

Exploring Parenting Styles and Experiences of Houseparents in Guiding Children in Conflict with the Law

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ABSTRACT

While numerous studies have explored parental influence on children's development, limited research in the Philippines has examined the parenting styles of houseparents caring for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), particularly within institutional rehabilitation settings. Understanding their caregiving approaches provides valuable insights into how parenting principles are applied in structured environments to promote behavioral reform and emotional stability among youth offenders. The main objective of this mixed-method study was to explore the parenting styles and caregiving strategies of houseparents at the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY)–VII in Argao, Cebu. Data were gathered from ten houseparents through the Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ) by Shyny (2017) and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics revealed that the authoritative parenting style was the most dominant, reflecting warmth, communication, and firm yet compassionate discipline. Findings further indicated that houseparents often treat CICL as their own children, fostering trust and emotional connection through consistent communication and empathy. Despite challenges such as resource scarcity, behavioral difficulties, and emotional strain, they remained resilient through faith, teamwork, and a sense of calling. Additionally, the study found that houseparents continuously adjust their approach to meet each child's unique needs. Beyond supervision, they act as mentors and emotional anchors, modeling respect, responsibility, and healthy communication. They emphasized that strong institutional support, such as ongoing training, counseling, and adequate staffing, plays a crucial role in helping them care effectively and compassionately for the youth. The study ultimately shows that caring, understanding, and well-trained houseparents are key to helping CICL recover and develop emotionally in institutional care.

Keywords: Parenting styles, Houseparents, Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), Rehabilitation, Mixed method

INTRODUCTION

Houseparents have an important yet challenging responsibility in shaping the lives of Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), often navigating complex behavioral, emotional, and institutional challenges that remain underresearched. In the Philippines, a CICL is defined as a child under 18 years of age who is alleged, accused, or adjudged to have committed an offense under Philippine laws (Philippine National Police Manual, 2016). The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 sets the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (MACR) at 15 years. When CICL are taken into custody, procedures prioritize the child's rights and welfare, and placements are often made in government-run residential facilities that provide temporary care, psychosocial support, and rehabilitation services while awaiting case disposition or diversion (Solmayor & Embornas, 2024). Moreover, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) reiterated the need to uphold the principles of restorative justice in handling cases of CICL. "Minors who commit offenses do not go scot-free," the agency emphasized, highlighting that while children are spared from harsh punishment, they are not exempt from accountability. Instead, rehabilitation and reintegration are prioritized (DSWD, 2025). The DSWD Memorandum Circular No. 14, s. (2019) outlines that CICL are placed in residential care facilities managed by the DSWD or other accredited agencies. These children are cared for by houseparents, who are trained staff responsible for

their day-to-day needs, safety, emotional support, and development within these institutions. According to the job description of DSWD Houseparent I (2021), a houseparent is a substitute parent of CICL in the rehabilitation center. One of the groups they handle includes CICL.

Additionally, one role of the houseparent is to motivate the CICL to finish the rehabilitation program by providing support and care (Panelo & de la Cruz, 2023). Accordingly, in DSWD Houseparent I job description (2021), one of their duties and responsibilities is to monitor behavior, document progress, aid in rehabilitation and medical care, and create a supportive and healthy environment with effective communication and positive relationships to help CICL build discipline, stability, and essential life skills for reintegration. Despite their critical role, houseparents face multiple challenges in guiding CICL, including emotional and psychological stress, difficulties in establishing trust, and behavioral issues among the children (Cometa, 2017; Amelyn, 2021; Bongbong et al., 2023; Palitayan, 2023; Galleposo et al., 2023). Emotional and psychological challenges such as burnout, frustration, and emotional fatigue are common due to the overwhelming responsibilities of managing CICL's schedules, ensuring compliance with rehabilitation programs, and addressing past trauma (Bongbong et al., 2023; Palitayan, 2023). Building positive relationships and trust is particularly challenging, as many CICL exhibit shyness, fear of exposing their violations, or resistance stemming from past negative experiences (Amelyn, 2021; Bongbong et al., 2023). Additionally, houseparents must handle behavioral problems such as defiance, aggression, bullying, erratic sleep patterns, and attempts to escape from the facility, which further complicate caregiving (Cometa, 2017; Amelyn, 2021; Palitayan, 2023; Galleposo et al., 2023). Limited access to training programs, insufficient resources, and underfunded facilities also hinder the implementation of effective rehabilitation strategies (Bongbong et al., 2023; Palitayan, 2023).

To address these challenges, houseparents employ different parenting styles to connect with CICL and manage behavior effectively. Parenting styles, first conceptualized by Diana Baumrind in the 1960s and expanded by Maccoby and Martin in the 1980s, include authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful approaches (Jessup, 2024). These parenting styles are some of the things parents implement to shape children's reactions to discipline and guidance. Authoritarian parents tend to use one-way communication, setting strict rules that children must follow without question or flexibility. In contrast, authoritative parents build a warm and supportive relationship with their children, using discipline to teach rather than to punish. Permissive parents are also loving and caring, but set few rules or limits, giving their children a lot of freedom to make their own choices. Uninvolved parents, on the other hand, give children even more independence but are emotionally distant and largely disconnected from their child's life, meeting only basic needs with little engagement or guidance (Sanvictores, 2022).

Furthermore, this study aims to explore the types of parenting styles utilized by houseparents at the DSWD Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) – VII and how these styles influence their caregiving strategies when working with CICL. While prior research has examined general caregiving approaches in rehabilitation facilities, few studies have specifically categorized the parenting styles employed by houseparents and analyzed how these styles affect daily practices, communication, and behavior management (Bongbong et al., 2023; Amelyn Laro, 2021). Most existing literature focuses on broad caregiving strategies without linking them to practical outcomes in discipline, emotional support, or rehabilitation. This study addresses this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the parenting styles of houseparents and examining how these styles shape their caregiving approaches and strategies for guiding CICL.

This study was conducted using a mixed-methods research design. The Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ) developed by Shyny T. Y (2017) was utilized to identify the parenting styles of the houseparents. In addition, semi-structured interviews were carried out to gather data on houseparents' experiences. The collected information underwent in-depth thematic analysis to provide meaningful insights. This study aimed to explore how houseparents set rules, discipline and assist the children in their care by learning what specific parenting styles they employ when dealing with them. Aside from determining their parenting styles, this study examined the dynamics of houseparents, such as their communication, love, care, and attachment, disciplinary practices to the CICL, and houseparents' challenges and coping strategies in caring for CICL while addressing these children's behavior. This study aimed to illuminate the realities of care at the rehabilitation facility by looking at these topics.

METHODS

Research design

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, specifically an explanatory sequential research design, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the parenting styles employed by the houseparents in the DSWD RRCY – VII when guiding CICL. According to Shorten and Smith (2017), mixed-methods design offers the advantage of drawing on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data, thereby expanding the evidence base and providing a more complete understanding of complex social phenomena. This study integrates both methods, which enables the researchers to examine not only the prevalence of specific parenting styles but also to explore the lived experiences, attitudes, and challenges encountered by the houseparents in their caregiving roles.

To establish a foundation, the study utilized a quantitative component. The study employed the frequency of identified parenting styles of each houseparent using the Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ). This standardized instrument allows for the classification and summary of parenting styles through numerical data. Moreover, the qualitative part of the study utilized a phenomenological approach to provide context and depth to the numerical results by investigating the personal experiences, views, and specific caregiving methods houseparents use when applying the identified parenting styles to CICL. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews and observations to uncover the emotional and relational dynamics involved in their houseparenting practices.

By employing a mixed-methods design, the study aimed to offer a richer, more nuanced understanding of how houseparents support and influence the development of children in conflict with the law within a residential care setting.

