MORAL COMPETENCE AND
CONDUCT DISORDER AMONG
FILIPINO CHILDREN IN
CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

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DISCLOSURE

I have no financial conflicts of interest to disclose regarding this presentation.
INTRODUCTION
FILIPINO CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

- In the Philippines, the number of children in conflict with the law (CICL) has increased in the recent decades.
  - In 2009, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council reported that there were more than 11,000 Filipino children in conflict with the law [1,2].
  - This increase is consistent across most regions in the country, as well as the Southeast Asia region.

2. Quismundo, T. Philippine Daily Inquirer. Juvenile crimes up by 18% -- PNP.
CONDUCT DISORDER AND CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

- Western studies has shown that delinquent youth are likely to have conduct disorder [3].
- Rates of conduct disorder in juvenile delinquents are 73-77%.

- Conduct disorder is defined as a repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior in which the basic rights of others or major societal norms or rules are violated [4].
- Children with conduct problems have increased risk for comorbid psychiatric conditions, as well as severe antisocial and criminal behaviors in adolescence and adult life [3, 5-7].

CONDUCT DISORDER
AND CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

▪ Children with conduct problems have a reduced capacity for empathy and moral judgment, and this may contribute to antisocial behaviour.

▪ Juvenile delinquents as a group have been found to have lower levels of moral competence and higher levels of psychopathy compared to their non-delinquent counterparts [8-10].

▪ However, other studies do not support the presence of a relationship between delinquency, psychopathy, and moral competence [11-12].
FAMILY-RELATED FACTORS AND CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

- Family-related factors have also been associated with conduct disorder and juvenile delinquency. These factors include:
  - Child abuse or neglect
  - Harsh parental discipline
  - Low levels of parental warmth
  - Family disruption [5-6].

- It has been suggested that moral competence is highly influenced by parents, as parents are often the basis upon which children learn to judge moral dilemmas [13-14].

FAMILY-RELATED FACTORS AND CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

- Parental influences on moral competence may lead to the development of conduct disorder and eventually, delinquent behavior.

- Hence, these three factors were selected as the main study variables.
STUDY OBJECTIVES

- Present a demographic profile of Filipino children in conflict with the law
- Determine the prevalence of conduct disorder in the sample
- Determine the presence of an association between conduct disorder and the following:
  - Family background
  - History of abuse
  - Moral competence
  - Parental warmth and acceptance
  - Comorbid psychiatric conditions
METHODOLOGY
STUDY DESIGN AND SETTING

- This was a descriptive cross-sectional study conducted at the Kanlungan ng Kabataan Village Children in Conflict with the Law Custodial Care Center and Children’s Haven, Antipolo City, Philippines in 2017.

- Participants were recruited using convenience sampling.
STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Inclusion criteria

• Initial referral to the center due to conflict with the law, informed assent from the participant and informed consent from the guardian

Exclusion criteria

• Diagnosed psychiatric illness, the inability to understand either the English or Tagalog language.
**STUDY PROCEDURE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Determination of eligibility</th>
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<td>Informed assent/consent</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data gathering using the DSM-5, MCT, PWAS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct disorder and comorbid conditions (DSM-5)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical analysis using SPSS v.23</th>
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<tr>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
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ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Assent was secured from all participants, and informed consent was secured from a legally authorized representative of each child.
- Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.
- Ethical approval was secured from the UERMMMCI Research Institute of Health Sciences prior to conduct of the study.
RESULTS
# Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>CD Sample</th>
<th>Control Sample</th>
<th>Test Statistic</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (p-value)</th>
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<td><strong>Number of Subjects (n)</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Male (n)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female (n)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>2.44</td>
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<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 4-6</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 7-9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade 10-12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Presence of Stepfamily</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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**Chi-Square Analysis:**

**Type of Violations Committed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violation</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>CD</th>
<th>CTRL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use or Trade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Offenses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* LR = 14.63, df = 3, p = 0.002
CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS: COMORBID SUD AND PRESENCE OF ABUSE

