such as social workers, psychologists, and lawyers, to effectively address the needs of children in conflict with the law. The importance of police officers' coordination with other stakeholders in the criminal justice system to ensure that children's rights are protected throughout the legal process. Moreover, police officers' attitudes and perceptions towards children in conflict with the law can significantly affect their ability to intervene and protect them effectively. Negative attitudes and biases towards these children can result in harmful and inappropriate actions, including using force or discriminatory practices. Therefore, police officers must receive training to identify and overcome their biases and negative attitudes toward these children (Cherniavskiy et al., 2019; Sander, 2019; Simmons & Jo, 2019).

Lastly, the need for police officers to take a proactive role in preventing children from getting involved in criminal activities. This involves engaging with children and youth in their communities, developing positive relationships, and promoting education and personal and social development opportunities. The role of police officers in rescuing and rehabilitating children in conflict with the law is multi-faceted. It requires specialized training, collaboration with other professionals, positive attitudes and perceptions, and proactive prevention efforts. By taking a holistic approach, police officers can effectively protect the rights and well-being of children in conflict with the law and contribute to creating safer and more just societies (Higgins et al., 2020; Lum et al., 2022; Muir, 2021).

## **2.2 Coping Mechanisms of Police Officers in Rescuing Children in Conflict with the Law**

A study on Gender Differences in Law Enforcement Officer Stress and Coping Strategies noted that female officers have substantially higher mean stress scores on numerous items (especially safety-related). According to the findings, they are significantly more likely to use positive coping strategies than male officers. According to some research, female officers face stressors that male officers do not, in terms of sexual harassment, negative attitudes toward female officers, and the "second shift" of family responsibilities after work. Female officers experience the repercussion of stress differently, including higher anxiety levels, depression, and suicidal ideation. The article discusses how women are more likely to use emotion-focused coping and seek social support (Bonner & Brimhall, 2022; Busetto et al., 2020; Stratton, 2021).

In contrast, men officers are more likely to use problem-centered coping, and how officers who use active coping styles are more successful at managing stressors. The study aims to determine the extent of gender differences in coping styles so police organizations can adopt more tailored stress management approaches. According to the study, many police officers perceive stress as an illness, while many do not. Although participants' knowledge of the health effects of stress was limited, many had adequate and effective

coping mechanisms, with many turning to religion as a means of coping with stress and some actively coping with stress (John-Akinola et al., 2020; Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Saldaña, 2021).

This could imply that, even though most police officers lack formal knowledge of stress and coping mechanisms and possibly have never received stress and coping mechanism training, they can identify and recognize stress and have personal strategies for dealing with it. Therefore, it is recommended that health promotion programs focusing on stress management strategies in workplace settings be designed to reduce incidences of chronic stress and that educational interventions to increase police officers' knowledge of health consequences and coping techniques be implemented in the law enforcement workplace (Ashcroft et al., 2022; Basinska & Daderman, 2019; Singh, 2017). Furthermore, a counseling unit focusing on stress management and the effects of stress should be established in the health system of the police organization and units to ensure those police officers are well-resourced and trained to deal with stress. Furthermore, given the rigor of the job, law enforcement agencies must provide adequate annual/casual leave and compensation to officers. Finally, the government should provide the equipment required for effective functioning and prioritize interventions to reduce the stress-related health burden among police officers. Individuals can cope with stressors in a variety of ways. However, problem-focused, emotional-focused, and avoidance-focused coping is the most common (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017; Hennink et al., 2020; Shukla, 2018).

Moreover, problem-focused or task-focused coping employs activities that target the source of stress to eliminate or improve the stressful situation. First, problem-focused coping is aggressive efforts to change or solve work-related issues. Second, emotion-focused coping focuses on regulating emotional strain by expressing emotions. This frequently includes techniques such as social support and emotional responses. Finally, avoidance-focused coping is dysfunctional because it avoids or denies stressors. Distancing, isolation, and emotional suppression are examples of escapist behaviors (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2019; Daher et al., 2017; Schutt, 2018).

On the other hand, coping with work stress is another significant factor to consider in managing and mitigating stress among police officers. Several authors have delved into coping with work stress and noted that specific coping strategies should be promoted to decrease police work stress. For example, it was noted that maladaptive coping strategies positively correlate with working stress while active- and adaptive-related coping responses have an inverse link with work stress. The authors also underscored the need to take into account the levels (hierarchy) and groups (job tenure) of police officers in proposing coping strategies, given that each level and group also vary in terms of their ways/forms of coping with work stress (Arble et al., 2018; Kubiak et al., 2017; Singh, 2017).

Likewise, assessing the coping styles of officers from three levels of job hierarchy: officers, sub-inspectors, and constables, the findings revealed that officers used more active- and adaptive-related strategies to cope with work stress. Conversely, it was found

that constables used more maladaptive coping strategies than sub-inspectors and officers. This could be one of the reasons why some groups report more work stress; aside from levels of job hierarchy, stress levels are heightened due to police coping strategies. As such, targeted interventions should include maladaptive coping strategies, as this type effectively reduces work stress (Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Punnett, 2017; William, 2017).

Furthermore, the stress and trauma of rescuing children in conflict with the law can significantly impact police officers' mental health and well-being. To cope with these challenges, police officers use coping strategies such as emotional distancing, cognitive restructuring, and seeking social support. Furthermore, studies have found that police officers with higher levels of emotional intelligence and resilience are better able to cope with the stress and trauma of their work. It is, therefore, essential that police organizations provide emotional intelligence and resilience training to officers to help them cope effectively (Foley & Massey, 2021; Lynch & Liefwaard, 2020; McCanlies et al., 2019).

In addition, creating supportive work environments and implementing peer support programs can also help police officers cope with the stress and trauma of their work. Studies have found that police officers who receive peer support and are part of a supportive work environment have better mental health outcomes and can better cope with the stress of their work. Police organizations must recognize the importance of creating supportive work environments and implementing peer support programs for officers working with children in conflict with the law. The importance of implementing comprehensive approaches that include emotional intelligence and resilience training, supportive work environments, and peer support programs to help police officers cope with the challenges of rescuing children in conflict with the law (Mendoza et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2020; Soravia et al., 2021).

Moreover, studies have found that exposure to traumatic events can lead to various mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. These mental health problems can affect not only the police officer's performance but also their personal lives and relationships. Police officers who had experienced trauma were more likely to use avoidant coping strategies, such as substance abuse or denial. The study emphasized the importance of addressing the root causes of stress and trauma, rather than simply focusing on coping strategies, to ensure that police officers' mental health needs are met. Furthermore, police organizations must prioritize their officers' mental health and well-being, including those working with children in conflict with the law. This includes providing access to mental health services, developing supportive policies and procedures, and promoting a culture of openness and understanding surrounding mental health (Jackson et al., 2019; Purba & Demou, 2019; Queirós et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the coping mechanisms of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law require a comprehensive approach that addresses coping strategies and the underlying causes of stress and trauma. Police organizations must prioritize the mental health and well-being of their officers, including those working with children in

conflict with the law, by providing access to mental health services, developing supportive policies and procedures, and promoting a culture of openness and understanding surrounding mental health (Nisar & Rasheed, 2020; Syed et al., 2020; Van Dijk et al., 2019).

On the other hand, police officers who have a sense of purpose and meaning in their work may be more resilient and better able to cope with the stress and trauma of their work. Police officers who felt a sense of meaning and purpose in their work had better mental health outcomes and were better able to cope with the challenges of their work. In addition, studies have also highlighted the importance of self-care practices in helping police officers cope with stress and trauma. Self-care practices like regular exercise, healthy eating, mindfulness, and relaxation techniques can help reduce stress levels, promote mental health and well-being, and enhance resilience. It is essential to note that the coping mechanisms used by police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law are not solely the responsibility of the individual officer. Police organizations must prioritize their officers' mental health and well-being by providing the necessary resources and support to help officers cope effectively. This includes training, support programs, access to mental health services, and a culture prioritizing mental health (Blumberg et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Gardner et al., 2019).