Participants

The target population for this study consisted of the 22 houseparents employed at the DSWD RRCY – VII. However, the study utilized a purposive sampling method to select 10 houseparents as participants. This method was employed to specifically select individuals who were qualified as participants and directly responsible for the caring, supervising, and guiding of CICL residing in the facility. According to Stratton (2024), purposive sampling involves the researcher selecting participants based on their presence in a population of interest, specific characteristics, or experiences, ensuring the selected sample is highly relevant to the investigation.

This selection was justified because the experiences and parenting styles of these houseparents play a crucial role in shaping the rehabilitation and reintegration of these youth. By purposively selecting these 10 houseparents, the study was able to gain valuable, meaningful, and necessary insights into their caregiving approaches, experiences, dynamics, challenges, and adaptive strategies when guiding CICL within that structured institutional setting.

The target sample size of 10 was justified based on numerical suggestions for phenomenological studies, which formed the qualitative core of this research. According to Bekele and colleagues (2022), a sample size of 5 to 25 participants was considered appropriate for phenomenological inquiries, while 10 was considered the smallest acceptable sample size for qualitative research. Since the quantitative aspect of this study focused on identifying parenting styles and presenting descriptive statistics, the primary emphasis remained on gathering rich, meaningful data through in-depth qualitative interviews. The sample size ensured a diverse range of perspectives, allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how various factors—such as years of experience, personal beliefs, and institutional guidelines—influenced their parenting styles.

Furthermore, the selection ensured that the data collected was both relevant and applicable, as houseparents serve as the primary caregivers within the rehabilitation center, making them the most directly involved in the day-to-day upbringing and discipline of the children under their care.

The following criteria were used to ensure the relevance of the participants:

1. Participants have at least one year of service at the DSWD RRCY – VII, which ensures they have sufficient experience in guiding CICL.

2. Participants were biological or legal parents in addition to fulfilling the role of a houseparent.
3. Participants were actively involved in the day-to-day supervision, care, and discipline of CICL within the rehabilitation center.
4. Participants were willing to share their experiences and perspectives through interviews

All participants met the inclusion criteria and were selected with careful attention to demographic balance, thereby minimizing potential bias in representation. The sample was evenly distributed by sex, comprising 5 female and 5 male houseparents, and by length of service, which ranged from 1 to 7 years. This stratification supported a balanced representation of participant backgrounds, contributing to the credibility and inclusiveness of the findings.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in Argao, Cebu, specifically at the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) – VII. The RRCY – VII, as a government-run facility, served as a rehabilitation center for children in conflict with the law, providing them with structured programs aimed at their reformation, education, and reintegration into society. The researcher worked closely with RRCY – VII to secure a dedicated room with a controlled environment, ensuring a focused setting for the study. This allowed the researchers to identify different parenting styles and explore how they were applied within the structured rehabilitation system, where houseparents served as the primary caregivers.

Hence, conducting the study within the RRCY – VII ensured that data were gathered in an environment where houseparents' daily interactions with the CICL took place, allowing for more accurate and relevant insights into their caregiving practices.

Research Instrument

32-item Parenting Styles Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ)

Prior to conducting the semi-structured interviews, participants first completed the 32-item Parenting Styles Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ; Shyny, 2017). The PSFFQ (Refer to Appendix E) was a self-report questionnaire instrument developed to assess parenting styles and dimensions in the context of overall family functioning. This questionnaire evaluated parenting behaviors across four styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved. It also incorporated aspects of cohesion, adaptability, and communication. PSFFQ used a 5-point Likert scale to measure the frequency of specific parenting practices. Responses ranged from “all of the time,” which corresponded to 5 points, to “never,” which corresponded to 1 point. Furthermore, each parenting style was represented by eight items, yielding a maximum possible score of 40 per style. Consequently, higher scores in each subscale reflected a stronger inclination toward the corresponding parenting style. The PSFFQ was selected for this study due to its comprehensive nature and its validated reliability and applicability in diverse contexts, ensuring that the houseparents were able to complete the measure effectively without undue burden. For the purposes of this study, the PSFFQ was used solely to identify the parenting styles of the houseparents.

Interview Questions

The research instruments in this study utilized semi-structured interviews as the main method for data collection. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers to obtain in-depth narratives while also maintaining a structured approach that ensured all key areas of interest were covered. This format provided the flexibility to ask follow-up questions, enabled a deeper exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and caregiving strategies. The interview questions consisted of five categories, which ensured a comprehensive understanding of the houseparents' approaches to caregiving.

The first section included questions designed to build rapport with the participants and create a comfortable interview environment, where it gathered background information on houseparents, including their age, gender, educational attainment, and years of experience as a houseparent. The second section, communication, delved

into how houseparents interacted with CICL on a daily basis. It examined how they established respectful and trusting relationships, how they managed misunderstandings, and how they encouraged open emotional expression among the children under their care. The third section, love, care, and attachment, explored how houseparents expressed affection, built emotional connections, and developed a sense of attachment with the CICL. This section aimed to understand how emotional support contributed to the rehabilitation process and affected the children's sense of safety and belonging within the facility. The fourth section, the disciplinary practices, investigated the strategies houseparents used to guide behavior and maintain order. It focused on how discipline was administered, whether it aligned with a particular parenting style, and how houseparents balanced structure with empathy and understanding. Lastly, the fifth section, the houseparents' challenges and coping strategies, explored the difficulties that houseparents encountered when guiding CICL and also examined how houseparents managed stressful situations and resolved conflicts within the facility. This section examined the techniques and coping mechanisms they used to maintain a structured yet supportive environment.

Data Gathering

Pre-Data Gathering Phase

Before collecting the data, the researchers made several preparations to make sure the process was smooth and ethical. After all necessary requirements and processes to conduct the study, the researchers then visited the DSWD Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) in Argao to explain the study and ask for help in identifying houseparents who qualified as participants. After three days, the center provided the list of qualified houseparents. Once the list was received, the researchers scheduled the interview dates based on the availability of the participants and the institution. The interviews were set for September 16, 18, and 19, 2025. All research tools, including the Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ) and the semi-structured interview guide, were prepared ahead of time. The informed consent forms were also ready to ensure that participants clearly understood the purpose of the study and their rights. During each interview, the researchers began by giving the participants their informed consent form. The study was explained in simple terms, including what they were expected to do and how their information would be kept private. This step also helped build rapport and trust, making the participants feel comfortable and willing to share their experiences.

Actual Data Gathering Phase

The data collection took place on September 16, 18, and 19, 2025, at the institution's conference room. A step-by-step process was followed to ensure consistency. The first step was giving the houseparents the Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ). Most participants finished the questionnaire in about five minutes. After they completed it, the researchers immediately checked and scored their answers to determine their dominant or most common parenting style. After the questionnaire, the researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant. This interview focused on their parenting practices, challenges, and experiences in guiding CICL. The format allowed the participants to speak freely while still following the main questions of the study. Each interview varied in length depending on how much the participant wished to share. By September 19, the researchers had completed ten interviews.

Post-Data Gathering Phase

After all the interviews had finished, the researchers moved to the post-data gathering phase. Each participant received a token of appreciation for their time and cooperation. Five days after the data collection, the researchers began reviewing and organizing the data. The interview recordings were transcribed, and the questionnaire results were double-checked. For the qualitative analysis, the researchers used Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis, which involved reading the responses carefully, identifying patterns, and forming themes that represented the participants' experiences. Combining the questionnaire results and the interview data, gave the researchers a clearer and deeper understanding of how houseparents carried out their roles and interacted with CICL. All information was kept confidential and stored safely throughout the entire process.

