

Restorative Justice in a Multicultural Setting: The Cultural and Social Foundations of Inter-Agency Collaboration in Juvenile Justice and Welfare Programs in Zamboanga City

Melodina V. Francisco, Mscrim¹, Reinier N. Rosaldo, Mscrim²

^{1,2}Western Mindanao State University Zamboanga City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study assessed juvenile justice and welfare programs in Zamboanga City through a cultural and social science lens, focusing on inter-agency collaboration among the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), Public Attorney's Office (PAO), Philippine National Police (PNP-Women and Children Protection Desk), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). Anchored on restorative justice theory, social learning theory, labeling theory, and cultural relativism, the research evaluated program effectiveness and examined how cultural and social factors shape implementation in a multicultural setting. A descriptive-evaluative design was employed with 61 purposively selected inter-agency respondents within a three-kilometer radius of Zamboanga City proper. A validated researcher-made questionnaire measured effectiveness across seven dimensions: care, guidance and supervision, counseling, probation, foster care, education and vocational training, and other alternatives to institutional care. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, t-test, ANOVA, and thematic analysis. Findings revealed high overall effectiveness ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.42$), with care ($M=3.93$) and guidance and supervision ($M=3.92$) rated highest. Inferential results showed significant differences in perceived effectiveness when grouped by age ($F=4.225$, $p=.009$), gender ($t=2.03$ - 2.621 , $p<.05$ in selected dimensions), and agency affiliation ($F=4.969$, $p=.002$), while ethnicity showed no significant difference, suggesting shared professional culture overrides ethnic differences. The study proposes a Culturally Responsive Inter-Agency Collaborative (CRIAC) Model grounded in Tausug and Chavacano values of family solidarity, mutual help (*pagtutulungan*), and forgiveness (*pagpatawad*), integrating community-based accountability and social systems support aligned with Republic Act No. 9344 as amended by RA 10630.

Keywords: restorative justice, juvenile justice and welfare, inter-agency collaboration, cultural relevance, social science, Children in Conflict with the Law, Zamboanga City

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines enacted Republic Act No. 9344, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006 as amended by RA 10630, shifting the paradigm from punitive to restorative justice. The law emphasizes diversion, intervention, and reintegration over institutionalization and mandates inter-agency collaboration among duty-bearers. However, implementation in multicultural settings such as Zamboanga City remains complex.

Zamboanga City is a highly urbanized city in Mindanao with a mixed Christian, Tausug, and Sama-Bajau population, where Chavacano, Tausug, and other ethnolinguistic identities intersect. It also experiences cross-border migration of minors from Sulu, Basilan, and Sabah, Malaysia. Children in Conflict with the Law

(CICL) in this setting are not merely legal subjects but cultural beings whose behaviors are shaped by kinship ties, maratabat (family honor), religious values, and community norms. Evaluating juvenile justice programs solely through legalistic metrics overlooks these cultural and social dimensions.

Culture and Social Science Lens. From a cultural perspective, program effectiveness depends on cultural relevance—whether interventions respect indigenous child-rearing, spiritual healing, and community reconciliation mechanisms. From a social science perspective, effectiveness is embedded in social structures—poverty, family disruption, peer influence, gender roles, and institutional coordination. Inter-agency collaboration is thus not merely bureaucratic but a social process influenced by shared meanings, trust, and organizational cultures. This study reframes juvenile justice evaluation as a cultural and social phenomenon, assessing how inter-agency actors perceive and enact restorative justice in a multicultural urban context.

Despite existing inter-agency mechanisms, field observations indicate fragmented implementation, varying perceptions of effectiveness across agencies, and limited integration of culturally relevant practices. This study addresses that gap by assessing program effectiveness and developing a culturally grounded collaborative model for Zamboanga City.

2. Literature Review

Restorative Justice and Cultural Relevance. Restorative justice requires maximum involvement of victim, offender, and community to achieve reparation, reconciliation, and reintegration (UNICEF Philippines, 2006; Zehr, 2002; Braithwaite, 1989). In collectivist cultures such as Mindanao, restorative principles resonate with indigenous practices of dialogue (shura) and forgiveness. Effective programs must therefore be culturally relevant, adapting to local languages and family systems rather than imposing uniform models (Lipsey et al., 2010).

Social Learning and Labeling Theories. Social learning theory (Akers) posits delinquency is learned through differential association and reinforcement within family and peer networks. Labeling theory (Becker, 1963) warns that institutional processing may stigmatize children, producing secondary deviance. Both theories support diversion and alternatives to institutional care—counseling, foster care, education and vocational training—as social interventions that prevent labeling and promote prosocial learning. In Zamboanga, social learning occurs within extended kin and faith communities, requiring interventions that engage these natural supports.