### **2.3 Insight/Lesson Learned of Police Officers in Rescuing Children in Conflict with the Law**

The researcher must undertake several crucial steps to ensure that a research study is conducted with ethical and valid standards. Firstly, the researcher must formulate research questions that a validator will scrutinize and endorse. Subsequently, the researcher must obtain approval from an Ethics Research Committee to guarantee that the research study is conducted with ethical considerations. Once the committee approves the research study, the researcher must obtain authorization from the Dean of their institution. After the researcher receives permission, they must seek out willing participants who must consent to be part of the study by completing an Informed Consent Form. If participants consent to the study, the researcher may conduct interviews to gather data (Hajjar et al., 2020; Mingus, 2022; Papazoglou et al., 2019).

In addition, police officers who work with children in conflict with the law develop a better understanding of their work's legal and ethical considerations. They recognize the importance of upholding children's rights and ensuring that their interactions with them are fair, just, and respectful. To effectively rescue and rehabilitate children in conflict with the law, police officers need to develop their knowledge, skills, and compassion continuously. Through ongoing training, reflective practice, and collaboration with other professionals, police officers can continue to build on their insights and lessons learned, ultimately contributing to creating safer and more just communities. By applying these insights and lessons learned in their work, police officers can make a significant impact on the lives of children in conflict with the law and



contribute to creating a more positive and compassionate justice system (Carroll et al., 2020; Hoeve et al., 2021; Romosiou et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the literature suggests that police officers working with children in conflict with the law may also gain valuable insights into the importance of community engagement and prevention efforts. By engaging with communities and promoting education, awareness, and opportunities for personal and social development, police officers can proactively prevent children from getting involved in criminal activities. Moreover, police officers who work with children in conflict with the law may also gain insights into the importance of cross-disciplinary collaboration. To effectively address the complex needs of children in conflict with the law, police officers must work closely with social workers, psychologists, lawyers, and other professionals in the criminal justice system. Through collaboration and communication, these professionals can create a coordinated and comprehensive response that promotes positive change and rehabilitation (Prontenko et al., 2019; Staller & Körner, 2021; Van Hasselt et al., 2019).

Moreover, police officers working with children in conflict with the law may also gain insights into the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding. Children in conflict with the law come from diverse cultural backgrounds, and police officers must be aware of cultural differences and sensitive to cultural practices and beliefs. Culturally competent police officers were better able to communicate effectively with children from diverse backgrounds and build positive relationships with them. In addition, police officers may also gain insights into the importance of trauma-informed care when working with children in conflict with the law. Many children in conflict with the law have experienced trauma, abuse, or neglect, and police officers need to understand the effects of trauma and provide care and support sensitive to these experiences. Trauma-informed care emphasizes creating a safe, supportive, and empowering environment that promotes healing and recovery (Li, 2020; Lynch & Liefwaard, 2020; Papazoglou et al., 2019).

#### **2.4 Hopes and Aspirations of Police Officers in Rescuing Children in Conflict with the Law**

The Philippine National Police ensures the safety and welfare of the people. That includes their hope and aspirations for the youth of the country. Therefore, the Philippine National Police believe that children, whether victims or offenders, should be treated with respect and dignity, given child-appropriate treatment and language, and handled according to the standards set forth by the law and the rules to avoid their re-victimization (Basinska & Dåderman, 2019; International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2018; Nisar & Rasheed, 2019).

Furthermore, several programs have been implemented in various jurisdictions nationwide to improve interactions between police officers and youths. These programs are implemented to ensure that the hopes and aspirations of PNP for the youth will prosper. These include school-related or Police-led diversion programs (or diversion programs in which police are involved), police training programs, and community-based policing programs are all examples of community-based prevention programs. Some are

specifically designed to improve police-youth relationships (such as police athletic leagues). Others include elements intended to improve interactions between police and youth, but their effectiveness could be improved. The primary objectives may differ, such as substance use prevention for the DARE program (Hilal & Litsey, 2020; KPA, 2021; Millar et al., 2021).

In addition, the overall goal of programs such as those implemented by police in the community is to improve community safety and crime rates; however, because these programs offer the opportunity to have police and youth interact, the ultimate goal is to change criminal behavior and delinquency. In addition, the Police Regional Office-11 (PRO 11) and DepEd 11 have partnered to implement an anti-crime program in schools known as "Oplan Makabata or Magtutudlo ug Kapulisan Bata Tudluan." This campaign hopes to educate further students, teachers, and parents on various crime prevention programs of the Philippine National Police. Moreover, the campaign aims to raise awareness of the negative consequences of illegal drugs, bullying prevention, and the defense of children's basic rights, said Major Jason Baria, PRO-11 spokesperson (Bailey, 2021; Soravia et al., 2021; Yin, 2017).

Likewise, according to Baria, Oplan Makabata also seeks to address issues related to schools, notably the safety and security of students and instructors, as well as close the "gap" between young people and the police by fostering positive interactions between them in the classroom. *"Due to the problems of abuse, bullying, an increase in the number of kids in legal trouble, and the recruitment of pupils into certain left-leaning organizations, I think this partnership is very timely,"* Morales added (Arcega & Caballero, 2019; Bonner & Brimhall, 2022; Gibbs et al., 2018).

Moreover, there are police-led programs crafted in the hopes of the promising and bright future of the youth in the country. These are preventive programs that enable change in youth criminal activities or behavior. Prevention programs are designed with specific goals (such as preventing substance use or gang involvement) and target the general youth. A few programs also aim to improve law enforcement and youth interactions, primarily by having police officers implement the program (Heflin-Brand, 2020; Naganag, 2022; Starcher & Stolzenberg, 2020).

On the other hand, various programs are implemented for the wellness of police officers. It is noted that police officers prioritized the following work values: Supervision, Workplace, Security, Co-workers, and Achievement; job burnout was significantly negatively correlated with the intrinsic work values of Creativity, Challenge, and Variety. While the magnitude of the correlation was moderate, work engagement was significantly positively correlated with the intrinsic work values of Creativity, Variety, Altruism, Challenge, and Achievement and with the extrinsic work values of Prestige and Co-workers. There were significant differences between police officers with different levels of job burnout and work engagement for intrinsic work values such as Variety, Challenge, and Creativity (significant effects) and Altruism and Prestige (moderate effects) (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Ashcroft et al., 2022; McMullin, 2021).

Furthermore, Cebu City police officers conducted welfare intervention to mitigate the impact of quarantine duties on personnel's emotional and mental health in response to job-related stress and burnout. The Philippine National Police leadership has recognized that there is a necessity to monitor the behavior of police officers considering the physical, emotional, and mental stress they have experienced being on the front line. The intervention program recommends rest and recreation to police officers. This is in the hopes of intervening in police officers to experience the effect of stress while serving. Police officers in Metro Manila also undergo a mental health wellness program (Schutt, 2018; Watson & Kimble, 2017; Yin, 2018).

Additionally, several researchers have noted that having an ineffective coping strategy for stress leads to worsened health among police officers. For example, drawing data from 917 Swedish police officers found that avoidant coping as a stress strategy significantly worsened their overall well-being, heightening their stress levels even more. Moreover, due to ineffective coping styles, some police officers reported resorting to substance use (Arble et al., 2018; Kubiak et al., 2017; Singh, 2017).

## **2.5 Children in Conflict with the Law Record**

According to police records, there were 6,044 CICLs during that period in the first six months of 2017. Children who are predisposed to Those between the ages of 15 and 18 commit crimes. Boys and Girls are more likely to commit crimes than boys—the most commonly reported violations nationwide. In 2016, police received reports of property crimes. There appears to be an increase in the number of CICLs. However, contrary to popular belief, many children are not now committing crimes. Only a tiny percentage of crimes recorded in recent years, more than 2%, were allegedly committed by children, and more than 98 percent of the cases involved adult offenders (Juvenile Justice and Welfare of the Republic of the Philippines, 2017; Philippine Regional Office 2, n.d.; Saldaña, 2021).