Data Analysis

This study employs mixed-methods, specifically an explanatory sequential research design. For the quantitative aspect, measures of variability and frequency distribution were utilized. The Parenting Styles Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ) uses a 5-point Likert scale—all of the time, most of the time, sometimes, rarely, and never—to assess specific parenting behaviors exhibited by participants. Scores are calculated separately for each houseparent, and the total score for each parenting style is derived from the sum of the relevant items. This results in four separate scores per participant, each corresponding to a distinct parenting style. The scores are interpreted using measures of variability to determine the degree to which each parenting style is exhibited. Higher values indicate a greater prevalence of that particular style. Additionally, frequencies for each parenting style are presented in percentages to allow for clear and systematic identification of the predominant approaches used by the houseparents. Following the identification of parenting styles, semi-structured interview responses are analyzed to explore how houseparents with different styles care for and interact with CICL (Children in Conflict with the Law).

For the qualitative data, this study adopts Braun and Clarke's (2016) Thematic Analysis (TA), to systematically examine the qualitative data collected from houseparents. The analysis began five days after the final interview, last September 24, 2025. From September 24–28, 2025, the researchers engaged in familiarization by listening to audio recordings, transcribing the interviews verbatim, and repeatedly reading the transcripts. During this stage, they immersed themselves in the participants' narratives and highlighted significant statements that reflected daily caregiving experiences, challenges, emotional labor, and interactions with CICL. From October 1–6, 2025, the researchers generated initial codes by labeling important features of the data such as "strict but caring discipline," "emotional support," "trust-building," and "challenges in guiding CICL." These codes helped break down the data into smaller, manageable segments that represented recurring ideas across interviews.

From October 10–12, 2025, the researchers examined the coded data and grouped related codes to identify potential themes. Codes about discipline, guidance, and rule-setting were clustered together, while codes about empathy, patience, and emotional connection were grouped to explore relational aspects of caregiving. By grouping codes on discipline and emotional support, the researchers were able to identify dominant parenting styles and caregiving strategies. Between October 16–18, 2025, the researchers carefully went through the initial themes to make sure they truly matched what the participants had shared. Some themes were combined, others were split into smaller ideas, and a few were removed if there was not enough evidence to support them. The researchers also went back to the transcripts to double-check that the themes reflected the houseparents' real experiences and not just their own interpretations. Then, from October 22–24, 2025, the researchers clearly defined and named each theme, choosing quotes from the participants that best illustrated them. This step helped show how each theme represented the different parenting styles and caregiving strategies used in the rehabilitation center.

Finally, from October 25–29, 2025, the researchers organized the finalized themes into a clear and coherent narrative that showed how the themes were connected. The themes highlighted the ways discipline, emotional support, and caregiving strategies influenced the houseparents' roles in guiding CICL. The final report presented the analysis systematically, demonstrating how each theme was grounded in the participants' real experiences and how the thematic analysis helped answer the research questions about parenting styles and caregiving in the youth rehabilitation setting.

Ethical Considerations

This study carefully followed ethical principles to protect the rights, dignity, and well-being of houseparents working with Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL). Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, and their consent was obtained voluntarily, with the option to withdraw at any time. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms were used, and all data were securely stored in encrypted files and locked cabinets, in line with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012. The research was designed to minimize any potential harm: interview questions were sensitive and non-invasive, and participants were offered the chance to pause or stop if they felt uncomfortable, with support resources available when needed. The study also emphasized respect for diversity and inclusion, valuing participants as experts in their

experiences and ensuring that all interactions and reporting were culturally sensitive and non-discriminatory. Data were managed responsibly, with access limited to the researcher and supervising faculty, and all identifiable information was removed after the required retention period. By following these ethical safeguards, the study aimed to create a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for participants while producing trustworthy and meaningful insights about caregiving practices in institutional settings.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor and quality of this qualitative study, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria for trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability—were carefully applied. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement with participants and the research setting, allowing for a deep understanding of their experiences, as well as member checking, where participants reviewed their interview transcripts or summarized findings for accuracy. Triangulation of data from interviews, field notes, and relevant documents further strengthened confidence in the results. Transferability was addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants' roles, and institutional environment, enabling other researchers to judge the applicability of findings to similar settings. Dependability was supported through a thorough audit trail documenting research decisions, interview guides, and data analysis steps, alongside regular consultation with the thesis adviser and research peers to maintain methodological consistency. Confirmability was ensured through reflexivity, with the researcher keeping a reflective journal to identify personal biases, while triangulation and peer debriefing verified that findings reflected participants' experiences rather than the researcher's perspective. These combined measures ensured that the study's findings are credible, reliable, objective, and grounded in authentic narratives, providing a trustworthy understanding of houseparents' caregiving practices in guiding CICL.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a comprehensive presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the findings derived from this mixed-method study. The data were systematically collected from 10 houseparents serving at the DSWD RRCY-VII in Argao, Cebu.

Table 1: Results of the PSFFQ (N=10)

Parenting Styles	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (SD)	Level
Authoritarian	19.70	3.49	Average
Authoritative	29.90	3.92	High
Permissive	23.40	3.13	Average
Uninvolved	18.20	4.28	Average

0 - 8 = VERY LOW, 9 - 16 = LOW, 17 - 24 = AVERAGE, 25 - 32 = HIGH, and 33 - 40 = VERY HIGH

Table 1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of the four parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and uninvolved, derived from the Parenting Style Four Factor Questionnaire (PSFFQ). Among these, the authoritative parenting style obtained the highest mean score ($M = 29.90$ and $SD = 3.92$), categorized as high, while the other three styles, authoritarian ($M = 19.70$ and $SD = 3.49$), permissive ($M = 23.40$ and $SD = 3.13$), and uninvolved ($M = 18.20$ and $SD = 4.2$.) were rated as average.

Table 2: Dominant Parenting Styles (N=10)

Parenting Styles	<i>f</i>	%
Authoritarian	0	0%
Authoritative	10	100%
Permissive	0	0%
Uninvolved	0	0%

Additionally, the findings presented in Table 2 demonstrate that the authoritative parenting style is the dominant approach among houseparents at DSWD-RRCY VII, as 100% of the ten houseparent participants assessed through the PSFFQ reportedly adhere to this style. This is highly commendable and provides a strong positive context for the CICL in their care. Consequently, the identified authoritative parenting style is substantiated by the themes that emerged from the qualitative data, wherein their responses consistently reflected practices of warmth, open communication, and structured guidance in their experiences of supporting CICL. These thematic patterns, such as building trust and emotional support, establishing emotional connection, engaging in academic assistance, facilitating values formation, daily interaction and communication style, implementation of structured rules and regulations, positive and balanced discipline, demonstrate the alignment between the reported parenting style and the lived experiences of the houseparents in guiding the CICL.

Moreover, this finding aligns with the study conducted by Culanag and Cuevas (2023) and Baumrind's (1967) theory of parenting styles, which posits that the authoritative style is characterized by warmth, clear communication, and balanced control. Authoritative parents, or in this case, houseparents encourage open dialogue, provide consistent discipline, and show genuine concern for the child's well-being. Such a style fosters both emotional security and behavioral regulation, which are crucial for guiding CICL, who often exhibit emotional instability and behavioral defiance.

Following the identification of the Authoritative style as the dominant approach in Table 2, Table 3 presents the thematic analysis that elucidates the practical application and experiences of the houseparents as they utilize this style to guide the CICL. This study identified several thematic dimensions that characterize their style of caregiving.

