Empowering Recovery: Evaluating the Reintegration Strategies for Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse in Baguio

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Abstract

Sexual child abuse is a critical global issue requiring immediate intervention. While existing research has primarily focused on detection and prevention, the post-rescue experiences of victims are often neglected. This study examines the practices of CFSPI Baguio Chapter in facilitating the reintegration of child sexual abuse survivors into their communities. It aims to identify the reintegration protocols used and the challenges faced by CFSPI staff in implementing these protocols. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive design, insights will be gathered from experienced staff through unstructured interviews and analyzed via thematic coding. Preliminary findings indicate that CFSPI employs structured reintegration protocols, including family assessments, gradual transitions, and after-care services. However, challenges such as inadequate support from local government units (LGUs), lack of family preparedness, and community resource limitations hinder effective implementation and pose risks to survivors' safety. While organizations like CFSPI have established robust protocols to facilitate this reintegration process, without the active involvement of LGUs and community resources, reintegrated children remain vulnerable to exploitation and revictimization. Thus, a thorough review of existing case management protocols is necessary to confirm their relevance in addressing Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and to assess local coordination mechanisms. Collaborations between LGUs, DSWD, mental health professionals, and NGOs are essential for conducting reintegration workshops that equip families with skills to support children who have experienced trauma. Furthermore, financial literacy workshops should be provided to families of reintegrated children, alongside sustainable livelihood programs to promote financial independence. As families become more self-sufficient, LGUs and DSWD should gradually reduce external assistance, fostering independent coping strategies. Finally, future research should focus on gathering insights from LGUs involved in the reintegration process at the barangay level.

Keywords: Reintegration, Child Sexual Abuse, Support Systems, Local Government Units, Revictimization.

INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a pervasive global phenomenon that demands urgent attention. Worldwide, it is recognized as a significant public health concern, with devastating consequences for the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of children. Numerous studies highlight the alarming prevalence rates of child sexual abuse, emphasizing its widespread occurrence across diverse socio-cultural contexts. According to Loren, 2023, one in three girls and one in five boys are sexually abused before the age of 18. Finkelhor, Turner & Colburn (2024), estimated that approximately 13.5% of children worldwide experienced sexual abuse but with the advancement of technology at present, the overall child sexual abuse (CSA) prevalence raised from 13.5% to 21.7%. The rate for females increased from 19.8% to 31.6% and for males from 6.2% to 10.8%. The Philippines which is known as the "global hotspot" of OSEC cases (IJM, 2020, p. 60) ranked amongst the top ten producers of child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) (UNICEF, 2017).According to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) 2019 report, the Philippines received 801,272 Cyber Tipline reports on online child exploitation. This is a sharp increase compared to 2018 with 600,000 reports, 2017 with 45,645, and 37,715 in 2016. However, it is difficult to determine if this rise in reporting is associated with actual increase in offending, thus the true numbers or prevalence of online sexual exploitation of children cases remains unknown (IJM, 2020).

This number is likely to be even higher as many cases go unreported due to victims not being able or willing to speak out about their experiences. Research shows that over 91% of perpetrators are individuals known to the victim; this includes family members, close friends, teachers, coaches, and other trusted adults. This can make it difficult for victims to come forward since they may have a deep emotional bond with the perpetrator. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d) Child sexual abuse is also prevalent across class, race, and ethnicity, with both short-term and long-term impacts. It mainly involves an interaction between the abuser and the child, in which the child is the focus of the sexual stimulation of an observer or the offender (Wagenmans et al. 2018).

Sexual victimization is a vicious cycle that follows an individual throughout their lifetime. Persistent intrapersonal issues level affects the response at the macro-levels and affect the socio-emotional development of the child victim of sexual abuse. Being a victim of CSA increase the future maltreatment risk in its different forms depending upon its timing, severity, duration, and nature, and upon the child's age that compromise the wellbeing of these populations (Vasudevan & Lau, 2019). According to Dochetry et al. (2018) 10%-53% of survivors of CSA live in unhealthy and abusive intimate relationships as adults. Over the past decade, research reported evidence that CSA may be linked to increased sexual dysfunction with a decreased sexual satisfaction in adulthood and higher sexual compulsivity and risky sexual behaviors (Bigras et al, 2021). Konya et al. (2020) reported that female survivors of sexual abuse might find it challenging to create healthy sexual intimacy such as emotional and sexual conflict. Without intervention, these victims may be more susceptible to adult mental health problems and other adverse behavioral health problems such as the early onset of alcohol use and abuse, early smoking, prescription drug misuse, sexual risk-taking behaviors, and increased risk of suicide, among others (McKillop, 2019). Coping strategies have been revealed as one of the determinants of resiliency among female adult survivors of CSA. One of the specific risk factors for revictimization in CSA victims is maladaptive coping strategies (Scoglio et al., 2021). Thus, interventions should be implemented to have an impact for positive social change at different levels (Cires, 2022).

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children provide a global framework for protecting children who have been abused, exploited, or lack parental care. These guidelines prioritize keeping children with their families whenever possible, and only seeking alternative care if the family cannot provide a safe and nurturing environment for the child's growth and well-being. In cases of sexual exploitation where the perpetrators are the child's parents or family members, alternative care options become crucial for the child's safety and well-being. One option is kinship care, where the child is placed with extended family or close family friends who are already familiar to them. If this is not feasible, foster care can be considered, where the child is placed with a qualified and approved caregiver outside of their family. Lastly, residential care can provide a safe and structured environment in a group setting, with both short-term and long-term options available (UNICEF, 2023).