## **2.6 General Santos City CICL Report (2021)**

This is an annual report of children in conflict with the law from the Women's and Children Protection Desk of the General Santos City Police Office as of 2021. This consolidated report had: two recorded cases of physical injury, Seventeen (17) cases of rape (RA 8353), (Eleven) 11 cases of prohibited drugs (RA 9165), Ten (10) cases of illegal gambling, Six (6) records of motor napping, One (1) case of Trespassing to dwelling, Thirty-five (35) cases of theft, Six (6) cases of robbery, One (1) case of robbery with homicide, Five (5) cases of robbery with force upon things, Two (2) cases of grave threats, malicious mischief, and unjust vexation has One (1) recorded case. Among these reported cases, none was turned over to the police diversion program (Philippine National Police About Us, n.d.; Stratton, 2021; Williams, 2017).

However, most of the CICL was turned over to other government agencies such as CSWDO and BCPC. In 2021, thirteen (13) CICL cases were filed with the prosecution. Among these records, it is ambiguous whether police have specific experience rescuing

or handling these CICLs. This is because there are so many circumstances in which the police had to rescue CICL. Therefore, this consolidated report was obtained (Caruso, 2021; Heflin-Brand, 2020; Kartika, 2020).

Additionally, the data presented in the RRL showed a summary of information on CICL cases in General Santos City, which is the target area of the researcher. It also presented the previous record of CICL in the Philippines in 2017. Various studies have pointed out that police and children in conflict with the law interact within the community, neighborhood, social service settings, and schools. Police-CICL interactions happen not only on the streets but also in other occurrences. Furthermore, this literature review has highlighted the experiences of police officers in their workplace, their interactions with children in conflict with the law (CICL), the coping strategies, and police officers' hopes and aspirations (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2020; Hennink et al., 2020; Shukla, 2018).

In conclusion, these studies are relevant to the current researcher. It is found that police and youth encounters occurred in a unique setting, and indeed the police have significant experience rescuing or dealing with CICL. Police officers who have encountered CICL should embark on a positive experience upon the interaction so that it may also positively affect CICL's behavior. In addition, it is common for police officers to experience burnout and secondary trauma, job-related stress due to their exposure and experiences involving CICL for various reasons (Alpi & Evans, 2019; Bachman & Schutt, 2020; Jain, 2021).

Additionally, the study can determine and shed light on various topics, including police officers' experiences rescuing children in conflict with the law, which the researcher believes is the gap between this study and previous studies. On the other hand, the wellness and welfare of police officers must be highlighted as well. Due to work-related circumstances, police officers suffer great stress that may affect their physical, mental, and capabilities to perform their duties and responsibilities. Occupational stress is negatively related to career satisfaction, in-role performance, and extra-role performance of police employees (Nisar & Rasheed, 2019; Starcher & Stolzenberg, 2020; Watson & Kimble, 2017).

Moreover, police officers must remain focused on their central powers and functions as mandated by Republic Act 6975, "An Act Establishing the Philippine National Police under the Reorganized Department of Interior and Local Government and Other Purposes," which was revised by RA 8551, the "Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998," and further revised by 9708. These powers and functions include the ability to enforce all laws and ordinances related to protecting lives and property, maintain peace and order, investigate crimes, conduct searches and seizures by the constitution and applicable laws, and detain arrested individuals (Bonner & Brimhall, 2021; Busetto et al., 2020; Stratton, 2021).

Furthermore, with all these essential functions in the community, it is necessary to dive into the experiences of police officers, for they carry out an important task to ensure the public's welfare and protection not only among youths, children in conflict with the

law, or Children at risk. Moreover, ensuring the public's welfare and safety is not an easy task to take on. It imposes tremendous pressure and burden as police officers must perform their job accordingly and responsibly. Hence, police officers' wellness should be taken into account seriously, for it is evident in the studies presented in this chapter that burnout and other work-related stressors significantly impact the overall work performance, well-being, and other occupational experiences police officers have (Kubiak et al., 2017; Nisar & Rasheed, 2019; Naganag, 2022).

Among the general public, police officers witness a wide range of abnormal and delinquent behavior. Most police encounters with juveniles are in response to minor infractions, ranging from minor offenses to serious crimes against children and youth. Nevertheless, a law enforcement function keeps the peace. Police officers are typically young people's first point of contact with the criminal justice system. Officers' decisions about handling these encounters are influenced by their on-the-spot assessments of young people's proclivity for delinquency, prospects for rehabilitation, and overall moral character. Because most police-citizen interactions occur publicly, officers are forced to make decisions with limited information, frequently relying on racial and ethnic stereotypes.

In this chapter, most of the presented data highlighted the emotional and mental experiences of police officers or other agencies handling and rescuing CICL. As observed in the chapter on review of related, there is less discussion, particularly on the experiences of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law. As a result, this study, *Life-Saving Stories: An Anecdote of a Police Officer in Rescuing Children in Conflict with the Law*, will significantly contribute to disseminating new ideas and findings by exploring areas other researchers still need to explore. This study could also contribute significantly to this field's current and existing research.

### **3. Material and Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative narrative research design. Qualitative research design is an approach where the researcher can examine people's experiences in a more detailed and specific set of research methods. The most prominent feature of qualitative research is that this approach allows the researcher to identify issues from the perspective of the study participants and understand the meanings and interpretations they have on a particular behavior, object, or event. Additionally, qualitative research enables the researcher to study people in their natural settings, to identify experiences and behavior shaped by the context of their lives, social and economic status, and the cultural or physical context they have (Hennink et al., 2020; Muzari et al., 2022; Williams, 2019).

The qualitative method proved effective for examining and comprehending the significance that different people or groups assigned to a social or human phenomenon. Qualitative research involves materialized questions and procedures, data generally collected in the participants' settings, data analysis inductively builds from specific to

general themes, and the researcher interprets the meaning of the data gathered. Researchers who conduct qualitative research believe in an inductive approach to research, a focus on personal meaning, and the importance of reporting the difficulty of a situation problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ishtiaq, 2019; Staller & Chen, 2022).

The goal of qualitative research was to understand social phenomena in their natural environment thoroughly. Instead of concentrating on the "what," it emphasizes the "why" of social phenomena. It relies on the firsthand accounts of people to serve as the primary interpreters of their daily experiences. For the study of human phenomena, qualitative researchers employ a variety of systems of inquiry, such as biography, case study, historical analysis, discourse analysis, ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology, as opposed to logical and statistical methods. The study takes a deep dive into a narrowly defined subject, which is the experience of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law (Cardano, 2020; Kalu, 2019; Pearse, 2019). As a researcher, I aimed to give an account of the experiences of police officers.

One of the most common approaches to qualitative research was narrative study. Narrative research aims to investigate and conceptualize how the human experience is expressed in text. Aiming for a thorough investigation of people's interpretations of their experiences, narrative researchers use small participant samples to produce voluminous and unrestricted discourse. Researchers write narratives about the experiences of individuals, describe a life experience, and discuss the meaning of the experience with the individual. A narrative research design typically concentrates on studying a single subject. Instead of a group of people, the researcher takes on the role of storyteller for the individuals (Camic, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Ishtiaq, 2019).

On the other hand, narrative research aimed to investigate and conceptualize how the human experience was expressed in text. Aiming for a thorough investigation of people's interpretations of their experiences, narrative researchers use small participant samples to produce voluminous and unrestricted discourse. Again, the value of stored experience is highlighted. Typically, this involves interviewing people with knowledge of the relevant subject, but it may also entail document analysis. Researchers from a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology, communication studies, economics, education, history, linguistics, social work, etc., use narrative research as a mode of inquiry (Muzari et al., 2022; Tomaszewski et al., 2020; Shufutinsky et al., 2020).