Table 3: Experiences of Participants in their Parenting Style

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Emotional Expression	Building Trust and Emotional Support	Active Listening
		Maintaining Confidentiality
	Establishing Emotional Connection	Showing Care and Concern
Holistic Development Support	Engaging in academic assistance	Providing Skills Training
		Assisting with module answers or school projects
	Facilitating Values Formation	Instilling values
Communication Practices	Daily Interaction and	Parental Tone and Calm Approach

	Communication Style	
Disciplinary Practices	Implementation of Structured Rules and Regulations	House Rules, Major Rules, and Cardinal Rules
	Positive and Balanced Discipline	Balancing discipline with empathy
		Giving Fair consequences
Resource Scarcity	Lack of Updated Training and Resources	Limited Resources
		Outdated Seminars
Behavior and Safety-Related Challenges	Aggressive and Risky Behaviors	Riots and Fights among Children
		Escape / Leaving Without Permission (LWOP)
Workplace Relations and Cooperation Conflict	Lack of Teamwork and Communication	Lack of Cooperation
		Observed Negligence of Duty
Social and Emotional Coping Strategies	Sources of inner strength and motivation	Reliance on faith and prayer
		Emotional support from family

Emotional Expression

In the context of this theme, the findings highlight that emotional expression constitutes the core of how houseparents provide care for CICL. The subthemes that emerged include building trust and emotional support and establishing emotional connection, which illustrate the relational depth of their caregiving practices. The houseparents' love is conveyed not merely through verbal affirmation but through consistent, everyday acts of care, such as ensuring the children have eaten, offering guidance, or listening attentively when they feel distressed. These seemingly simple gestures foster a sense of being valued and understood among the youth.

In the subtheme of building trust and emotional support, participants underscored that trust and emotional safety form the foundation of their relationship with CICL. The first identified code, active listening, was emphasized as essential in helping children feel respected and acknowledged. By devoting time and attention to each child, houseparents create a safe space where emotions can be expressed freely without fear of judgment. As participants articulated in their accounts:

(P1) *"I listen to each of them individually, no matter what happens, because they also have their own reasons and explanations."*

(P6) *"I listen to whatever pain they're carrying and I'm willing to accept it; I won't tell them they're wrong because they aren't at fault for ending up here. God has a plan for why they reached RRCY."*

(P9) *"Since I started here, I've been conducting monthly meetings. I call them together to ask how they're doing and have a one on one talk for the child to express how he feels."*

The second identified code, maintaining confidentiality, emphasizes the critical role of safeguarding the privacy of CICL within the caregiving process. Upholding confidentiality fosters trust, as children develop confidence that their personal stories and experiences are protected from disclosure. This assurance of privacy becomes a cornerstone for building authentic relationships, allowing the youth to feel secure in sharing their emotions and vulnerabilities. As participants quoted:

(P2) “if they share something with you and you don’t pass it on to others, that’s when they see your trustworthiness, and they’ll keep sharing and trusting you.”

(P4) “When you show that you’re willing to listen, that’s when they begin to trust you. Also, if they share something and you don’t tell others, that’s when they start to trust you and continue opening up.”

(P6) “What I do is focus on that child so they can eventually talk about their emotions and build trust with me, knowing that only the two of us will know what they share. I reassure them that it’s just between us....so through that, I slowly gain their trust until they have the confidence to talk.”

(P7) “What I do is focus on the child so they can talk about their emotions and build trust, assuring them that what they share stays between us.”

(P8) “What I usually do is to approach them softly to ensure that they feel heard and to really consider what they share with me. Whatever they tell me, I keep it confidentially, making sure it won’t harm others and that I won’t spread it to anyone else.”

Within the subtheme of establishing emotional connection, the findings reveal that caregiving extends beyond the dimension of trust in the relationship with CICL. The identified code, showing care and concern, illustrates how houseparents perceive themselves as parental figures who provide comfort, reassurance, and guidance to children who often yearn for understanding and belonging. This care is not limited to emotional support but also encompasses the fulfillment of practical needs, thereby reinforcing a holistic approach to caregiving. Such practices mirror the role of houseparents as nurturing figures who integrate empathy, guidance, and structure to foster each child’s emotional development. As participants expressed:

(P1) “Whenever I’m on duty, I always check in on them, even if they’re not under my observation. I’d say, ‘How are you, child? Do you have any bookings?’”

(P3) “I would comfort them about their problems and what they’ve been through. I’d listen to their difficult experiences and try to relate with them so we can understand each other.”

(P4) “In caring for them, we provide things like their basic needs. When they arrive here, they are given personal necessities.”

(P6) “The first thing I do, especially when we first meet, is to ask how they are and what they like here and what they don’t like so I can adjust. I comfort them first, and once they feel comforted, they begin to open up about their problems.”

(P9) “Give them advice to live properly, just like how we guide our own children to do what’s right and not what’s wrong.”

Many houseparents treat the children as their own, providing warmth and stability that rebuilds the trust often lost from past neglect or trauma. This approach reflects the principles of Attachment Theory, which emphasizes that secure bonds are formed when caregivers respond reliably and empathetically to a child’s needs. By offering predictability in routines, attentiveness in listening, and genuine affection, houseparents create a safe environment where children begin to internalize the belief that relationships can be nurturing and dependable. Over time, this steady care helps children regulate their emotions, manage anxiety, and develop resilience. Houseparents become safe and reliable figures, serving as both a secure base for exploration and a safe haven in times of distress. Beyond immediate comfort, they model empathy, responsibility, and healthy boundaries, equipping the youth with relational skills that extend into adulthood. In this way, the bonds formed within the household foster a renewed sense of belonging and identity, enabling children to shift from narratives of rejection toward experiences of acceptance, stability, and hope.

This finding aligns with Bongbong et al. (2023) and Palitayan (2023), who noted that emotional responsiveness and empathy from houseparents strengthen emotional recovery and promote healing. As outlined in the DSWD Houseparent I job description (2021), emotional support is not just a duty but a vital part of rehabilitation.

Ultimately, the emotional expression of houseparents serves as a powerful tool for healing, reminding every child that they are worthy of care, understanding, and a second chance.

Holistic Development Support

Guided by this theme, the findings highlight how DSWD RRCY – VII upholds its commitment to providing adequate educational opportunities for CICL, a dedication clearly acknowledged by the houseparents. Two subthemes that emerged include engaging in academic assistance and facilitating values formation, which illustrate how the center's educational initiatives are not limited to cognitive growth but are deeply anchored in shaping character, resilience, and ethical awareness—critical dimensions for rehabilitation and eventual societal participation.

In the subtheme, engaging in academic assistance, findings reveal how houseparents actively contribute to the educational development of CICL by addressing both practical and academic needs. The first identified code, providing skills training, reflects the center's emphasis on equipping CICL with functional and vocational competencies that extend beyond classroom learning. The findings of this study indicated that houseparents play a crucial instructional role by conducting life skills training referred to as “houseparent sessions” and in-house skills workshops covering areas such as sewing, arts and crafts, carpentry, masonry, and related activities. These sessions, typically held in the afternoons, also address essential topics like personal hygiene and budgeting, aiming to develop both the practical and personal competencies of the residents. These trainings not only enhance employability but also foster self-reliance and confidence, preparing the CICL for reintegration into society. As participants shared:

(P4) “We, the houseparents, also conduct our own training. We facilitate different sessions every week. For me, I have catering, electrical, and skirting. Others have machinery, welding, housekeeping, or service crew. Most of us houseparents teach the children life skills.”

(P6) “We have what we call life skills training once a month, like sewing and farming.”

(P10) “We conduct life skills training, also called houseparent sessions. We also have in-house skills training like arts and crafts, sewing, carpentry, masonry, and more.”

The second identified code, assisting with module answers or school projects, highlights the direct academic support offered by houseparents, ensuring that CICL can keep pace with formal education requirements despite the challenges of their circumstances. The results showed that houseparents willingly offer academic assistance, including tutoring and homework support, to CICL students enrolled in elementary and secondary education. Some residents, particularly those in senior high school, are also encouraged to continue their studies within the rehabilitation center through modular learning. This assistance goes beyond mere completion of tasks; it nurtures persistence, discipline, and comprehension, reinforcing the value of education as a pathway to rehabilitation. As participants quoted:

(P5) “Sometimes they approach me to ask for help with their assignments.”