In the Philippines, The Department of Justice (DOJ) Protocol for Case Management of Child Victims of Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation outlines a collaborative approach involving various government agencies, organizations, and professionals to protect and support child victims in the Philippines. This multi-disciplinary team assesses the parenting capabilities of guardians and decides on suitable care arrangements. They also provide counseling, therapeutic activities, life skills education, vocational training, and is also responsible for supplying enough information for children nearing 18 years old desiring to live independently. Furthermore, they deliver interventions to the family, such as parent education, self-employment assistance, vocational or skills training, educational assistance, family counseling, or therapy provide counseling, education, and support services for both the child and their family while monitoring their progress (Navarro, 2020).Despite the existing framework for supporting survivors of child sexual abuse, several gaps hinder effective intervention and service delivery to include lack of comprehensive assessment and community-based intervention and monitoring, as well as limited capacity of local governments to intervene.

These shortcomings stem from a shortage of social workers, insufficient knowledge and skills among service providers to properly conduct assessments and case management, and inadequate funding for reintegration programs and services (Escoton et al., November 2020).

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a pervasive and deeply troubling issue that can have long-lasting consequences for survivors. While much attention is rightly given to the immediate protection and support of victims, the process of reintegration into society is equally critical for their long-term well-being and recovery. Residential care facilities play a vital role in providing a supportive environment for CSA victims during their healing journey. However, the effectiveness of these facilities in facilitating successful reintegration remains an understudied area.

This study aims to identify the practices of residential care facilities catering to victims of child sexual abuse, focusing specifically on their reintegration protocols. By examining whether consistent reintegration protocols are applied across different agencies, the research seeks to shed light on the uniformity and effectiveness of these approaches. Understanding the prevalence and consistency of reintegration protocols is essential for ensuring that CSA victims receive comprehensive and standardized support throughout their recovery process. Furthermore, by identifying the challenges faced by residential care providers in implementing reintegration protocols, this study aims to highlight areas for improvement and intervention which is crucial for enhancing the quality of care and support offered to CSA survivors, ultimately contributing to their successful reintegration into society and the prevention of revictimization.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Understanding the process of reintegration for child abuse victims within the community necessitates a comprehensive theoretical framework that encompasses the intricate interplay of individual, interpersonal, and societal factors. This theoretical framework draws upon various perspectives to shed light on the complexities involved in supporting survivors as they navigate the path towards healing and social integration.

Solution Based Casework (SBC) Model. This model provides a common conceptual map for child welfare caseworkers, supervisors, leadership, and treatment providers to help focus everyone's efforts on clear and agreed upon outcomes. SBC combines what we know from research on family development, clinical behavioral change, and child welfare outcomes to help staff stay focused on three key elements, or tenets 1) to create a partnership based on problem consensus in language the family understands, 2) to focus that partnership on the patterns of everyday family life that directly relate to threats to safety, and 3) to target solutions specific to the prevention skills needed to create safety and reduce risk in those family situations.

Family Systems Theory

This theory posits that individuals cannot be fully understood in isolation from their family dynamics; rather, they exist as part of a complex, interconnected system where each member influences and is influenced by others. This theory emphasizes key concepts such as boundaries, equilibrium, and bidirectionality, which highlight how family members interact and maintain stability amidst stressors. In the context of reintegration for child sexual abuse survivors, Family Systems Theory is particularly relevant. It recognizes that the trauma experienced by a child affects not only the individual but also reverberates throughout the family system, impacting relationships and dynamics. This approach highlights the involvement of the entire family in the assessment and healing process of survivors of child sexual abuse particularly in creating a safe and supportive environment for the child upon reintegration, as it addresses underlying issues within the family that may contribute to ongoing trauma or instability.

Social Learning Theory

According to this theory, individuals learn behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. In the context of reintegration, child sexual abuse victims may internalize both positive and negative social behaviors from their environment. By fostering a supportive community

environment with positive role models and opportunities for constructive social interactions, reintegration efforts can leverage social learning principles to facilitate the adaptation and recovery process.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of secure emotional bonds formed in early childhood for healthy development. Child sexual abuse can disrupt these attachment patterns, leading to difficulties in forming trusting relationships and seeking support. In the reintegration process, interventions informed by attachment theory can focus on rebuilding secure attachments with caregivers, peers, and community members, providing a foundation for emotional healing and social integration.

Stigma Theory

Stigma theory suggests that individuals who have experienced trauma may encounter societal attitudes and prejudices that lead to social exclusion and discrimination. In the context of reintegration, child sexual abuse victims may face stigma and negative perceptions from their communities, hindering their ability to reintegrate successfully. Interventions informed by stigma theory can focus on challenging stereotypes, promoting empathy, and fostering inclusive environments that support the reintegration of victims into the community.

Ecological Systems Theory

This theory highlights the interconnectedness between individuals and their environments, emphasizing the influence of various systems, such as family, school, and community, on development. Reintegration efforts for child sexual abuse victims need to consider the multiple levels of influence within their ecological systems. Interventions can target not only the individual victim but also their family dynamics, social networks, and community resources to create a supportive environment conducive to successful reintegration.