Inter-Agency Collaboration as Social System. International models demonstrate effective collaboration. Norway coordinates five ministries for youth crime prevention involving schools, police, and health services. Denmark's SSP model (School-Social Services-Police) operates in over 90% of municipalities (Storgaard, 2005). In the Philippines, RA 9344 mandates Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council and Local Councils for the Protection of Children. However, collaboration is hampered by role confusion and divergent organizational cultures—social work's care orientation versus police's control orientation (Andrews et al., 1990). From a social science perspective, collaboration depends on social capital—trust, shared goals, and communication—requiring cultural brokering to create shared restorative values.

Statement of the Problem

This study assessed juvenile justice and welfare programs in Zamboanga City through Culture and Social Science and developed a collaborative model. The original multiple questions were simplified and rephrased into three publication-focused problems comprising descriptive and inferential inquiry:

Problem 1 [Descriptive]: What is the demographic profile of respondents and what is the level of effectiveness of juvenile justice and welfare programs in Zamboanga City in terms of care, guidance and supervision, counseling, probation, foster care, education and vocational training, and other alternatives to institutional care?

Problem 2 [Inferential]: Is there a significant difference in the level of perceived effectiveness of juvenile justice

and welfare programs when respondents are grouped by age, gender, and agency affiliation?

Problem 3 [Inferential - Model Building]: What culturally and socially grounded inter-agency collaborative model can be proposed to enhance juvenile justice and welfare programs in a multicultural setting like Zamboanga City?

3. Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-evaluative design with a cultural and social science approach. Descriptive statistics assessed profile and effectiveness; inferential statistics tested differences; qualitative insights informed model development.

Locale and Respondents

The study was conducted in Zamboanga City, focusing on inter-agency actors within a three-kilometer radius of the city proper. Respondents were 61 personnel purposively selected from DSWD (n=15), CSWDO (n=15), PAO (n=10), PNP-WCPD (n=11), and BJMP (n=10). Inclusion criteria were at least one year of handling CICL cases.

Instrument

A validated researcher-made questionnaire with two parts was used: Part I profile (age, gender, ethnicity, agency affiliation); Part II effectiveness (35 items, 5 per dimension) using 5-point Likert scale: 5-Very Highly Effective to 1-Not Effective. Interpretation: 4.20-5.00 Very Highly Effective, 3.40-4.19 Highly Effective, 2.60-3.39 Moderately Effective, 1.80-2.59 Slightly Effective, 1.00-1.79 Not Effective. Content Validity Index=.89; Cronbach's α =.91.

Data Collection and Ethics

Ethical clearance was obtained from WMSU Ethics Committee. Permissions were secured from agency heads. Informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality were observed per Data Privacy Act. Questionnaires were administered face-to-face with cultural sensitivity using Chavacano and Tausug when needed.

Data Analysis

For Problem 1, frequency, percentage, mean, and SD were used. For Problem 2, independent t-test for gender and One-Way ANOVA for age and agency affiliation with Tukey HSD post-hoc at α =.05. For Problem 3, thematic analysis and integration of findings were used to develop the CRIAC Model. SPSS v.26 was used.

4. Results and Discussion

Problem 1: Profile and Level of Effectiveness

Profile	Category	f	%
Age	18-23	3	4.9
	24-29	12	19.7
	30-35	11	18.0
	36-41	18	29.5
	42 and above	14	23.0
Gender	Male	28	45.9
	Female	33	54.1
Ethnicity	Chavacano	24	39.3
	Muslim (Tausug/Sama)	20	32.8
	Visayan	17	27.9
Agency	DSWD	15	24.6

	CSWDO	15	24.6
	PAO	10	16.4
	PNP-WCPD	11	18.0
	BJMP	10	16.4

Table 1 shows mature professionals (52.5% aged 36 and above), female majority (54.1%), and balanced multi-ethnic representation, reflecting Zamboanga's multicultural workforce. Social welfare agencies comprise 49.2%, indicating care-oriented dominance—a social science observation on gendered division of labor where care work is feminized (Bastik, 2011).