Presence of a Substance Use Disorder

*LR=5.27, df=4, p=0.022

Presence of Abuse or Neglect

*LR=7.76, df=1, p=0.005
COMPARISON OF MEANS: VIOLATIONS COMMITTED AND MORAL COMPETENCE

- Mean Violations Committed:
  - CD: 6.5
  - CTRL: 1.15
  - * t=2.33, df=21, p=0.03

- Moral Competence:
  - CD: 13.26
  - CTRL: 19.8
  - * t=-2.99, df=21, p=0.007
DISCUSSION
DISCUSSION

- Majority of participants were between 16-18 years old, male, and were between Grades 4-6.
- More than half of them did not belong to a single, nuclear family.
- The demographic profiles of the participants were found to be in line with qualitative studies done in a Philippine context as well as other Asian research.
DISCUSSION

- In contrast to Western rates, only 43.5% of the sample met the clinical criteria for conduct disorder.
- However, 87% had a comorbid psychiatric disorder, with the most common diagnoses being mood and adjustment disorders.
- The presence of a comorbid psychiatric disorder in itself was not associated with the presence of a conduct disorder.
A Snapshot of Filipino Cicil

Seven regions had 2,000 or more recorded cases of Cicil between 2012-2015. The highest was Western Visayas with 7,953 cases, followed by Davao, with 6,684, then Central Visayas a far third with 2,766.

Theft was the most commonly committed offense by Cicil in 2015, according to PNP.

1 in 4 Cicil in NCR is apprehended for theft.

PNP said the number of foreign tourists and prevalence of crime syndicates in Western Visayas account for its high number of cases.


**DISCUSSION**

- Conduct-disordered children were more likely to have a comorbid substance use disorder.
- Substance use disorders, as well as polysubstance use, have generally been associated with conduct disorder in literature [7].
- A comorbid substance use disorder has been associated with severe functional impairment, recidivism and repeated incarcerations, and poorer treatment outcomes [15].

DISCUSSION

- More conduct-disordered participants had a history of abuse or neglect.
- Parental hostility has been found to lead to child and adolescent aggression, delinquency, and withdrawal, through evoking negative emotions in children [16,17].
- Physically punished children were found to be 1.3x more likely to develop psychological problems and antisocial behavior [18].
- However, there were no significant associations between parental warmth and acceptance scores and conduct disorder.

DISCUSSION

- Significant differences between the moral competence scores of children with conduct disorder and controls were noted.
  - This supports the theory that low moral competence may contribute to the development of conduct disorder and eventual conflict with the law.
# LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Relatively small sample size</td>
<td>• Replication in larger populations</td>
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<td>• Cultural specificity / limited generalizability</td>
<td>• Development of a local intervention program which</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Descriptive nature</td>
<td>aims to enhance moral competence</td>
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MORAL COMPETENCE: A TARGET FOR INTERVENTION

- Moral competence among conduct disordered children can be a target for intervention.
- Administration of the EQUIP program, which was geared to increase moral competence, led to moral judgment gains and decreased levels of misconduct, truancy, and recidivism one year after release [19].
- Reductions in recidivism were noted for similar programs geared towards the improvement of moral functioning, making moral competence a promising focus for intervention programs [20-21].

CONCLUSION

- In the study, less than half of the children met the criteria for conduct disorder.

- These children were more likely to have:
  - Committed multiple violations, particularly theft and homicide,
  - A comorbid substance use disorder,
  - A history of abuse or neglect, and
  - Lower moral competence levels

- Recommendations:
  - Study replication
  - Development and implementation of interventions geared towards increasing moral competence of children in conflict with the law
REFERENCES


Frick PJ. Developmental Pathways to Conduct Disorder. Child Adolesc Psychiatric Clinic N Am. 2006;11(3).


REFERENCES


THANK YOU!

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THE PHILIPPINES SAYS THANK YOU.