Psychoanalytic Theory

This theory examines the psychological and emotional impact of traumatic experiences on individuals. Child sexual abuse is a traumatic event that can lead to a range of negative consequences, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and substance abuse. In the context of reintegration, trauma-informed approaches prioritize understanding the effects of trauma on survivors and providing services in a sensitive, empowering, and culturally responsive manner. Reintegration efforts should address the unique needs of trauma survivors; promote safety and trust, and support survivors' coping and healing processes.

Social Support Theory

This theory posits that social support from family, friends, and community networks plays a crucial role in buffering stress, promoting coping, and facilitating adjustment to challenging life events. Reintegration efforts can leverage social support networks to provide emotional validation, practical assistance, and social connections for child sexual abuse victims. By strengthening social support systems, reintegration interventions can enhance the victim's sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation, contributing to their successful adaptation to community life.

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment theory emphasizes the importance of empowering individuals to exercise control over their lives and advocate for their rights and well-being. In the context of reintegration, empowerment-oriented interventions focus on restoring agency and autonomy to child sexual abuse victims. By providing opportunities for self-expression, decision-making, and skill-building, reintegration efforts can empower survivors to reclaim their sense of self-worth and agency, enabling them to navigate and contribute positively to their communities.

Resilience Theory

Resilience theory explores how individuals can adapt positively to adversity and develop resilience in the face of challenges. Child sexual abuse survivors demonstrate remarkable resilience in overcoming trauma and rebuilding their lives. Reintegration efforts should leverage resilience theory to identify and strengthen survivors' protective factors, such as social support, coping skills, and personal strengths. By fostering resilience, reintegration interventions can help survivors navigate the challenges of community integration and thrive in their post-abuse lives.

Significance of the Study

This study's findings will not only illuminate prevailing practices but also identify areas for enhancement, serving as a catalyst for intervention and improvement within residential care settings. Ultimately, the study holds the potential to significantly enhance the quality of care and support offered to CSA survivors, thereby fostering their successful reintegration into society and facilitating their long-term healing and recovery.

The beneficiaries of this study encompass a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including survivors of child sexual abuse, residential care providers, policymakers, and the broader community. Survivors stand to benefit from improved reintegration protocols that prioritize their unique needs and facilitate their transition back into society, promoting healing and empowerment. Residential care providers will gain insights into best practices and areas for improvement, enabling them to enhance the effectiveness of their support services and better serve their clients. Policymakers can utilize the study's findings to inform evidence-based policy decisions aimed at bolstering support systems for CSA survivors, thus advancing broader societal efforts to combat child sexual abuse and promote survivor well-being. Finally, the broader community stands to benefit from the successful reintegration of survivors, as it fosters a more inclusive and supportive social environment that rejects stigma and supports healing for all individuals affected by CSA. Thus, this study holds immense potential to catalyze positive change at individual, institutional, and societal levels, ultimately contributing to the creation of safer and more supportive communities for all.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify the practices of Child and Family Services Philippines Incorporated Baguio Chapter to facilitate the reintegration of victims of child sexual abuse in the community. Specifically the researchers sought to:
*Identify the CSA reintegration protocols implemented at CFSPI, Baguio Chapter; and
*Identify the challenges faced by CFSPI staff in implementing these reintegration protocols.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the design and methodology utilized in this research. It covered the research design, the study population, data collection tools, data gathering procedures, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations.

Study Design

This study utilized qualitative descriptive design. This approach enabled the researchers to systematically explore and document the specific reintegration protocols implemented at CFSPI, Baguio Chapter and the challenges faced by CSFPI staff members in the implementation of these protocols. Furthermore, this approach enabled the researchers to capture the complexity and richness of the phenomena under study, providing valuable insights for enhancing reintegration efforts and supporting the well-being of child sexual abuse victims in the community.

Population and Locale of the Study

The participants of this study were the staff members of the Child and Family Services Philippines Incorporated, Baguio Chapter who were chosen based on the following criteria: a) The participant must have been working at CFSPI Baguio Chapter for at least one year, and b) The participant must have been directly working with the victims of child sexual abuse.

Purposive sampling was also used in choosing the participants of the study because it allows the researchers to target individuals who possess specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research objectives.

The researchers chose to conduct the study at CFSPI, Baguio Chapter located at Manzanillo, Subdivision, Easter Road, Baguio City Philippines because it is the only accredited private social welfare and development agency catering sexually abused children within the city.

Data Gathering Tools

To effectively capture the insights of the participants, the researchers have chosen to employ an unstructured interview guide for face-to-face data gathering. Unlike structured interviews that follow a predetermined set of questions, an unstructured approach allows for flexibility and spontaneity in the conversation, enabling participants to freely express their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives. In the first part of the interview, participants were encouraged to describe and elaborate on the reintegration protocols implemented at CFSPI, Baguio Chapter.

This open-ended approach allowed a comprehensive exploration of the protocols, including their implementation processes and variations. In the second part of the interview, the focus shifted to identifying the challenges encountered by CFSPI staff members in implementing these reintegration protocols. By providing an opportunity for participants to discuss their experiences in-depth, the unstructured interview format facilitates a deeper understanding of the complex barriers and obstacles faced in supporting the reintegration of child sexual abuse victims.