Dimension	Mean	SD	Rating	Interpretation
Care	3.93	0.48	High	Effective - socio-emotional and culturally sensitive care
Guidance and Supervision	3.92	0.51	High	Effective - mentoring and family conferencing
Other Alternatives to Institutional Care	3.92	0.47	High	Effective - diversion programs
Counseling	3.91	0.49	High	Effective - psychosocial and faith-based
Education and Vocational Training	3.91	0.50	High	Effective - ALS and livelihood
Probation	3.90	0.52	High	Effective - community supervision
Foster Care	3.89	0.55	High	Effective but resource-constrained
Overall	3.91	0.42	High / Effective	Programs perceived as effective

Table 2 shows high overall effectiveness ($M=3.91$). Care is highest ($M=3.93$), indicating DSWD/CSWDO provide basic needs and socio-emotional support perceived as culturally appropriate. This aligns with collectivist values of familia and pagtutulungan in Chavacano and Tausug cultures where child-rearing is shared. Guidance and supervision and alternatives to institutional care (both $M=3.92$) indicate strong diversion implementation per RA 9344. Foster care has lowest mean and highest SD, reflecting resource constraints and cultural resistance to non-kin foster care in clan-based societies—requiring kinship foster care models, a key cultural insight. Education and vocational training being high suggests social reintegration is functioning, preventing labeling (Becker, 1963) and promoting prosocial learning.

Problem 2: Significant Difference

Grouping	Test	F/t-value	p-value	Decision
Age (Guidance & Supervision)	ANOVA	F=4.260	.009	Reject H_0 - Significant

Age (Cultural Relevant Services)	ANOVA	F=7.891	.000	Reject Ho - Significant
Age (Overall)	ANOVA	F=4.225	.009	Reject Ho - Significant
Gender (Guidance & Supervision)	t-test	t=2.03	.047	Reject Ho - Significant
Gender (Effective Prosecution)	t-test	t=2.621	.011	Reject Ho - Significant
Gender (Education & Vocational)	t-test	t=2.547	.013	Reject Ho - Significant
Ethnicity	ANOVA	F=1.12	.34	Accept Ho - Not Significant
Affiliation (Guidance & Supervision)	ANOVA	F=5.309	.001	Reject Ho - Significant
Affiliation (Cultural Relevant)	ANOVA	F=5.557	.001	Reject Ho - Significant
Affiliation (Effective Prosecution)	ANOVA	F=11.187	.000	Reject Ho - Significant
Affiliation (Overall)	ANOVA	F=4.969	.002	Reject Ho - Significant

Table 3 shows significant differences by age, gender, and agency affiliation, but not by ethnicity. For age, respondents below 30 rated cultural relevant services higher yet overall lower than older respondents, indicating generational differences in cultural expectations—younger professionals, exposed to rights-based discourse, are more critical of cultural gaps, while older professionals have institutional socialization. This is a social science finding on how tenure shapes perception.

For gender, significant differences in guidance and supervision, effective prosecution, and education and vocational training indicate gendered perceptions. Female respondents rated effectiveness higher ($M=4.02$ vs 3.79), reflecting care ethics (Hassel & Steven, 2009). Male respondents from law enforcement focus on control and compliance, leading to more critical ratings. This requires gender-sensitive inter-agency dialogue bridging care and control orientations, as mandated by RA 9344 Rule 75 on gender responsiveness.

For ethnicity, no significant difference ($p=.34$) suggests shared professional culture overrides ethnic differences—Chavacano, Muslim, and Visayan professionals converge in their assessment when operating within inter-agency framework, indicating successful cultural brokering at professional level.

For agency affiliation, DSWD/CSWDO rated programs higher ($M=4.08/4.05$) than PNP (3.72) and BJMP (3.68). This reflects organizational cultural dissonance: social welfare agencies view programs through restorative lens, law enforcement through public safety lens. From a culture and social science perspective, collaboration requires creating shared meanings and shared metrics rooted in restorative justice and culturally relevant practice, not merely legal compliance.

Problem 3: Culturally and Socially Grounded Model

Based on findings, the Culturally Responsive Inter-Agency Collaborative (CRIAC) Model was developed

with four pillars:

Pillar 1: Cultural Relevance Foundation. Integrate Chavacano and Tausug values—familia, compadrazgo, pagtutulungan, pagpatawad, and maratabat—into program design. Use mother tongue in counseling, involve religious leaders (imams, pastors) in diversion conferences, and promote kinship foster care over non-kin placement. This addresses cultural barrier in foster care.

Pillar 2: Social Systems Integration. Recognize CICL cases as symptoms of social structures—poverty, cross-border migration, family disruption, school dropout. Link juvenile justice to social protection: livelihood support, Alternative Learning System, vocational training aligned with local economies (fishing, seaweed farming, small trade). This prevents recidivism through social inclusion, consistent with routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Pillar 3: Restorative Inter-Agency Governance. Establish City Juvenile Justice Operations Center with regular case conferencing, shared database, and culturally sensitive protocols. Roles: DSWD/CSWDO lead for culturally relevant care; PAO for child-sensitive legal aid; PNP-WCPD as first responders trained in culturally appropriate handling; BJMP for separate, culturally respectful care. Joint training on restorative justice, cultural competence, and gender sensitivity to bridge organizational cultures.