(P10) “When they start answering their modules, they ask the houseparents for tutoring, especially when they find it difficult.”

The DSWD RRCY–VII consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring that CICL have equitable access to quality education. This commitment is supported by previous studies indicating that the institution actively prioritizes educational advancement by enrolling CICL in the Department of Education's ALS program (Oppus, 2019) and facilitating technical and vocational training through TESDA (Empuerto, 2021). Observations during data gathering further reveal that the center has established its own educational facilities, namely the RRCY Elementary School and the Vocational Training Center, to provide formal and skills-based learning opportunities.

Within the subtheme of facilitating values formation, one identified code is instilling values. This integration of positive moral and social values into the residents' daily routines serves as a fundamental component of

behavioral modification within the DSWD RRCY–VII. Values formation activities, primarily facilitated by houseparents include morning devotions, morning meetings, and houseparent sessions. During morning devotions, residents are encouraged to share personal reflections and relate their life experiences to the teachings of the Bible, fostering spiritual growth and moral awareness. Likewise, morning meetings and houseparent sessions provide opportunities to discuss values-based lessons, reinforce discipline, and cultivate respectful interpersonal relationships among the residents. Ensuring that these activities are consistently practiced allows the houseparents to guide CICL toward developing moral discernment, self-control, and empathy. This structured approach not only promotes positive behavioral change but also supports the residents' social reintegration by helping them internalize values essential for responsible citizenship and personal transformation. As participants expressed:

(P1) *"They wake up at 5 a.m. for morning devotion, which is a time for sharing insights about the Bible's gospel."*

(P1) *"We also have a morning meeting and houseparent session where we teach values like humility and honesty, and they share what they've learned from it."*

(P6) *"I encourage them not to talk back to the houseparents when they are being scolded, but if they are in the right, it's okay to answer politely. I always encourage them to practice good behavior and sometimes just let things pass."*

This practice aligns with the findings of Noble Dana (2024), who highlighted the authoritative parenting style as a balanced approach that combines emotional support with clear structure and guidance. Beyond implementing discipline, houseparents at the DSWD RRCY–VII embody the role of socializing agents who foster the moral and emotional development of CICL through modeling and guided interaction. This approach also resonates with Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that a child's development is profoundly influenced by the immediate environments and relationships within their microsystem. In this context, houseparents function as key figures within the CICL's microsystem, shaping their behavior, values, and coping mechanisms through daily interactions and consistent moral guidance. By creating a nurturing and structured environment, the houseparents contribute not only to the individual growth of the residents but also to their capacity to adapt and reintegrate successfully into the broader social systems beyond the rehabilitation center. In doing so, they serve as vital bridges between the microsystem and larger ecological layers, ensuring that the rehabilitative experiences of CICL remain connected to broader cultural, educational, and societal expectations.

Communication Practices

Corresponding to this theme of communication practices, the findings revealed that communication serves as one of the strongest foundations in the relationship between houseparents and the CICL. The subtheme emerged, daily Interaction and communication style, highlights how consistent exchanges, whether through casual conversations, guidance during tasks, or empathetic listening, create opportunities for houseparents to affirm the children's worth and reinforce their sense of belonging. These everyday interactions, though seemingly ordinary, serve as mechanisms through which emotional bonds are strengthened and behavioral expectations are clarified. For them, communication goes beyond giving instructions; it is about connecting heart to heart. Through calm conversations, gentle tones, and parental warmth, houseparents create a sense of trust and belonging that rules alone cannot achieve. One identified code is parental tone and calm approach, as some shared that they communicate with the children as if they were their own, describing their tone and approach as that of a mother talking to her child. As participants shared:

(P1) *"I talk to them every day with a normal tone of voice, no matter who they are, whether they've made a mistake or not."*

(P2) *"I talk to them calmly, without shouting."*

(P2) *"It's like I'm just at home talking to them, as if I were their mother."*

(P3) *"All of us here act as guardians. That's why sometimes the children call us 'Papa' or 'Mama', or 'Mommy' and 'Daddy'—though most often, they call us 'Tita' or 'Uncle'."*

(P4) *"Most of them even call me 'papa,' sometimes 'daddy.' Many really call me papa. They can easily express themselves to me, maybe because they feel comfortable since I also give them advice, especially when they get booked. It really depends on how you approach the children."*

(P4) *"The way I treat them is like my own children...we, the houseparents, are their second parents here. If they have problems, they should come to us, and we are ready to answer and advise them in a good way."*

(P6) *"It's still the usual thing we do, like asking, 'What are you doing here? What are you up to?' Just the usual, and in a calm way too."*

(P10) *"There should be a balance between being soft and firm; otherwise, they might take advantage of you."*

This nurturing communication also reflects Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which explains that trust and emotional security develop when houseparents respond with consistency, empathy, and warmth. By listening patiently, keeping conversations private, and correcting with compassion, houseparents become safe and dependable figures for the children. Such interactions encourage honesty, openness, and emotional healing.

The expression of parental care aligns with Palitayan (2023), who found that houseparents often treat CICL as their own children, extending affection and concern beyond professional responsibility. Within the context of communication practices, this parental stance is most evident in the way houseparents engage in dialogue that mirrors familial interaction. Communication is not merely transactional but relational, characterized by warmth, attentiveness, and consistency. Houseparents employ language that reassures and affirms, creating a safe emotional space where CICL feel valued and understood. The results also showed that discipline is delivered through calm and respectful dialogue rather than harsh words. Houseparents believe that discipline should guide, not harm, showing a balance between gentleness and firmness that reflects wisdom and care. This supports the findings of Bongbong et al. (2023) and Aguilar (2016), who emphasized that open and compassionate communication strengthens trust and reduces defiance among CICL. Ultimately, communication for houseparents is more than just talking; it is a daily act of love and care that builds connection, teaches empathy, and nurtures transformation.

Disciplinary Practices

In the context of this theme of disciplinary practices, two subthemes emerge, including the implementation of structured rules and regulations, and positive and balanced discipline. In the first subtheme, houseparents revealed that discipline within the center is implemented through a well-defined system of rules designed to guide and correct the behavior of CICL. These identified the code, house rules, major rules, and cardinal rules, which establish clear expectations and corresponding consequences. The house rules address minor violations related to daily living, while major rules are imposed when a child accumulates several violations within a month. Meanwhile, cardinal rules cover serious offenses such as physical disputes or acts of bullying. As participants explained:

(P1) *"We have house rules, and if they violate them, they receive a booking. We also have major and cardinal rules. A major rule is when someone accumulates five bookings in a month, and a cardinal rule covers serious offenses like physical injury or bullying."*

(P2) *"We have a booking system if someone violates the house rules. We also have major and cardinal rules."*

(P4) *"Our discipline here follows what we call the 'cardinal'. Under this, the child is given 1 week with no TV, no games, and no recreational activities."*

(P6) *"Here we really have structured rules to follow, and when we say rules, they already know those beforehand. For example, house rules are just small ones, limited only to home life. If we say they're not allowed to enter another room, and they still do it, that's what we call a booking. Once they reach five bookings, that's equivalent to four days of disciplinary measures."*

In the second subtheme of positive and balanced discipline, the first identified code is balancing discipline with empathy. Emphasizing that regulations lean toward positive discipline, suggesting that rules are implemented

with flexibility rather than rigid enforcement. The practice of giving warnings and explaining the reasons behind a child's misbehavior further demonstrates a restorative orientation, where discipline is framed as an opportunity for reflection and learning. The findings also underscored the importance of considering the child's perspective and tailoring responses to the severity of the behavior. By asking whether the child's reasoning was valid before reminding them of expectations, which reflects an empathetic stance that acknowledges agency while reinforcing boundaries. Also, adopting a soft approach for manageable mistakes but enforcing stricter measures for harmful behaviors such as aggression toward peers. As participants shared:

(P3) "Our regulations are not too strict; they lean more toward positive discipline."