Moreover, the research was mainly about exploring and understanding the experiences of police officers who rescued children in conflict with the law. I am thoroughly exploring the life-saving experiences of police officers in Station 7 of General Santos City. I wish to explore, interpret and understand the subjective experiences of police officers. Experiences rescuing CICL is one of the subjects in research or experiences of police officers that is under-represented or an under-research problem in the field of criminology. Therefore, this study's outcome will generate new ideas for future researchers and studies.

Furthermore, this research involved two-three police officers designated at PNP-WCPD (Women and Children Protection Center). These police officers are considered

eligible to participate in the study, for there are police officers who have direct interactions with children in conflict with the law. Moreover, the qualitative data analysis will be utilized in this research. The most important aspect of qualitative analysis is the emphasis on text—on qualitative data rather than numbers. The "text" those qualitative researchers analyze is typically interviewed transcripts or notes from participants' observation sessions, but the text can also refer to images the researcher examines (Schutt, 2018; Singh, 2017; Van Hasselt et al., 2019).

### **3.2 Research Participants**

The Police officers assigned to General Santos City Police Station 7 were selected to be the study participants since the researcher was currently assigned to GSC-Police Station 7. Furthermore, this chapter also defines the population and strategies for choosing the participants. Finally, purposive sampling, a non-probability, was chosen for this study.

I administer a face-to-face survey interview as the method of data gathering. A survey allows participants to express themselves in their own words, and I also ask follow-up questions. Although the survey is time-in, I still decided to pursue this form of data gathering because it is the most suitable form.

The interviewer was genuinely curious about the interviewee's beliefs, including their opinions, attitudes, and meanings, and how they interpret behavioral occurrences. Correlating these opinions with data from other sources would therefore be pointless. However, I can still confirm an interviewee's stated opinions by posing more than one question about them or having the conversation more than once in the hopes of getting a set of consistent answers (Yin, 2018).

Nevertheless, due to strict protocols for the COVID-19 pandemic, an alternative way to gather data is to utilize an online survey through Google Forms. This software allows me to create my survey interview and automatically store the participants' data or responses. In this way, I am sure that following the COVID-19 protocols set by the government. Moreover, while following the protocols, I can still ensure that I can administer the survey interview, which is essential to come up with the Life-Saving Stories of Police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The research relies heavily on selecting and collecting primary and secondary data, experimentation, and observations. Some primary data sources include surveys, interviews, case studies, and diary entries. Interviews are another standard method of data collection.

#### **a. Ask permission**

One of the researcher's primary responsibilities is approaching the organization and requesting permission. If the organization has a policy regarding research activities, the researcher must follow the necessary steps to ensure the study is conducted ethically and validly. One of the first steps is for the researcher to develop research questions that a

validator will validate. Once the research questions are validated, the researcher must seek approval from an Ethics Research Committee (ERC) to ensure that the study is conducted in an ethical manner. If the committee approves the study, the researcher must then seek permission from the Dean of their institution and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Once permission is obtained, the researcher must request participation from individuals willing to participate in the study and provide an Informed Consent Form. If participants approve of the study and consent to participate, the researcher may then conduct interviews to gather data for the study. By following these essential steps, the researcher can ensure that their study is conducted properly and ethically. (McMullin, 2021).

### **b. Meeting Participants**

The study is carried out during the coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, meeting other participants may not be possible or not advised in line with the health protocols. Moreover, meeting the participants over video conferences and acquiring data online may be the best way to interact and gather data from the participants (Busetto, 2020).

### **c. Actualizing Interviews**

The selection and collection of primaries and secondary data are vital in the research. Interviews are also a standard data collection tool. Interviews can help the researcher understand how and why certain things happen and the people involved, opinions, motivations, interests, and feelings. Thus, interviews are a powerful tool that should be considered when choosing the best research tool (Jain, 2021). The actualization of the interview will be conducted online in compliance with the government's health department's COVID-19 protocols. Therefore, the participants and the researcher interact online over Google, Form, SMS, and other means of communication such as email and other messaging applications (Busetto, 2020).

### **d. Transcribing**

Transcribing is the act of providing a written account of the spoken responses of the study's participants. The Individual or group interviews are typically transcribed and written verbatim in qualitative research exactly word-for-word (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020).

The researcher has a responsibility to determine which tool is appropriate for data collection and which one is appropriate when transcribing collected data. Transcription is an incredibly time-consuming and often tedious task. As the transcriber, I must make subjective decisions about what to include (or exclude), whether to correct errors, and whether to edit grammar repetitions (McMullin, 2021).

### **e. Analyzing Spoken Data**

Protocols and transcripts must be created to analyze the data gathered through observations, interviews, and focus groups. Depending on what is known to be relevant,



essential, and expected for the analysis, interviews can be transcribed verbatim, with or without behavioral annotations, and with or without phonetic transcription of dialects and filler words (Busetto, 2020).

#### **f. Reporting**

To allow for in-depth understanding and "thick description," qualitative research papers are typically longer than quantitative research papers. In addition, transparency of the methods used is emphasized, including why, how, and by whom the data are implemented in the specific study setting so that it is possible to talk about if and how this might have affected data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. Typically, the results section begins with a paragraph summarizing the main findings, followed by more detailed descriptions of commonalities, discrepancies, or exceptions per category (Stahl et al., 2020).

#### **g. Future Plans**

As the researcher of this study, I hope the data collection bears fruitful results and may bring forth new knowledge so the data expand and multiplies. As a result, this under-researched subject will open up new opportunities, and new research will be conducted to gain more information that will benefit the field of criminology (McMullin, 2021).

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Background of the Participants**

The table shows the code name of the participants and the police station they were in. Each of the participants has an assigned pseudonym to keep their identity confidential. In addition, the participants have undergone in-depth interviews with the researcher. Further information is presented in the table below:

**Protector** was a PCPL assigned at the General Santos City Police Office. She has been serving the WCPD for almost seven years as an investigator.

**Guardian** was a PCPL stationed at Police Station 7, General Santos City. She has been assigned to the WCPD for six years and still counts as an investigator.

**The defender** was a PSSG stationed at Police Station 7, General Santos City. She has been in the WCPD for five years as an investigator.

**Marshall** was a female PSSG stationed at Police Station 7, General Santos City. She was assigned to the Women and Children Protection Desk for three years and seven months.

#### **4.2 Categorization of Data**

This part analyzes themes through data categorization, including the beginning, middle, and ending stories of police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law.

**Research Question 1:** how do participants describe the beginning stories in rescuing children in conflict with the law?

An in-depth interview was conducted with four informants to answer this research question. Several sub-questions were asked to draw their insights and experiences on the lifesaving stories of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law. Several emergent themes were identified, such as crucial, pitiful, and Eagerness to Help.

**Table 1:** Beginning stories of police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
The rescue conducted is considered very dangerous.	Grim
Apprehending CICL is always significant and dangerous.	
I worry for them if they are not adequately guided.	
They need help and sympathy.	
The case of a minor who was killed with his bare hands is horrifying.	
Dangerous since you must consider everything.	
I really feel terrible about them.	Piteous
I felt sorry for their parents.	
I felt that they need help.	
I pitied them.	
I am very much willing to help.	Compassionate
Still willing to do the job more than I desire.	
We should never give up.	
I am still willing to rescue CICL.	

Police officer upholds law and order in their community by defending the general population and their possessions, preventing crime, lowering criminal fear, and enhancing everyone's quality of life. Within the police, many various positions may be filled, and there is a distinct hierarchy structure that can facilitate professional advancement from police officer to chief constable. However, on the other hand, the great goal and spirit behind Republic Act No. 9344, as revised by Republic Act No. 10360, contain one of the most fundamental principles of international human rights law: protecting children's well-being must always be safeguarded.

Children in conflict with the Law (CICL) must be allowed to contribute to society according to international law and humanitarian principles. Our Constitution, the highest legislation of the land also upholds this value, as stated in the Child Rights Convention of the United Nations and other international agreements.

The state views Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) and Children at Risk (CAR) as victims of an even bigger injustice: the moral decline of society, rather than as malefactors or hardened criminals, by the notion of restorative justice.