Data Gathering Procedures

In gathering the data, the researchers sent a letter of request to the Dean of SCJPS Graduate School for the conduct of the study. Upon receiving approval, a subsequent request letter was dispatched to the office of Child and Family Services Philippines (CFSPI) located at Manzanillo Subdivision, Easter Road, Baguio City, Philippines. Prior to commencing the interviews, the researcher conducted a briefing session with potential participants, explaining the study's purpose and seeking their voluntary participation. Participants were asked for their consent to be recorded using a voice recorder on the researcher's phone, ensuring transparency and documentation of the interview process. Additionally, participants were reassured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point and guaranteed the confidentiality of their identity and provided information. Following the interviews, the researchers meticulously transcribed and interpreted the gathered data, maintaining a rigorous and ethical approach throughout the research process.

Treatment of Data

In the data analysis phase, the researchers employed a thematic coding as a rigorous and systematic approach to uncover recurring patterns, themes, and concepts within the dataset. This method involves a meticulous process of organizing segments of text into meaningful categories or themes based on their content and relevance to the research questions. These codes were systematically applied to relevant segments of text, facilitating the identification of commonalities and variations within the data. This process served as the foundation for deeper analysis and interpretation of the findings, enabling the researcher to derive meaningful insights and implications from the data.

Ethical Considerations

In order to uphold ethical standards throughout the study, the researchers closely adhered to the following guidelines: First, they have obtained informed consent from all participants, ensuring they fully understood the study's purpose and participated voluntarily without any pressure. Participants were informed of their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Anonymity and confidentiality were also rigorously maintained to protect individuals from potential harm, stigma, or discrimination. When sharing results, the researcher avoided language that perpetuates stereotypes or reinforces harmful narratives about sex work. The focus was on

presenting the findings objectively and accurately, emphasizing the complex social and economic factors that contribute to individuals' involvement in the sex industry.

To ensure the findings of this study have a broader impact, the results were submitted for publication in a reputable journal. Additionally, individual participants were offered access to the final report upon request.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section of this research paper aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the reintegration protocols for child sexual abuse (CSA) victims implemented at the Center for the Support of Children and Families in Crisis (CFSPI), Baguio Chapter and the challenges facedby CFSPI staff in executing these protocols.

Child Sexual Abuse Reintegration Protocols Implemented at Child and Family Service Philippines Incorporated (CFSPI) Baguio Chapter

This section outlines the comprehensive reintegration process for child sexual abuse (CSA) victims at CFSPI, Baguio Chapter. The protocols are designed to ensure the safety, psychological well-being, and adaptability of children as they transition back into their families and communities. The foundation of these protocols is rooted in Dr. Kristen Swanson's Theory of Caring and Healing, which emphasizes five key categories: knowing, being with, doing for, enabling, and maintaining belief.

Knowing involves a thorough assessment of the child's condition and situation, fostering a bond of empathy between caregivers and children. Being with emphasizes authentic presence and attentive listening, while doing for focuses on anticipating needs and preserving dignity. Enabling facilitates the child's navigation through life transitions, enhancing their capacity for self-care. Finally, maintaining belief instills hope and confidence in the child's ability to achieve their goals. Together, these elements create a supportive environment that promotes dignity, respect, and empowerment throughout the reintegration journey.

CFSPI utilizes a structured approach that includes various support mechanisms and interventions. Here are the key strategies employed as stated by both of the participants of this study:

Pre-Case Conference Planning

The initial step of discussing a reintegration plan prior to a child's admission is vital for ensuring a successful transition back into the family and community. This proactive approach not only facilitates the early identification of family support systems but also underscores the critical role of local government units (LGUs) and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in this process. By assessing family strengths and needs before a child's placement, caseworkers can tailor interventions that align with the family's unique circumstances, enhancing the likelihood of positive outcomes.

According to Frescoln (2022), when families are actively involved in case planning, they are more likely to meet their objectives, leading to fewer recidivism rates and improved safety and well-being for children. This individualized strategy is particularly relevant to the Solution-Based Casework (SBC) model, proposed by Dana Christensen in 1999, which emphasizes collaboration with families as partners in the planning process. The SBC model highlights the importance of empowering families by focusing on their strengths and fostering engagement, which not only enhances the effectiveness of interventions but also promotes a sense of ownership among family members. Local government units play a crucial role in this framework by implementing policies that support child welfare initiatives, mobilizing community resources, and ensuring that families have access to necessary services. Their active participation is essential for creating a supportive environment that facilitates smoother transitions for children and encourages their successful return to stable home environments.

Moreover, the involvement of local DSWD offices ensures that families receive comprehensive support tailored to their specific needs, ultimately contributing to more effective reintegration efforts and better outcomes for children in care.

Family Assessment and Parental Capability Assessment Report (PCAR)

During a child's stay in foster care, after-care social workers conduct essential home visits to assess the readiness and capability of family members or relatives to provide a safe environment for reintegration. The CFSPI requests for the PCAR to LGUs to evaluate the suitability of the identified family. This report is compared with the assessments of the CFSPI social workers to ensure consistency in evaluations. This family assessment is crucial for ensuring the child's safety upon return and minimizing the risk of retraumatization, which can occur if the child is placed back into an unstable or unsafe situation. The assessment process allows social workers to evaluate various factors, including the family's social dynamics, parenting practices, and overall living conditions. In this context, the role of the barangay council for the protection of children becomes increasingly significant. Local barangay councils are often the first line of defense in safeguarding children's welfare within their communities. They are responsible for implementing local policies and programs that support child protection initiatives, making them essential partners in the assessment process. By collaborating with after-care social workers, barangay councils can provide valuable insights into the community's resources and support systems available to families, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of reintegration efforts.