(P3) "You must balance the consequences with the violation. We give them a 'talk to', a warning where we explain why and what they did was wrong."

(P10) "I always ask the child if the reason is valid, and I take it into consideration, but I remind them it shouldn't happen again."

(P6) "But sometimes, because of our soft approach, if the mistake is manageable, I just say, 'Don't do that again, okay? Next time, don't repeat it.' That way, I don't give them a booking. However, for children who are really restless, I book them right away. And for more serious offenses—like hurting another child—we strictly stick to the rules."

In the second identified code, giving fair consequences, reflects the participants' emphasis on ensuring that disciplinary measures are proportionate to the nature of the child's behavior. Rather than imposing overly harsh or arbitrary punishments, houseparents described their approach as one that balances accountability with fairness. This involves carefully considering the severity of the violation, the child's intent, and the broader context before deciding on an appropriate response. By doing so, discipline is framed not as punitive control but as a constructive process that teaches responsibility while preserving the child's dignity. As participants expressed:

(P5) "You talk to them about what they did and ask if it was right or wrong. If they say it wasn't, you ask what consequences should follow. They need to be aware of the consequences so they understand their mistake."

(P3) "We explain to them, 'This is your violation because of this behavior, and it's something you shouldn't be doing.'"

(P4) "Handling them here should be even and fair. If you need to be strict, it should also be in the right way."

This aligns with Noble Dana (2024), an authoritative parenting approach in which parents establish clear rules and expectations while also taking the time to explain the reasons behind their discipline, as they emphasized the importance of positive and balanced discipline. This mirrors Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which suggests that children learn through observation and modeling. When houseparents respond to mistakes with calm communication and understanding, they demonstrate constructive behaviors that CICL can imitate. This aligns with the findings of Bongbong and colleagues (2023), who noted that houseparents working with CICL and Children at Risk (CAR) use calm communication, empathy, and trust-building as non-punitive approaches to behavior management. Palitayan (2023) also supports this, noting that treating CICL with parental care and empathy helps manage behavior effectively while strengthening emotional bonds between houseparents and children, a concept supported by Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which emphasizes the role of nurturing houseparent relationships in promoting emotional stability and moral growth. These practices reflect a more constructive and rehabilitative form of discipline, emphasizing understanding over punishment and showing that discipline is not just about correction; it is about compassion, guidance, and helping the child grow.

Resource Scarcity

The analysis of houseparent experiences revealed a critical theme of resource scarcity, manifesting significantly in the subtheme of lack of updated training and resources. This challenge underscores the difficulties faced by houseparents in effectively addressing the complex needs of CICL. Participants emphasized that limited access to current training programs, educational materials, and practical tools constrains their ability to implement

evidence-based caregiving and disciplinary strategies. As a result, many houseparents are compelled to rely on outdated practices or personal judgment, which not only hinders professional growth but also compromises the overall quality of care provided.

From this perspective, the first identified code, limited resources, captures the broader struggle of houseparents with inadequate institutional support. Shortages in basic materials, educational tools, and livelihood resources directly impede their capacity to fulfill responsibilities and ensure comprehensive rehabilitation for CICL. These deficiencies affect both daily activities and long-term developmental outcomes, highlighting the systemic barriers that undermine the effectiveness of caregiving within rehabilitation settings. Ultimately, the scarcity of updated training and essential resources reflects a structural gap that must be addressed to strengthen the professional competence of houseparents and enhance the quality of rehabilitative care. As participants quoted:

(P1) "Children today are very different; they've evolved. That's why we also need new approaches and training to meet their needs."

(P6) "And there aren't enough materials to use, so when I'm asked to do something, I just rummage through my things to find something I can use."

(P7) "Resources in the farm, like seedlings, are only given to me as the focal point. How can I achieve what you want if we don't have support? That's why resources are really important."

The second identified code, outdated seminars, extends the scarcity of professional development, as houseparents reported that training programs and seminars have become outdated or infrequent. Without access to updated learning opportunities, houseparents find it difficult to apply new caregiving strategies and adapt to evolving behavioral management techniques. As participants expressed:

(P4) "We should continue our houseparenting training, since it was stopped. It would be better if we could join more training sessions because we can really use everything that is taught to us. Whatever we learn there, we can also give back and apply to the children."

(P8) "Actually, that's what I raised with our new center head—that our expectation is to still have ongoing training, because we're not perfect. Every day is a learning experience. Houseparenting really needs to be updated and refreshed."

This finding aligns with the observations of Bongbong et al. (2023) and Palitayan (2023), who noted that the lack of institutional resources and limited access to capacity-building programs hinder the effectiveness of rehabilitation centers for CICL. Similarly, Amelyn (2021), and Galleposo et al. (2023), emphasized that insufficient training opportunities and outdated program materials prevent houseparents from implementing modern approaches in caregiving and discipline. Houseparents recognized that children's behaviors and coping mechanisms are changing over time, which reinforces the need for continuous, updated training to remain responsive to these developments. This sentiment supports Cometa's (2017) assertion that houseparents must continuously update their skills and knowledge to address the evolving psychosocial needs of CICL. Without ongoing investment in professional development, it becomes challenging to effectively implement the principles of restorative justice and personalized rehabilitation, which are central to the center's goal.

Moreover, this mirrors Palitayan's (2023) findings that limited facilities and supplies can constrain houseparents' ability to execute effective rehabilitation programs. This sentiment is reinforced by the Determinants of Parenting Model by Belsky, which emphasizes that the quality of caregiving depends not only on personal competence but also on external factors such as workplace conditions and social support. Such a shortage not only impacts the operational efficiency of the center but also undermines the motivation and morale of the staff, who expressed a strong desire to improve their caregiving but lack the institutional means to do so.

Behavior and Safety-Related Challenges

Within the broader theme of behavior and safety-related challenges, a notable subtheme of aggressive and risky behaviors emerged. Houseparents described facing challenging and often unpredictable behaviors among CICL.

These incidents test their patience, composure, and ability to maintain order and safety within the center. Managing such behaviors requires not only physical presence but also emotional control. These experiences show that houseparents must constantly balance vigilance and compassion, maintaining safety while still fostering trust and rehabilitation among the children.