Therefore, eliminating crimes and instances of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect of children has thus always been a top priority for the committed men and women of the WCPC. Thus, this police officer works hard to ensure that children's welfare and best interests are always safeguarded.

### a. Grim

This study showed that police officers prioritize the importance of their work. One participant said that because they did not know who was carrying a weapon or guns, they viewed every rescue they carried out as extremely risky, especially if it involved gang riots. The need to be child-friendly, non-degrading, and gender-sensitive when rescuing or apprehending children in legal trouble makes the task significantly risky.

This evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follow:

Protector: *“Uhhmm... yes, sir. Actually, sir each rescue we conducted iare all consider as very dangerous lalo na if it involve riots between GANG’s kung sa anuhmm... hindi po naming alam kung sino sa kanila ang nagdadala ng mgaarmas. Grounds that we do not know who was carrying a weapon or guns”.* (Protector, lines 18-22)

Every rescue we conduct is considered very dangerous, especially if it involved riots between gangs on the grounds that we did not know which of them was carrying a weapon or guns.

Guardian: *“Ang pagliligtas sa mga bata na sumangkot sa batas ay palaging nasa panganib kasi kailangan mong isaalang-alang na dapat kang maging mapili sa mga bata at hindi mapang akit at sinsitibo sakasarian. Halimbawa ang babaeng CICL ay dapat hanapan ng babaeng opisyal bilang imbestigador ng WCPD, dapatmongipaliwanagsaisangdialectongkilalaniya ang dahilan kung bakit siya kailangan siyang ilagay sa kostodiya bago siya e turn over sa CSWDO at ipaliwanag din ang kanyang mga Karapatan sa konstitosyon. Dagdag pa ang posibleng pinsala sa ibang tao sapanahon ng nasabing presyon ay dapat pigilan. Dapat mong tiyakin ag pinaka mahusay na interest ng bata.”* (Guardian, lines 155-163)

Rescuing or apprehending children in conflict with the law is always significant and dangerous since you must consider being child friendly, non-degrading, and gender-sensitive. For instance, a female CICL should be searched by a female officer. As WCPD Investigator, you should explain in a dialect they know why they will be placed in custody before they are turned over to CSWDO and expounds on their constitutional rights. Further, possible injury and violence by other persons during the said operation must be prevented. Finally, you must ensure the Best Interest of The Child.

Defender: *“What bothers me most is Pyongyang case ng isang minor na pinatay niya sa sarili niyang kamay ang sarili niyang papa. We had difficulty as to where to temporarily put him since we don’t have shelter in the LGU”.* (Defender, lines 279-281)

What bothers me most is the case of a minor who killed with his bare hands his father. We had difficulty finding where to temporarily put him since we don't have a shelter in the LGU.

The verbatim accounts of the participants reveal that police officers primarily value their work. One participant stated that they viewed every rescue they carried out as extremely risky, especially if it involved gang rioting, because they did not know who was carrying a weapon or guns. When saving or apprehending children who are in legal trouble, it is necessary to be child-friendly, non-demeaning, and gender-sensitive. This increases the task's risk and danger.

#### **b. Piteous**

The verbatim accounts of the participants reveal that police officers primarily value their work. One participant stated that they viewed every rescue they carried out as extremely risky, especially if it involved gang rioting, because they did not know who was carrying a weapon or guns. When saving or apprehending children who are in legal trouble, it is necessary to be child-friendly, non-demeaning, and gender-sensitive. This increases the task's risk and danger.

This evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follow:

Protector: *“Uhhmm... yes sir. Everytime natinitignan ko po talaga kasi sila, at first I really feel terrible about them ummmm... for the reason na hindi ko ahhh maintindihan bakit sila nanggugulo at isa pa naawa po ako sa mga magulang nila.”* (Protector, lines 18-22)

When I look at them, at first, I really feel terrible about them for the reason that I don't understand them being troublesome. I feel sorry for their parents.

Guardian: *“Bilang isang pangunahing opisyal ng tungkulin sa aming stasyon, at isang kostitador, may mga pagkakatao na ako ay nadismaya at nabigo kapag ang mga kabataang ito ay nasaktan sa mga karumaldumal na krimen. At their age, ang tanging trabahonila ay mag-aral ng Mabuti para sa kanilang magandang kinabukasan at hindu gumawa ng krimen. Minsasila ay produkto ng sirang pamilya. Ang patnubay ng magulang ay napakhalagasakanila. Yon lang sir.”*

As a Key role Officer in our Station and a WCPD Investigator, there were times that I was dismayed and disappointed when these young ones were involved in such heinous crimes. At their age, their only job is to study hard for a brighter future, not to commit crimes. Sometimes they were a product of a broken family. Parental guidance is so vital for them.

Defender: *“I have mixed emotions, but what prevails is the feeling of sympathy with the CICL. Nakakawa sila kasi bikitima lang din sila usually sa resulta sa irresponsableng parents ast kadalasan ang mga mama nila is mga battered woman. Nakikita nila mula nong bata pa sila. I condemned the action but not the person.”* (Defender, lines 286-290)

I have mixed emotions, but what prevails is the feeling of sympathy with the CICL. I pitied them; they are the true victims and usually the result of irresponsible parents whose mother is a battered woman since they were young. I condemned the action but not the person.

Police officers expressed sympathy for both the parents and the kids, according to the participants' verbatim accounts. One participant expressed her disbelief and shock that such young people would commit such heinous crimes. They should focus on studying hard in order to get ready for a better future because they are old, not committing crimes. Some kids who commit crimes have also been used or persuaded by adults.

### c. Compassionate

This is evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follows:

Protector: *"Yes sir, I am very much willing to do it again at gawinito ng paulit-ulit for kasi po. I am a child advocate, and I am proud to do exact service with a heart to the children. Uhmmm... kailangan lang silanatingintindihin so that hmmm... they can stand them...on their own in the right track of their life."* (Protector, lines 43-46)

Yes, I am very much willing to do it again and again. As a growing child advocate, I am proud to do exact service with a heart to the children. They only need to be understood so that they can stand on their own on the right track in their life.

Guardian: *"Hmmm... kung bibigyan ng isang pagkakataon, handa parin ako na gawin ang trabahong ito sa pagliligtas ng mga bata nasumalungat sa batas. Sa kadahilanang ako ay isang instrument na ibinigay sila upang tulungan sila namagsimula ng isang panibagong buhay sa paggawa ng ganitong Gawain. Yon lang sir."* (Guardian, lines 188-192)

If given another opportunity, I am still willing to do this job of rescuing children in conflict with the law. The reason that I am an instrument given to them to assist them in starting a new life without committing such crimes and violence.

Defender: *"Yes! We should never give up on these children. Kailangan talaga nila ng strong na support system kasi ang kasa... kadalasan sakanila ay wala silangstongna support system e and people who will love and accept them no matter what do believe they have potentials that need to be discovered."* (Defender, lines 302-305)

Yes! We should never give up on these children. What they need is a strong support system and people who will love and accept them no matter what. Do believe they have potentials that need to be discovered.

Marshall: *“Ahhh... opo naman. Kung mabibigyan ulit ng pagkakataon, handa akong sumagip ng ga sinasabi nating children in conflict with the law. Dahil sa ito lamang ang paraan para masagip sila at hindi makakagawa ng paulitulis na mga kasalanan sakanilang ahhh... mgabuhay at sa kanilang pagtanda narin.”* (Marshall, lines 440-443)

Yes, if given another chance, I am still willing to rescue children in conflict with the law. It is because it is like saving them from re-offending when they grow up.

They all expressed a desire to keep assisting these CICLs in this verbatim account of the participants. One participant was proud of the work she had to do and did so with compassion for the kids. To stand on their own on the right path in their lives, these CICLs should be understood. Other participants, however, argued that she is merely a tool to help CICL begin a new life after committing those crimes and using violence. Another participant, however, advised her to never give up on those kids no matter what because they require a solid network of supporters who will accept and love them and believe they possess untapped potential. Lastly, if given another chance, a participant is still willing to rescue children in conflict with the law. It is because it is like saving them from re-offending when they are growing up.