This collaborative approach aligns with Family Systems Theory by Murray Bowen (1950), which posits that a child's well-being is deeply interconnected with family relationships and dynamics. By examining the family's strengths and challenges in conjunction with local resources facilitated by barangay councils, social workers can develop tailored interventions that address specific needs. Furthermore, this partnership fosters a supportive environment conducive to the child's healthy development while promoting community engagement in child welfare. The barangay council's involvement not only ensures that families receive comprehensive support but also empowers them to take an active role in creating a safe and nurturing environment for their children. Ultimately, integrating these community-level resources into the family assessment process enhances the likelihood of successful reintegration and long-term stability for children returning home.

According to Participant 2, if the PCAR results are negative, alternative family members are considered, following the same assessment procedures. Through this approach, the risks associated with unsuitable guardians are mitigated, increasing the likelihood of successful reintegration and restorations of CSA survivors.

Parenting Effectiveness Sessions

According to Participant 1, once a suitable family member has been identified to care for the child, they are encouraged to engage in a series of educational sessions. These sessions cover critical topics such as child protection laws, positive discipline strategies, and techniques for strengthening family dynamics. These educational initiatives are necessary to equip identified families with the knowledge and skills necessary for fostering a safe and nurturing environment, particularly during the reintegration process of children who have experienced trauma, such as survivors of child sexual abuse. These sessions typically cover essential topics, including child protection laws, positive discipline techniques, and family strengthening strategies. By participating in these educational programs, parents learn to recognize the signs of abuse, understand their legal responsibilities, and adopt non-violent disciplinary methods that promote healthy child development.

The Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977) argues that behaviors are learned through observation and imitation. By teaching parents effective parenting techniques and positive interaction skills, these sessions aim to break the cycle of abuse that may be perpetuated through learned behaviors. Additionally, Routine Activity Theory by Cohen and Felson (1979) suggests that

crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable target without capable guardianship. Parenting sessions serve as a form of guardianship by empowering parents to create safe environments for their children, thereby reducing opportunities for abuse.

In terms of preventing revictimization, educational sessions provide parents with tools to foster open communication about feelings and experiences, which is vital for children who have been victims of abuse. By encouraging empathetic communication and emotional regulation within the family, these programs help create an environment where children feel safe to express themselves and report any concerns about their well-being(Gubbels et al., 2019). Lachman et al. (2021) claimed that this proactive approach not only aids in the immediate reintegration process but also contributes to long-term protective factors that reduce the likelihood of future victimization.

Gradual Transition

A structured home leave process allows children to spend time with their identified relatives in a controlled manner. Participant 2 stated that minor is allowed to have a vacation under the custody of the identified guardian for three days. As per Participant 1, this is followed by a week-long leave. The gradual transitions help children acclimate better to a new environment, reducing anxiety and promoting stability. Such gradual transitions help children acclimate to a new environment, reducing anxiety and promoting emotional stability. This process can be deeply understood through the lens of Attachment Theory by John Bowlby (1950) , which stated that the quality of early relationships significantly influences an individual's emotional development and ability to form secure attachments later in life.For children who have experienced trauma, such as abuse, these attachments may be disrupted, leading to difficulties in emotional regulation and trust. The gradual transition process allows children to re-establish connections with their caregivers in a safe and controlled manner. Spending time with their relatives gradually, children can rebuild trust and develop a sense of security that is crucial for their emotional well-being (Modi & Kalra, 2024).

Feedback and Evaluation

According to Participant 1, after home leaves, "kamustahan" sessions are conducted by case managers to evaluate the child's safety and well-being during their time at home. Participant 2 added, "kamustahan" sessions is also reserved for gathering feedback from families.These feedback mechanisms are crucial for continuous improvement in care practices and can significantly enhance child welfare outcomes. Regular evaluations not only provide insights into the child's adjustment but also facilitate timely interventions when issues arise during reintegration.

Psychoanalytic Theory by Sigmund Freud, emphasizes that traumatic experiences, such as abuse or neglect, can profoundly impact a child's psychological and emotional development. The feedback gathered during "kamustahan" sessions allows case managers to assess how well children are coping with their trauma in a home setting and whether they are experiencing any triggers that could lead to retraumatization. Understanding the effects of trauma on children's behavior and emotional regulation is essential for tailoring interventions that promote healing. For instance, children who have experienced trauma may struggle with trust and attachment, making it vital for caregivers to create a safe environment where children feel secure enough to express their feelings. The feedback from families during these sessions can inform case managers about the effectiveness of current strategies and highlight areas needing adjustment, ensuring that interventions remain sensitive to the child's trauma history.

Incorporating Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, further enriches this evaluation process by emphasizing the multiple layers of influence on a child's development. This theory posits that a child's behavior is affected not only by their immediate family environment but also by broader social systems, including schools, communities, and cultural contexts. By gathering feedback from families during "kamustahan" sessions, case managers can gain insights into how external factors such as community support systems or school environments impact the child's reintegration experience.