The first identified code, riots and fights among children, constitutes one of the most critical behavioral and safety-related challenges within rehabilitation centers. These incidents not only strain the authority of houseparents but also disrupt the stability of the caregiving environment, with several participants emphasizing the overwhelming difficulty of managing such situations. Hostility in response to disciplinary measures and the recurrence of riots, particularly among boys, further underscores the complexity of maintaining order while addressing peer conflict and aggression. As participants shared:

(P2) *"I gave someone a booking because they were misbehaving, but they got angry and gave me a very hostile look."*

(P6) *"What really challenged me in handling children was when there was a riot. You realize how difficult it is as a houseparent to handle that kind of situation."*

(P7) *"A riot really is the most difficult situation to handle."*

(P10) *"Sometimes there are riots among the boys inside the center."*

The second identified code, escape/leaving without permission (LWOP), highlights the issue of children attempting to leave the facility without authorization, which directly challenges the safety and accountability measures in place. LWOP incidents often reflect deeper struggles with trust, autonomy, and resistance to authority. As participants explained:

(P5) *"When a child escapes, that's really the hardest."*

(P9) *"Your work becomes heavier whenever someone goes on LWOP. It's mentally exhausting, your eyes and brain feel like they're spinning because you really need to observe the minors closely."*

Managing CICL in rehabilitation settings often involves addressing aggressive, defiant, and risky behaviors such as physical fights, riots, and escape attempts. These incidents not only threaten the safety of the children themselves but also the overall harmony and security of the rehabilitation center. The constant need for vigilance and emotional control adds to the mental strain of houseparents, who must balance discipline with compassion in high-stress situations. This aligns with the findings of Amelyn (2021) and Cometa (2017), who reported that houseparents often experience emotional exhaustion and stress due to the unpredictable and sometimes violent behavior of CICL. Similarly, Palitayan (2023) noted that managing these behaviors requires patience, emotional regulation, and consistent supervision, as children may test boundaries or resist authority due to past trauma and negative experiences. This aligns with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains why some CICL display aggression or defiance. Many of these behaviors are learned responses modeled from their environments or peers prior to entering rehabilitation.

According to Bongbong et al. (2023), some CICL leave the rehabilitation facility for reasons such as missing their families, desiring freedom, peer influence, or difficulty adapting to the structured environment. These instances of "leaving without permission", along with other behavioral issues, reflect the children's deep emotional distress and struggle to adjust to institutional life. This observation mirrors Galleposo et al. (2023), who identified emotional instability and group conflicts as common challenges in residential rehabilitation settings. As Aguilar (2016) explained, Filipinos traditionally root discipline in empathy and moral reasoning rather than punishment, yet this compassionate approach can be challenging to sustain when safety and order are at risk and emotional triggers are frequent. Despite these challenges, houseparents continue to fulfill their protective and rehabilitative roles through patience and commitment. As Donato (2025) noted, strong collaboration among houseparents, social workers, and local agencies is vital in managing behavioral crises effectively and ensuring children's welfare by maintaining composure and compassion even during conflict.

Workplace Relations and Cooperation Conflict

In this theme of workplace relations and cooperation, houseparents revealed that one of the major challenges they encounter in guiding CICL is the lack of teamwork and effective communication among staff members. As one subtheme emerged, lack of teamwork and communication, the first identified code is lack of cooperation. Cooperation is particularly vital in managing children with diverse behavioral dispositions, including those who exhibit aggression or defiance. With that, effective collaboration and open communication are essential to maintaining order, safety, and consistent supervision within the center. However, several houseparents reported instances where colleagues preferred to handle tasks independently or left others to manage responsibilities alone. As participants quoted:

(P4) *"Regarding my co-workers, sometimes we work together in unity, but there are also times when we just let things be if someone prefers to handle things their own way."*

(P10) *"Co-workers lack cooperation and just leave you to do things alone."*

Such situations can lead to inattentiveness toward the residents, which the second identified code is observed negligence of duty, in turn, may trigger negative behaviors such as attempts to escape or LWOP. These incidents not only jeopardize the safety and progress of the CICL but also contribute to feelings of guilt and frustration among responsible houseparents, who view it as their moral and professional obligation to safeguard and guide the residents under their care. As participants explained:

(P5) *"Once someone escapes, it's already considered neglect of your duty."*

(P7) *"With co-workers, sometimes it can't be avoided that some use their phones, and it results in negligence of duty."*

While the findings of Bongbong and colleagues (2023) similarly highlighted the emotional strain and frustration experienced by houseparents, the present study reveals that such challenges primarily stem from weak coworker relations, particularly the lack of teamwork, communication, and shared accountability within the workplace. This finding also reflects Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that individuals acquire behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses through social interactions and observation. In this context, the absence of teamwork and communication among houseparents not only affects their professional dynamics but may also influence how CICL perceives and emulates adult behavior. Therefore, fostering a cooperative and communicative environment among staff is essential, as it models positive interpersonal relationships and reinforces pro-social behavior that CICL can internalize and apply in their own rehabilitation and reintegration.

Social and Emotional Coping Mechanisms

Despite the numerous challenges they face in guiding CICL, houseparents consistently demonstrate resilience and intrinsic motivation that enable them to continue their work. The data revealed the theme of social and emotional coping mechanisms relying on a combination of spiritual practices and emotional support from family to sustain their strength and well-being. As one subtheme emerged, sources of inner strength and motivation, the first identified code is reliance on faith and prayer. Their reliance on spiritual practices provides them with a sense of peace, purpose, and resilience, enabling them to cope with the emotional strain and moral challenges associated with guiding CICL. Prayer, for many, serves as both a personal refuge and a source of emotional renewal, helping them maintain patience and compassion in the face of behavioral difficulties among the residents. As participants expressed:

(P3) *"When I'm really tired, I just pray. It truly helps."*

(P7) *"When I encounter a difficult situation, I just pray that I can handle it properly. Prayer really helps."*

(P4) *"You can only always trust in the Lord to guide you every day because He is truly powerful. We don't know the children's moods. So just pray."*

(P5) *“When a child has a problem, we just pray for them. It’s the only thing that can calm everything down.”*

The second identified code, emotional support from family, underscores the encouragement and understanding from family members and close relationships foster a sense of belonging and emotional stability, allowing houseparents to persevere in their caregiving roles despite the demanding and stressful nature of their work. As participants shared:

(P2) *“Sometimes I miss my family, because they are my strength, so I just pray and stay focused.”*

(P8) *“It’s really my family that keeps me strong.”*

(P9) *“I draw my strength from my children and family. Without them, I wouldn’t last long here.”*

This finding aligns with Urie Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that an individual’s behavior and development are influenced by multiple environmental systems. The emotional and spiritual support houseparents receive from their families represents the microsystem, directly nurturing their psychological well-being, while their faith and reliance on prayer reflect the macrosystem, encompassing the cultural and religious values that shape their coping mechanisms. The interaction between these systems strengthens their resilience, enabling them to persevere and remain emotionally balanced despite the challenges of caring for CICL. Through this interconnected support, houseparents sustain their motivation and capacity to provide consistent emotional guidance, demonstrating that effective caregiving is shaped not only by professional commitment but also by the supportive social and spiritual environments surrounding them. This shows that their family, community, and spiritual support are important for helping them care for the children.

Implications

This study underscores the critical role of houseparents in Philippine rehabilitation centers, particularly in guiding children in conflict with the law (CICL) through authoritative caregiving that balances empathy with discipline. By highlighting the effectiveness of nurturing yet firm parenting styles, the findings emphasize how stability, predictability, and role modeling foster trust, resilience, and positive behavioral development among vulnerable youth. The implications extend to institutional practice, urging the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and rehabilitation centers to strengthen training in trauma-informed care, communication, and emotional regulation, while also providing support systems to prevent burnout among houseparents. On a broader scale, the study encourages reflection among caregivers and parents, reinforcing the value of consistent and compassionate parenting both inside and outside institutional settings. The integration of psychological theories—such as Baumrind’s Parenting Styles, Attachment Theory, Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems, and Bandura’s Social Learning—illustrates that effective caregiving is multidimensional, shaped by personal, relational, and environmental factors. Ultimately, the research advocates for collaborative efforts among schools, families, communities, and government units to promote rehabilitation over punishment, fostering a restorative society that embraces empathy, acceptance, and second chances for CICL.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The limitations of this study mainly stem from its small sample size and focused scope, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to houseparents in other rehabilitation centers across the country. As the study was conducted only at DSWD RRCY-VII in Argao, Cebu, the results reflect the specific realities of this facility, where institutional resources, administrative support, and caregiving conditions may differ from those in other regions. In addition, the study focused only on the perspectives of the houseparents, excluding the views of social workers, psychologists, and CICL. Including these perspectives could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how caregiving, discipline, and emotional support interact within the rehabilitation process. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insight into the daily realities, challenges, and strengths of houseparents who are committed to guiding and caring for CICL.