**Research Question 2:** How do participants describe their middle stories in rescuing children in conflict with the law?

An in-depth interview was conducted with four informants to answer this research question. Several sub-questions were asked to draw out their insights and experiences on the lifesaving stories of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law. Several emergent themes were identified, such as dedication to the service, love for children, and happiness.

**Table 2:** Middle stories of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
I am more than willing to continue serving children.	Dedication to the Service
We should never give up on them.	
I like to help children.	
I was being motivated to continue.	
Encourage them to join and let them feel that you are with them.	Love with Children
My duty is to protect them.	
Children are the assets of our society.	
They should be protected.	
I feel personally attached to the rescued children.	Happiness
My job is very fulfilling.	
Helping these children made me glad.	
I believe I have done the most.	
It is very fulfilling to help these children.	

The comprehensive juvenile justice and welfare system was established in 2006 with the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act's passage. The act was created by international juvenile

justice standards and child rights, and it recognizes the right of every child who is suspected of, charged with, found guilty of, or recognized as having violated the penal code to be treated in a manner suitable to their age and desirable for promoting their reintegration. The act thus acknowledges the fundamental goal of using non-judicial means first and foremost and using custody as a last resort.

Apart from this, handling children who enter the court system is the responsibility of the specialized child and youth relations officers in police stations. However, studies suggest that procedural norms about minors are frequently disregarded. However, the police officers play a critical role in ensuring that eligible children are passed straight via the Civil Justice Council police, preventing eligible children from being detained for trial. Indeed, working in the police force is a rewarding career with the potential to change the community, even though it can sometimes be challenging. The working environment, however, can occasionally be upsetting and physically taxing. Thus, a Police Officer must be physically fit to perform various components of the job, which are physically demanding.

#### **a. Dedication to the Service**

According to the participants' verbatim accounts, despite their numerous difficulties, they are more than willing to keep helping children because of "Ang Kabataan ang Pag-asa ng Bayan." Furthermore, they added that in their capacity as child advocates, they allowed CICL to approach law enforcement by demonstrating the reliability of those in uniform. For CICL to feel like these police officers are with them, these police women encouraged and involved CICL to support their organization's advocacy efforts. Another thing is the commitment to give this CICL quality assistance by being inspired and cognizant that these kids lacked guidance during their battles.

This evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follow:

Protector: *"Uhhh... yes, sir. Despite so many challenges we are facing actually, I am more than willing to continue serving children kasi po nanininwala po ako sa kasabihang ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng bayan if we want that to happen. We should never give up on helping them."* (Protector, lines 50-53)

Despite so many challenges we are facing, I am more than willing to continue serving children because I still believe in the old saying, "Ang Kabataan Ay Pag Asa Ng Bayan" If we want that to happen, we should never give up on helping them.

Protector: *"Ahhh... yes, sir. So, as a child advocate, instead of nahabulin sila, we let them come to us by showing them that men and women in uniform can be trusted; we involve and encourage them to join the advocacy in our organization for them to feel that we are with them. Yun po, sir."* (Protector, lines 57-60)

As child advocates, instead of running after them, we let them come to us by showing them that men and women in uniform can be trusted; we involve and encourage them to join the advocacy in our organization for them to feel that we are with them.

Guardian: *“Doing this kind of job, my motivation to continue despite so many challenges is “I like to help children. They were just lack of guidance during their battles in life.” (Guardian, lines 197-200)*

Guardian: *“Muli sir, ang aking motivation ay ang aking pagpursigenatulongansila at iligtassila. Dahil napaka vulnerable nila at bilang imbestigador ng WCPD, tungkol sa protektahan sila. Yon lang sir.”*

Again, my motivation is my urge to help them and to save them. Since they were so vulnerable and as WCPD Investigator, it is my duty to protect them.

#### **b. Love to Children**

This evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follow:

Protector: *“Ahhh... yes, sir. So, as a child advocate, instead of nahabulin sila, we let them come to us by showing them that men and women in uniform can be trusted; we involve and encourage them to join the advocacy in our organization for them to feel that we are with them. Yun po sir.” (Protector, lines 57-60)*

As child advocates, instead of running after them, we let them come to us by showing them that men and women in uniform can be trusted; we involve and encourage them to join the advocacy in our organization for them to feel that we are with them.

Guardian: *“Again, my motivation is my urge to help them and to save them. Since they were so vulnerable and as WCPD Investigator, it is my duty to protect them.” (Guardian, lines 204-206).*

Defender: *“I believe God has a purpose on me. May purpose po ang Diyos sir kung bakit ako nilagay sa ganitong trabaho. It made me realized that as a person kung gaano ako ka blessed kung paa sa kanila. Meron akong pamilya na sumusuporta sa akin. Anak at anak naahhh... alalagaan nasusuportasa akin. And God wanted them to children who will be assets to our society. Yong CICAL po.” (Defender, lines 325-330)*

I believe God has a purpose for me. Why did he place me in this kind of job? This job made me realize that, as a person, I am blessed. I have a family who supports me and loves the children God gave us to love and take care of and the kind of job they made, children whom we will support so they would be the best persons. God wanted them to be, children who will be assets to our society.



Marshall: *“Uhhmm... palagi kong iniisip na itong mga batang ito ay nangangailangan ng kalinga at kailangan maisalba at mabigyan ng maayos at proteksyon.”* (Marshall, lines 458-460)

Marshall: *I kept in mind that children like them need to be saved and protected.”* (Marshall, lines 458-460)

Protector: *“You know what sir, I really feel personally attached to the rescued children during diversion process kung saan ang mga bata ay humihingi pa po ng ahhh... pangalawang pagkakataon upang magbago at uhhm.... ipagpatuloy ang kanilangpag-aaraluhmm... and to become uhhmm... a better version of himself po sir.”* (Protector, lines 64-68)

I feel personally attached to the rescued children during the diversion process wherein the child was asking for a second chance. He would like to correct his wrong by continuing his study. Moreover, be a better version of himself.

As found in the verbatim account of the participants as child advocates, instead of running after them, they let children come to them by showing them that men and women in uniform can be trusted. They involve and encourage CICL to join the advocacy in their organization to feel that police officers are with them. Another motivation that urges them to help CICL and save them is knowing that CICL is so vulnerable. As WCPD Investigator, she must protect them. While other participants believed that God had a purpose for her, why He placed her in this kind of job? This kind of job made her realize that, as a person, she is blessed. Another is to keep in mind that children like them need to be saved and to be protected. Lastly, another participant felt personally attached to the rescued children during the diversion process, wherein the child was asking for a second chance. They would like to correct their wrong by continuing their study and being a better version of themselves.

### **c. Happiness**

Participants asserted that they found happiness in their work. One participant said that while no one can truly change the world with a finger, she believes she can change one or two people by giving them little by little help. Another participant expressed joy at the prospect of a new life beginning every time CICLs were released from CSWDO-Shelter (Bahay Pag-asa or Substitute Home for Girls). They were also happy to see these CICLs recover and be willing to alter their way of life because these kids would have a better future.

This evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follow:

Protector: *“Yes, naman po uhhmm. It is very fulfilling considering that I truly cannot change the world in just a snap of my finger, but hmmm... I can change a single or two persons world by helping them a little.”* (Protector, 71-73)

Yes, indeed, it is very fulfilling considering that I truly cannot change the world in just a snap of my finger, but I can change a single- or two-person world by helping them a little.

Guardian: *“Uhhmm... oo sir sobrang fulfilling siya sa tuwing sila ay pinalaya mula sa CSWDO-Shelter or Bahay Pag-asa or Substitute Home for Girls, isang bagong buhay ang malapit ng magsimula para sakanila sir.”* (Guardian, lines 214-216)

Yes, of course, it is very fulfilling. Every time they were released from CSWDO-Shelter (Bahay Pag-asa or Substitute Home for Girls), a new life was about to begin.