Moreover, regular evaluations through these feedback sessions foster a collaborative approach between families and case managers, reinforcing the idea that effective child welfare practices rely on partnership and open communication. This aligns with findings in recent studies that highlight the importance of involving families in decision-making processes related to their children's care (Tambasco et al., 2020).

Discharge Planning

A pre-discharge conference before reintegration was also highlighted by Participant 1 to ensure continuity of care post-reintegration. This structured approach to discharge planning is essential for addressing the complexities of reintegration, particularly for children who have experienced trauma. This process calls for the involvement of various stakeholders—such as social workers, family members,LGUs, healthcare providers, and community organizations to further enhance the overall effectiveness of care.

The significance of this collaborative discharge planning was expounded by Goffman (1963) in his Stigma Theory. This theory explores how societal perceptions and attitudes can negatively impact individuals' access to resources and support. Children and families involved in the child welfare system often face stigma, which can manifest as discrimination or bias from service providers and the community. This stigma can hinder their ability to seek help or fully engage in available support systems. By conducting inclusive discharge conferences that emphasize collaboration and open communication, stakeholders can work together to combat stigma and create a more supportive environment for families. This approach not only normalizes the reintegration process but also empowers families to advocate for their needs without fear of judgment.

Furthermore, the Empowerment Theory by Rappaport (1981), emphasizes the importance of enabling individuals and communities to gain control over their circumstances and improve their quality of life. By actively involving families in the discharge planning process, social workers can help them recognize their strengths and capabilities. This involvement fosters a sense of agency, allowing families to take ownership of their reintegration journey. According to An et al., (2024), when families feel empowered, they are more likely to utilize available resources effectively and engage with support systems, ultimately leading to better outcomes for children.

After-Care Services

Participant 1 also emphasized the importance of providing six months to one year of after-care services, which include home visits, counseling sessions, educational assistance, and material support such as hygiene kits. These comprehensive after-care services play a critical role in reducing instances of retraumatization among reintegrated children, thereby facilitating their emotional and psychological recovery.

According to Cullen (1994) in his Social Support Theory, individuals who perceive themselves as having adequate social support are better equipped to cope with stress and adversity. In the context of after-care services, the ongoing engagement of social workers and community resources offers both tangible and emotional support to children and their families. Research by Modi & Kalra (2024) demonstrated that when families receive consistent assistance, they are more likely to feel empowered and capable of addressing challenges that arise during the reintegration process. This continuous support helps alleviate feelings of isolation and anxiety, fostering a sense of belonging that is essential for children recovering from trauma.

Furthermore, Calhoun et al. (2022) highlighted that access to social support networks during the after-care phase significantly reduces instances of retraumatization among children who have experienced abuse. These findings underscore the necessity of structured after-care services as a means of fostering resilience and ensuring a successful transition for children returning home. By providing a robust framework of support, these services not only address immediate needs but also promote long-term emotional stability and well-being for reintegrated children.

Challenges in the Implementation of CSA Reintegration Protocols

This section outlines the challenges faced by CFSPI staff in executing these protocols, including resource limitations, family preparedness, and community support dynamics.

Inadequate Support from Local Government Units (LGUs)

The effectiveness of after-care services for reintegrated children is often contingent upon the active involvement and support of Local Government Units (LGUs). However, feedback from participants reveals significant gaps in this support, highlighting challenges that can hinder the reintegration process.

Participant 1 expressed concern about the failure of Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPCs) and LGUs to fulfill their responsibilities as outlined in the after-care plans, stating, "There is a clear lack of implementation of their functions and tasks."

Participant 2 added, "Some LGUs are passive after referrals. In many instances, LGU social workers and partners become less participative during the planning and preparation phases for family reintegration and the subsequent monitoring of after-care services. Unfortunately, only a very few of the LGU partners are effectively fulfilling their roles."

Participants further emphasized that successful reintegration of child sexual abuse survivors occurs when they are discharged into supportive families or communities capable of meeting their essential needs. This perspective aligns with the findings of Escoton et al. (2020), which emphasize the necessity of extending preventive, protective, and supportive interventions not only to the children but also to their families and communities. By recognizing that families and communities play pivotal roles in both the prevention of child sexual abuse and the rehabilitation of survivors, a holistic approach becomes fundamental to ensuring a survivor's restoration, sustained recovery, and successful reintegration (Mamauag et al., 2021).

Effective governance and coordination structures are critical for the successful reintegration of survivors of child sexual abuse into communities. This includes implementing multi-disciplinary case conferencing and ensuring that Local Government Units (LGUs) and Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPCs) provide long-term services and support. As highlighted by UNICEF (2022), these structures facilitate collaboration among various stakeholders, ensuring that families are adequately prepared and supported throughout the reintegration process.

The importance of a supportive environment cannot be overstated. Successful reintegration is characterized by several key factors: safety from physical, emotional, and psychological harm; fulfillment of basic physiological needs; access to education; and opportunities to develop essential life skills. Participants noted that when these needs are met, children demonstrate smoother adaptability to their new environments, significantly reducing the risk of retraumatization or revictimization.

Moreover, the structured approach adopted by CFSPI—including pre-case conference planning, family assessments, parental capability assessments (PCAR), and gradual transitions—ensures that families are actively involved in the reintegration process. By engaging families through parenting effectiveness sessions and community workshops on child protection laws and positive discipline techniques, CFSPI prepares them to provide a nurturing environment conducive to healing.