To better support houseparents, it is recommended that the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and its partner agencies strengthen institutional assistance by enhancing regular training programs. These trainings should focus on effective caregiving practices, child behavior management, communication

skills, and trauma-informed approaches to care, particularly in challenging situations that may cause emotional strain among houseparents. Additionally, houseparenting programs may be improved by incorporating coaching and mentoring sessions where experienced houseparents can share practical strategies related to discipline, relationship-building, and emotional support. It is also important for DSWD to establish a continuous supervisory and coaching system in which supervisors regularly monitor and guide houseparents, not only in managing the children under their care, but also in supporting their own mental and emotional well-being.

Intervention Plan

Title: “Nurturing Hands, Healing Hearts: A Capacity-Building and Wellness Program for Houseparents of DSWD RRCY–VII”

Rationale

The study revealed that houseparents at DSWD RRCY–VII predominantly practice the authoritative parenting style, characterized by warmth, empathy, and structure. Despite their dedication, they encounter numerous challenges, including:

1. Emotional exhaustion and stress from caregiving roles
2. Difficulty managing behavioral issues and resistance among CICL
3. Limited access to training, psychosocial support, and resources
4. Challenges in maintaining emotional boundaries while still providing compassionate care
5. Lack of institutional reinforcement for professional growth and self-care

This intervention program aims to empower houseparents through psychological, emotional, and professional support systems grounded in Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory, Attachment Theory, and Belsky’s Determinants of Parenting Model.

Goals and Objectives

The general goal is to strengthen the caregiving capacity, emotional resilience, and professional competence of houseparents in guiding Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) toward holistic rehabilitation. For the specific objectives:

1. Enhance houseparents’ knowledge and skills in trauma-informed and empathy-based caregiving.
2. Provide psychosocial support to manage emotional fatigue and stress.
3. Promote effective communication and behavior management strategies aligned with rehabilitation goals.
4. Develop a peer-support and supervision mechanism within RRCY.
5. Advocate for organizational support and continuous professional development.

Target Participants

All houseparents and relevant support staff of DSWD RRCY–VII.

Key Components and Activities

Table 4: Key Components and Activities

Component	Objectives	Key Activities	Expected Output/Outcome
1. Capacity-Building Seminar: “Heart of a	Enhance caregiving and	- Seminar on Trauma-Informed Care and Behavioral Management	Increased competence in handling CICL with empathy and consistency

Parent, Mind of a Counselor”	communication skills	- Role-playing sessions on empathy, discipline, and conflict resolution	
2. Psychosocial Wellness Program: “Recharge and Reflect”	Prevent burnout and promote self-care	- Stress Management Workshop - Mindfulness & Emotional Regulation Sessions led by a psychologist - Monthly peer-sharing circles	Improved emotional well-being and job satisfaction
3. Values and Relationship Building Retreat: “Healing Through Connection”	Strengthen team unity and moral resilience	- Outdoor retreat and reflection sessions - Guided sharing on. “Why I Serve” stories - Group counseling and teambuilding games	Strengthened camaraderie and renewed sense of purpose
4. Skills Enhancement and Professional Growth	Reinforce professionalization of houseparent roles	- Certification training on Case Documentation, Crisis Intervention, and Behavioral Support Plans in partnership with DSWD Field Office VII - Regular supervision and mentoring	Competent and confident houseparents equipped with structured caregiving tools
5. Institutional Support and Policy Advocacy	Build sustainable systems of care	- Formulation of RRCY Houseparent Support and Development Framework - Proposal for Quarterly Case Debriefings and Wellness Allowance	Institutionalized support mechanism for houseparents’ welfare

Implementation Timeline

Table 5: Implementation Timeline

Phase	Activities	Time Frame
Phase 1: Preparation	Coordination with DSWD FO VII, pre-assessment of needs, design of materials	Month 1
Phase 2: Capacity-Building and Wellness Workshops	Conduct seminars, retreats, and training sessions	Months 2–4
Phase 3: Peer Support and Supervision Establishment	Create peer circles, designate supervisors, launch debriefing sessions	Months 5–6
Phase 4: Monitoring and Evaluation	Conduct feedback surveys, observation, and postassessment	Month 7
Phase 5: Policy Integration and Sustainability	Submit recommendations to DSWD for ongoing implementation	Month 8

Monitoring and Evaluation

Table 6: Monitoring and Evaluation

Area Of Evaluation	Indicators	Means Of Verification
Knowledge and Skills	Pre- and post-test scores, skill demonstrations	Evaluation forms, observation
Emotional Wellness	Self-assessment on stress and job satisfaction	Psychometric tools, interviews
Program Impact	Improvement in CICL behavior, teamwork, retention	Case reports, supervisor feedback
Sustainability	Institutional adoption of wellness policies	Policy memo, DSWD endorsement

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased resilience, empathy, and morale among houseparents
2. Improved behavior and emotional stability of CICL
3. Enhanced teamwork and professionalization in caregiving
4. Sustainable wellness culture within DSWD RRCY–VII

Theoretical Anchors

1. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory – emphasizes interconnected systems (houseparents, institutional, societal) influencing child rehabilitation.
2. Attachment Theory (Bowlby & Ainsworth) – reinforces the role of consistent, nurturing relationships for behavioral reform.
3. Belsky's Determinants of Parenting Model – highlights the impact of psychological resources, child characteristics, and institutional support on parenting quality.

CONCLUSION

In this field of caregiving and rehabilitation, being a houseparent goes beyond simply watching over the children. It means showing compassion, patience, and genuine care for their growth and healing. Based on the findings and observations, it was clear that the houseparents at DSWD RRCY VII practice an authoritative parenting style, which balances love, understanding, and discipline. This helps them guide the CICL in a way that promotes respect and trust. Instead of using strict control, they use calm and caring communication to help the children reflect on their actions and learn from their mistakes. Through this approach, the houseparents create a homelike environment where the children feel accepted, supported, and motivated to change.

Being a houseparent is not an easy job. It takes a lot of patience, emotional strength, and dedication to handle the daily challenges of caring for the youth. Despite these difficulties, the houseparents at RRCY continue to show determination and passion in what they do. They remain calm and understanding even during hard times, showing their genuine love and concern for the children. Through their example, the children learn how to respect others, manage their emotions, and build better relationships.

Moreover, the lived experiences of the houseparents play a crucial role in shaping their approach to caregiving. Many of them shared stories of overcoming personal hardships, adjusting to the emotional needs of the children,

and learning how to balance discipline with empathy. Their experiences, whether in guiding a child through a breakdown, helping them regain confidence, or encouraging them to make better choices, reflect the depth of their commitment. These experiences strengthen their resolve and allow them to connect with the children on a deeper level. Their everyday sacrifices, long hours, and moments of emotional struggle demonstrate that their work is not only professional but deeply personal.

The results of this study show that the authoritative parenting style of the houseparents plays a big role in the rehabilitation process. Their ability to balance firmness and affection helps the children develop self-discipline and emotional stability. More importantly, the findings highlight that the effectiveness of this approach stems not only from techniques or strategies, but from genuine relationships built between houseparents and the children. The consistent presence, emotional availability, and authentic care they provide give CICL a sense of safety and belonging, which are very important for healing and behavioral change. In the end, this study reminds us that successful rehabilitation is not only about rules or programs, but about the people who carry them out with heart. The houseparents of RRCY prove that with love, patience, and understanding, real change and healing can happen. Their work shows that rehabilitation is a deeply human process- one that thrives when care, connection, and compassion are at the center.

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