Marshall: *“Opo. Ang...ang...ang matulungan ang mga batang ito uhhmm... ito ay nagpapasayasa akin.”* (Marshall, line 470-471)

Indeed, it is very fulfilling helping these children made me glad.

Marshall: *“Kung er-rate ko po ang aking sarili siguro nasa 9 na puntos o 9 points. Masarap sa pakiramdan na makatulong. Makatulong tayo sapag... pagtupad sa magandangkinabukasansamgakabataangito.”* (Marshall, lines 475-477)

I was going to rate myself fulfillment 9 points. Since it's very fulfilling to help these children for a better future.

Defender: *“Uhhmm... I rate myself 8 because I believe naginagawa ko naman po yong trabaho ko, but I still have to do more, para ma improve and ma develop ang sarili ko to the needs of the changing world to keep myself abreast in making this RA 9344 effective.”* (Defender, lines 351-354)

I rate myself 8 because I believe I have done most, but I still have to do more, improve and develop myself to be relevant to the needs of the changing world to keep myself abreast in making this RA 9344 effective.

Police officers are routinely surveyed as part of a study to determine how content and happy they are with their work. The satisfaction level of police officers with their careers is 4 out of 5 stars, or in the top 50% of occupations. In general, police officers rate the significance of their work. One of the main reasons for joining the force is the ease with which police officers, in contrast to those in many other professions, can find meaning in their work. Police personnel gave their workplace a general rating of 4.5 out of 5. The overwhelming majority of police officers' express satisfaction in their work, which suggests that joining the force results in greater fulfillment and pleasure.

**Research Question 3:** How do Participants Describe their Ending Stories in Rescuing Children in Conflict with the Law

An in-depth interview was conducted with four informants to answer this research question. Several sub-questions were asked to draw out their insights and experiences on the lifesaving stories of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law. In addition, several emergent themes were identified, such as fulfillment, understanding, and success.

**Table 3:** Ending stories of police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law

Cluster Themes	Emergent Themes
I see the fruit of my hard work.	Fulfillment
Make me so proud and more inspired.	
I am very satisfied in doing my job.	
I am very satisfied in rescuing CICL.	
I can help someone to live a new life.	
These children were victims.	Understanding
I realized that parents played crucial roles.	
Do not judge the child.	
Understand and know the reason.	
We must understand its cause.	
We need to understand them first.	Passion
Passion to save children.	
We should work it together.	

Moreover, police officers face unique challenges and opportunities when dealing with young people. Law enforcement is frequently a young person's first introduction to anything related to justice, whether in a classroom, a neighborhood, or a social service context. A young person's perception of the type and circumstances of this contact may be profound and long-lasting.

In this study, most police officers have mentioned fulfillment, understanding, and passion as part of their learned experiences from rescuing CICL.

**a. Fulfillment**

This evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follow:

*Protector: "Uhhmm... yes, sir. Actually, sir that at the end of the day uhhmm... nakikita ko ang bunga ng akin guhhmmmpagot at ng aknguhmmmm... trabaho. Uhhmm... seeing them being a better version of themselves made me so proud and made me more inspired. Yon po. (Protector, lines 92-95)*

At the end of the day, I see the fruit of my hard work; seeing them being a better version of themselves makes me so proud and more inspired.

*Guardian: "Oo sir. Lubos akong nasisiyahan sa paggawa ng aking trabaho sa pagliligtas sa mga batang sumasalungat sa batas. Ito ay dahilan sa aking... (Guardian, lines 160-162)*

Yes, I am very satisfied in doing my job in rescuing children in conflict with the law. It is because it was my duty and responsibility to rescue, to save, and to protect them.

Marshall: *“Ahhh... wala akong pagsisi... ahhh... magsisisi dahil sa alam ko naman na meron akong matutulungang mga bata at mabugyan ng bagongbuhay at tuluyan narin namaisalba sa mga krimen. Ganon.”* (Marshall, lines 488-490)

I don't have regrets about doing my job since, in this line of duty, I can help someone live a new life.

According to the participants' verbatim accounts, seeing the CICL become a better version of themselves at the end of the day makes the police officers immensely proud and inspired. Another participant echoed the above statement and expressed satisfaction with her work saving children who were in legal trouble. It is because she was responsible for saving, protecting, and rescuing them first and foremost. Lastly, these officers do not regret carrying out their duties because doing so allows them to fulfill a personal need by assisting someone in starting a new life.

## **b. Understanding**

This evident in the verbatim account of the participants as follow:

Marshall: *“Ang mga batang ito ay biktima lamang ng economic issues, social issues at mga masamang impluwensya ng mga bata dyan sa kapa...kapaligiran at dahilanansa... dahilangan sakahirapan. Uhhmm... at dahil ditto nangangailangan sila ng tulongupangmaisalba.”* (Marshall, lines 494-497)

These children were victims of economic and social issues, peer pressure, and poverty and needed to be saved.

Guardian: *“Uhhmm... lesson sir. Gabayan sila ng mabuti ng kanilang magulang sr para hindi sila masangkot sa mga naturang mga krimen sir.”* (Guardian, lines 249-250)

Parental guidance is crucial to young ones to prevent them from becoming one of Children in Conflict with the law.

Protector: *“Yes sir. Actually, po for me lang, do not judge the child of what he committed wrong, instead understand and know the reason of why he committed such crime. Yon po.”* (Protector, lines 124-126)

Do not judge the child for what he committed wrong; instead, understand why he committed such a crime.

Protector: *“Uhhmm... yes sir. For me sir, not every CICL is always at fault, we only need to understand them first before judging them. So, yun po.”* (Protector, lines 131-132)

Not every child in conflict with the law is always at fault; we must understand them before judging them.

Marshall: *“Ahhh... dapat siguro nating respetuhin ang karapatan at ahhh... paka... kapakanan ng mga bata kahit paman na sabihin nating Nakagawa ito ng krimen wag natin silang pagbintangan at ahhh... isisi sa kanila sa halip unawain natin muna ang rason kung bakit nila nagawa iyon.”* (Marshall, lines 501-504)

We must ensure the "Best Interest of the Child." Even if he/she committed such a crime, we must not blame her/him and must understand its cause.

These kids needed to be saved because, as was revealed in the participants' verbatim accounts, they were victims of social and economic problems, peer pressure, and poverty. It should be noted that children need parental guidance to avoid becoming Children in Conflict with the Law. Otherwise, be cautious in passing judgment on the child's wrongdoing; try to understand and ascertain his motivations. Another participant added that not all children who run afoul of the law are always at fault, so police officers must understand them before passing judgment. Lastly, a participant suggested that they should ensure the child's best interest. Even if they committed such a crime, they must not blame them, and as officers in charge, they must understand its cause.

### **c. Passion**

The evidence in the verbatim account of the participants is as follows:

Defender: *“The lesson I have learned is yong value po talaga ng family kasi lahat nagsisimula sa family. We went to have a strong country. And if we want to have a strong country kailangan po yong matibang po yong foundation ng ating pamilya.* (Defender, lines 359-362).

The lesson I share is that once they are into this job, they should put into their minds that they are doing this not out of compliance but because it is a passion to save children.

Defender: *“Ano po sir. Ano po yong pagrerescue sa mga bata. Kailangan po holistic po yong approach. If we have... if we want to have a better nation, we should work it all together.* (Defender, lines 395-3976)

Rescuing the children should be a holistic approach. If we want a better nation, we should work it out together.

The lesson that can be learned from the participants' verbatim accounts is that these officers are passionate about their work and should remember that saving children is what drives them to do what they are doing (rescuing the CIGL). Therefore, a comprehensive strategy should be used to rescue the kids.

## 5. Recommendations

Finally, the outcomes or findings of this study were able to describe the lifesaving stories of the police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law. Indeed, law enforcement officers run into risky and stressful situations while performing their duties. While specific hazards, such as gun violence, are obvious, others, like fatigue, are less obvious but commonly occur and can seriously hinder officer performance. Officer performance is also impacted by training and other factors.