Thus, successful reintegration is not merely about transitioning children back into their homes; it requires a comprehensive strategy that encompasses family involvement, community support, and effective governance. By addressing the multifaceted needs of survivors and their families through coordinated efforts among various stakeholders, we can create an environment that fosters healing, resilience, and ultimately prevents future victimization.

Lack of Family Preparedness

The successful reintegration of children into their families is often compromised by a lack of preparedness among family members to support the child's needs. Insights from the Parental Capability Assessment Report (PCAR) frequently reveal that families are not adequately equipped to

address the psychological and emotional challenges faced by reintegrated children, which can significantly hinder their transition back into the home environment.

Participant 1 remarked on this issue, stating, "The preparedness of the family and community is lacking. The identified family or guardian with whom the child is to be reintegrated is not yet ready, as indicated by the Parental Capability Assessment Report from the LGUs or following the visit from the after-care social worker of the CFSPI."

Participant 2 further emphasized this concern, noting, "Families are often unprepared or incapacitated, especially when it comes to handling the psychosocial challenges that the child may face."

It becomes evident from these observations that family's ability to support a reintegrated child is crucial for fostering resilience in the child. Resilience Theory proposed that individuals can adapt positively to adversity when they have adequate support systems in place. For children who have experienced trauma, such as abuse or neglect, a supportive family environment is essential for rebuilding trust and emotional stability.

When families are unprepared, as highlighted by Participants 1 and 2, they may struggle to provide the necessary emotional and psychological support that fosters resilience in children. Research has shown that children who receive consistent support from their families during challenging transitions are more likely to develop coping strategies that enhance their ability to navigate future adversities (Stapley et al., 2023). Conversely, a lack of preparedness can lead to increased feelings of anxiety and instability for the child, which can hinder their recovery process (Vladislav et al., 2024).

Community Resource Limitations

The successful reintegration of children into their communities is often hindered by significant limitations in available resources and programs. Feedback from participants highlights critical gaps in community support systems that are essential for addressing the diverse needs of reintegrated children.

Participant 1 noted, "The community lacks adequate resources to meet the special needs of children being reintegrated. "Participant 2 echoed this concern, stating, "There is a lack of comprehensive programs and services for reintegrated children at the community level."

These insights underscore the notable absence of comprehensive programs and resources in many communities, which can severely impact the adjustment process for reintegrated children. Without adequate support systems in place, these children may struggle to access the necessary services that facilitate their emotional and psychological recovery, ultimately affecting their overall well-being and successful integration into society.

These challenges emphasized that the availability of social networks and resources is crucial for the well-being of reintegrated children. The Social Support Theory stated that strong social connections can provide emotional, informational, and instrumental support that is vital during times of transition or stress. When communities lack comprehensive programs, they fail to provide the necessary emotional support—such as encouragement and empathy as well as practical assistance like access to educational resources or mental health services. This deficiency can lead to feelings of isolation among children and families, further complicating their adjustment process (Degrauwe et al., 2023).

Moreover, Wilson (2024) highlights a concerning trend where some trafficked children receive minimal or no case management and monitoring. This lack of oversight not only jeopardizes their immediate safety but also undermines their long-term recovery prospects. While calls for child-centered responses to CSA are well-founded, it is essential to recognize that centering children's perspectives should not occur at the expense of supporting their caregivers. The findings suggest that addressing the needs of non-abusing caregivers and wider family members is vital for reinforcing the support system around the survivor. Warrington et al. (2023) assert that by integrating the perspectives and needs of both children and their support networks, programs can

enhance the effectiveness of interventions aimed at preventing further victimization and facilitating successful reintegration.

Thus, Empowerment Theory emphasizes the importance of equipping individuals with the skills and resources needed to take control of their lives. The absence of adequate community resources can disempower families, leaving them feeling helpless in navigating the complexities of reintegration. It further suggests that when families are provided with access to supportive programs and services, they are more likely to feel capable of addressing challenges effectively (Michaelson et al., 2021). In contrast, a lack of resources can foster dependency on external systems without building the family's capacity to manage their circumstances (Jabbari et al., 2023).

Economic Constraints

Economic constraints significantly impact families' ability to support the needs of reintegrated children, particularly in terms of healthcare and education. Feedback from participants highlights how financial difficulties can lead to critical gaps in care and support, ultimately affecting children's well-being and adjustment.

Participant 1 noted, "Some families discontinue their medications due to a lack of financial resources for psychiatric medications. Additionally, some children choose not to pursue their studies and instead prefer getting married."

Participant 2 added, "Many have stopped their medications without their physician's advice, and they no longer return for follow-up check-ups, even when these appointments are scheduled with their psychiatrists or psychologists."

These comments illustrate how financial difficulties can severely limit families' capacity to provide essential resources for their children. The inability to afford necessary medications can lead to deteriorating mental health, while the lack of educational opportunities can hinder personal development and future prospects. For survivors of child sexual abuse, these challenges are particularly pronounced as they may already be grappling with trauma-related issues that require ongoing psychological support.

The risk of revictimization is heightened in such circumstances. When children are unable to access mental health services or educational resources due to economic constraints, they may find themselves in precarious situations that expose them to further abuse. The findings of the study of Hosny et al. (2022) revealed that survivors who lack adequate support systems are more vulnerable to re-experiencing trauma. In addition, Jones (2024) argues that the absence of a stable educational environment can lead to increased susceptibility to exploitative relationships or situations, as children may feel pressured to seek financial security through means that could compromise their safety.