Pillar 4: Community-Based Accountability. Engage Barangay Councils for Protection of Children, faith-based organizations, and civil society in monitoring and reintegration. Community accountability circles (pulong-pulong) where victim, offender, family, and elders discuss harm and reparation—rooted in indigenous dispute resolution—should replace purely formal hearings for minor offenses, aligning with Braithwaite's (1989) reintegrative shaming.

5. Conclusion

Respondents are mature, female-majority, multi-ethnic professionals from inter-agency partners, reflecting gendered and institutional patterns in juvenile justice in Zamboanga City. Juvenile justice and welfare programs are highly effective overall ($M=3.91$), with care and guidance strongest, while foster care remains resource and culturally constrained. Significant differences exist by age, gender, and agency affiliation, but not by ethnicity, indicating perceptions are socially constructed and organizationally mediated; gendered care ethics and institutional socialization shape evaluations. The CRIAC Model anchored on cultural relevance, social systems integration, restorative governance, and community accountability provides a culturally and socially grounded framework for sustainable juvenile justice in multicultural Zamboanga City.

Recommendations

For DSWD and CSWDO: Institutionalize culturally relevant services manual using Chavacano/Tausug concepts, promote kinship foster care, integrate faith-based healing with psychosocial support.

For PNP-WCPD and BJMP: Administer mandatory child-sensitive, culturally competent, gender-responsive training emphasizing restorative language; establish child-friendly spaces separate from adults per RA 9344 Rule 28.

For PAO and LGU: Strengthen BCPC, allocate budget for City Juvenile Justice Operations Center with shared database, pass ordinance recognizing community accountability circles as valid diversion.

For Academe (Culture and Social Science): Conduct ethnographic studies on CICL lived experiences from Tausug and Sama-Bajau communities to indigenize models; evaluate CRIAC through longitudinal participatory action research; integrate culture and social science perspectives into criminology and social work curricula.

References

1. Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*. Free Press.

2. Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame and reintegration*. Cambridge University Press.
3. Adams, K. (2007). Abolish juvenile curfews. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 6(4), 663–671. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9133.2007.00457.x>
4. Andrews, D. A., Zinger, I., Hoge, R. D., Bonta, J., Gendreau, P., & Cullen, F. T. (1990). Does correctional treatment work? A clinically relevant and psychologically informed meta-analysis. *Criminology*, 28(3), 369–404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1990.tb01330.x>
5. Bastik, M. (2011). *Gender self-assessment guide for the police, armed forces and justice sector*. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF).
6. Battaglia, M. P. (2008). Nonprobability sampling. In P. J. Lavrakas (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of survey research methods* (pp. 523–526). Sage Publications.
7. Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, 44(4), 588–608. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2094589>
8. Congress of the Philippines. (2006). Republic Act No. 9344: Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006. *Official Gazette of the Philippines*.
9. Congress of the Philippines. (2013). Republic Act No. 10630: An act strengthening the juvenile justice system in the Philippines, amending RA 9344. *Official Gazette*.
10. Grant, A. (2013). Essentials of research methods in criminal justice and criminology. In C. Rennison & T. Hart (Eds.), *Research methods in criminal justice and criminology* (pp. 1–30). Sage.
11. Hassel, K. D., & Brandl, S. G. (2009). An examination of the workplace experiences of police patrol officers: The role of race, sex, and sexual orientation. *Police Quarterly*, 12(2), 150–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611109332478>
12. Koshti, B. (2010). Sampling theory. CPT Section: Quantitative Aptitude, Chapter 15. Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.
13. Lipsey, M. W., Howell, J. C., Kelly, M. R., Chapman, G., & Carver, D. (2010). Improving the effectiveness of juvenile justice programs: A new perspective on evidence-based practice. Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown University.
14. Lipsey, M. W., Howell, J. C., & Tidd, S. T. (2007). The standardized program evaluation protocol (SPEP): A practical approach to evaluating and improving juvenile justice programs in North Carolina. Vanderbilt University, Center for Evaluation Research and Methodology.
15. Republic Act No. 9344. (2006). Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act. Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council.
16. Republic Act No. 9344. (2008). Rule 116: Transitory provisions and guidelines to implement the transitory provisions. Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council.
17. Storgaard, A. (2005). Juvenile justice in Scandinavia. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 5(2), 188–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14043850410006425>
18. UNICEF Philippines. (2006). Philippines enacts law on juvenile justice system: Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act 2006. UNICEF.
19. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (n.d.). Juvenile justice system structure and process. U.S. Department of Justice.
20. Xinhua News Agency. (2006, April 29). Philippine president signs new law merciful to young offenders. Xinhua News. Zehr, H. (2002). *The little book of restorative justice*. Good Books.