Additionally, the Grim theme of police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law highlights the punitive and harmful nature of the justice system. To address these issues, officers may promote restorative justice practices that repair harm caused by criminal behavior through dialogue, community involvement, and accountability is crucial. Additionally, empowering marginalized and disempowered communities through community-led initiatives, such as restorative justice programs or youth diversion programs, can provide alternatives to the justice system. Focusing on restorative justice and community empowerment can lead to a more just, equitable, and supportive system of justice for kids that break the law.

Moreover, the piteous theme of police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law sheds light on the vulnerability and underlying causes of children's involvement in criminal behavior. To effectively address these issues, it is essential to focus on prevention by implementing early intervention programs that address risk factors such as poverty, neglect, and abuse while promoting protective factors like positive relationships and opportunities for growth and development. By prioritizing prevention, we can work towards reducing the number of children involved in criminal behavior and provide them with the support they need to thrive. This approach requires a collaborative effort from all levels of society, including families, communities, and the justice system, to ensure that all children can reach their full potential and lead successful lives.

Furthermore, the compassionate theme of police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law underscores the importance of empathy towards these vulnerable children. Several steps can be taken to put this into practice, such as developing training programs for police officers and practitioners to build empathy and promote a compassionate approach in interactions with children and their families. Additionally, community-based programs can be established to provide opportunities for positive relationships with police officers, mentors, and other supportive adults. Finally, access to counseling, mental health services, and other forms of support can be provided to help children overcome their difficulties and move towards a more positive future. By prioritizing empathy and providing the necessary support and resources, we can build a

justice system that is more compassionate and effective for children in conflict with the law.

The middle stories of police officers rescuing children conflict with the law with emergent themes of dedication to the service, love for children, and happiness. The findings implied that child protection professionals note a sharp increase in young victims, witnesses, and (alleged) offenders during emergencies. In conflict circumstances, when justice institutions are weaker due to underfunding and lax enforcement, standard detention regulations are frequently administered incorrectly. It is possible for requirements to protect adolescents' well-being in the justice system to be broken or ignored. Children displaced by conflict have a significant risk of being detained and arrested in several nations.

Additionally, the theme of dedication to the service of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law highlights the importance of building strong relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. To put this into practice, law enforcement agencies may prioritize community policing initiatives that promote positive relationships between police officers and community members, particularly those most impacted by the justice system. Additionally, agencies may invest in training programs emphasizing the value of empathy, communication, and de-escalation skills to enhance officers' ability to work with children and families in crisis. By promoting dedication to service, law enforcement agencies may work towards building trust and collaboration with the communities they serve, leading to more effective and equitable outcomes for children in conflict with the law.

Moreover, the theme of love with children of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law highlights the importance of a compassionate and caring approach to working with children in crisis. To put this into practice, law enforcement agencies may implement training programs that focus on building empathy and developing positive relationships with children and families. Additionally, agencies may collaborate with community organizations and service providers to offer resources such as counseling, mental health services, and other forms of support that prioritize the well-being of children. By prioritizing love and compassion in their approach to working with children in conflict with the law, law enforcement agencies may help to create a more supportive and nurturing environment for children to thrive.

Furthermore, the theme of the happiness of police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law highlights the importance of promoting positive outcomes for children. Police leaders may prioritize officer well-being and mental health, as this may help to promote a positive and empathetic attitude towards children and their families, may provide access to counseling services, peer support groups, and other resources that can help officers to manage stress and build resilience, may recognize and celebrate the positive impact that police officers may have on the lives of children in conflict with the law, and create opportunities for positive interactions between police officers and children may help to build trust and promote positive relationships. It may involve

organizing community events, sports programs, or other activities that unite officers and children in a non-threatening and enjoyable setting.

Additionally, the theme of the fulfillment of police officers rescuing children in conflict with the law highlights the importance of recognizing and promoting the positive impact of this work on the officers themselves. To address this, police departments may implement programs that prioritize the mental health and well-being of officers who work with children in conflict with the law. This may involve providing access to counseling, mental health services, and other forms of support, as well as promoting a culture that values and celebrates the positive impact of this work. Furthermore, it may provide opportunities for officers to build positive relationships with the children they work with and to recognize the positive impact of these relationships on both the officers and the children. Moreover, it may promote the fulfillment and well-being of police officers who work with children in conflict with the law. Lastly, it could strengthen the relationships between law enforcement and the community and promote a more compassionate and practical approach to addressing the needs of children in conflict with the law.

Moreover, the theme of understanding police officers in rescuing children in conflict with the law may provide specialized training on child development, trauma-informed approaches, and de-escalation techniques. This training may help officers better understand children's needs in difficult situations and provide them with appropriate support. It may also help officers to recognize and respond to the underlying causes of children's involvement in criminal behavior, such as poverty, neglect, and abuse. Equipping officers with this knowledge and understanding can improve their effectiveness in responding to these situations and provide better outcomes for the children in their care. Additionally, ongoing support and supervision may help officers apply this knowledge in their daily work and improve their practice over time.

Furthermore, the theme of the passion of police officers for rescuing children in conflict with the law can make a significant difference in the lives of young people. However, this passion must be accompanied by practical actions to ensure that it produces positive outcomes for children. One critical step was to provide specialized training to officers on how to work with children in conflict with the law. This training should cover child development, trauma-informed care, and non-punitive approaches to dealing with children who have committed offenses. Collaboration with social workers, child protection agencies, and other professionals is also crucial.

## **6. Conclusion**

The findings of this study indicate that police officers are responsible for upholding law and order, protecting the public, and stopping, identifying, and looking into unlawful behavior, with a focus on protecting the best interests of all children and those in legal trouble. However, the term used to describe these actions is policing. Additionally, police frequently assume a variety of licensing and regulating duties. However, police officers



are well aware of the talents and skills of other officers. After all, the public's sense of security comes from police officers. They are the specialists who respond to local emergencies or threats. They want to shield the locals and their communities from harm by aiding in deterring criminal activity. Therefore, officers need various skills, strength, and bravery to succeed in their challenging line of work.

Because of this, the majority of police officers in today's society are committed to safeguarding their neighborhoods and have the necessary skills to do their jobs, especially when it comes to dealing with children and people who are in legal trouble. The moral discernment, public speaking, and empathy abilities of the police may all be improved. However, there are undoubtedly still issues with the police force. However, more importantly, police officers are committed to upholding the PNP Ethical Doctrine's principles and objectives. Government employees must always uphold the Doctrine when interacting with family, coworkers, or other community members. However, due to upholding their obligations, these officers have adored their jobs and the kids who rely on them for their devoted assistance.

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### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors unequivocally declare their complete lack of conflicts of interest concerning this research. They meticulously carried out the study independently, guaranteeing that their interpretation and reporting of the results remained uninfluenced by any financial

or personal affiliations. Importantly, the utmost care was taken to ensure the well-being and safety of all participants involved in the study. It is crucial to highlight that the participants willingly volunteered to take part and were neither coerced nor influenced by the researcher in any way. There exists no evidence to suggest that the study in any manner misled participants regarding potential harm. Upholding the rights of all study participants is of paramount importance and was rigorously safeguarded throughout the entire research process.

### **About the Author**

The author of this study possesses a diverse educational background, having successfully earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology. Currently, they hold the esteemed position of Chief in the Supply and Logistic Section of the Philippine National Police (PNP) located in General Santos City. Their professional growth and expertise have been further enhanced through active participation in a multitude of seminars and training programs. Notable among these are the Investigation Officer Basic Course Regional Investigation and Detective Management Division, PRO 12, Public Safety Officer Basic Course, Public Safety Junior Leadership Course, Public Safety and Investigation and Detection Course (PS IDC), Public Safety Field Training Program, and Police Recruit Orientation Course. These valuable experiences have contributed significantly to comprehensive skill set and enriched the understanding of the subject matter at hand.

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