Administrative resistance and bureaucratic hurdles often impede effective execution, with many survivors encountering gaps in support from governmental institutions. For instance, survivors have reported incurring out-of-pocket expenses for necessary treatments that are not covered by health insurance, leading to financial burdens that can ultimately disrupt their healing process (Schoon & Briken, 2021). Such economic constraints can exacerbate the psychological toll on survivors, hindering their recovery and reintegration into society.

Dependency on Assistance

Dependency on assistance from organizations such as CFSPI or government programs can create significant challenges for families of survivors of child sexual abuse. While these resources are essential for immediate support, an over-reliance on them can impede families' ability to develop independent coping strategies and sustainable support systems for their children. This dynamic not only affects the family's resilience but also heightens the risk of revictimization for the children involved.

Participant 1 observed, "Some families become too dependent on the assistance being provided by the organization or the government." When families are overly reliant on external

assistance, they may neglect to establish their own support networks or coping mechanisms. This lack of self-sufficiency can leave children vulnerable to further trauma. Researches indicated that survivors of child sexual abuse often face ongoing mental health challenges, and without a robust support system, they may be at increased risk of revictimization (Theimer et al., 2020;Downey & Crummy, 2022).

Moreover, dependency on aid can foster feelings of helplessness and low self-esteem among both parents and children. The inability to advocate for their own needs or seek additional resources may lead children to remain in unsafe situations or relationships, perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

The challenges faced in the implementation of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) reintegration protocols underscore a critical aspect of child abuse prevention programs: successful reintegration extends beyond merely removing a child from immediate danger; it necessitates the establishment of a long-term, supportive environment conducive to healing and thriving. This perspective is crucial, as it emphasizes that the well-being of survivors is intricately tied to the resources and support systems available to them post-rescue.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations derived from the study's findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that successful reintegration of child survivors of sexual abuse is characterized by the absence of threats to the child's safety, no instances of revictimization or retraumatization, and the fulfillment of various needs—safety, physiological, psycho-emotional, educational, and life skills. While organizations like CFSPI have established robust protocols to facilitate this reintegration process, including structured steps such as pre-case conference planning, family assessments, and gradual transitions through home leaves, the effectiveness of these interventions is significantly undermined if local government units (LGUs) and the broader community do not actively participate in supporting these efforts.

Without the active involvement of LGUs and community resources, reintegrated children remain vulnerable to exploitation and revictimization. If local governments fail to provide adequate resources or programs that address the specific needs of these children—such as mental health services, educational support, and safe recreational opportunities—the very foundation for successful reintegration is compromised. Children may find themselves in environments that lack supervision or protective measures, increasing their susceptibility to further abuse.

Moreover, a lack of community engagement can perpetuate stigma surrounding child sexual abuse survivors. When communities do not recognize or address the unique challenges faced by these children, it can lead to isolation and a lack of understanding among peers and adults alike. This social exclusion can exacerbate feelings of worthlessness and vulnerability in survivors, making them more likely to enter into harmful situations or relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS

*Local Government Units (LGUs) should evaluate the effectiveness of Local Councils for the Protection of Children, assessing their integrated action plans, resources dedicated to child rights, and specific interventions for children subjected to various forms of violence.
*Communities should establish targeted prevention systems, ideally led by trained Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPC), who possess a deep understanding of the dynamics and pathways of child exploitation.
*All personnel within relevant LGUs and NGOs involved in assessing children's needs must undergo training in child-sensitive and culturally appropriate assessment methodologies, which will serve as a foundation for developing effective intervention models.
*LGUs ought to create a centralized database containing information on vulnerable children and families to facilitate targeted support, prevention efforts, and ongoing monitoring.

*The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), along with LGUs, BCPCs, CFSPI, and other stakeholders, should schedule quarterly meetings to review after-care plans and ensure accountability across all parties involved.

*The DSWD, LGUs, BCPCs, and NGOs must conduct a thorough review of existing case management protocols to ensure they remain relevant in addressing Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). This review should include a specific assessment of current coordination and referral mechanisms at the local level to confirm that adequate capacity and services are available for effective referrals and case management as outlined in the protocols.

*The LGUs and DSWD must collaborate with Mental Health Professionals, relevant NGOs, and other Community-Based Organizations to conduct Re-integration Workshops for families to equip them with necessary skills and knowledge to foster a nurturing environment and educate them about the specific needs of children who have experienced trauma, enabling them to recognize signs of distress and respond appropriately.

*The LGUs and DSWD must collaborate with local NGOs and community organizations with financial educators and institutions to provide financial literacy workshops to families of reintegrated children.

*Local government units (LGUs) must implement sustainable livelihood programs for the families of reintegrated child sexual abuse survivors, ensuring that support is available until these families can achieve financial independence.

*The LGUs and DSWD must gradually reduce external assistance as families demonstrate increased self-sufficiency to empower them to cultivate independent coping strategies and establish sustainable support systems for their children. This gradual transition from dependency to independence not only promotes personal growth but also ensures that families are equipped to thrive without ongoing external support.

*Future researchers should focus on gathering insights from LGUs, particularly those directly involved in the reintegration process of CSA survivors at the barangay level.

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