

An Intrinsic Exploratory Case Study of Parenting Children at Risk (CAR)

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ABSTRACT: *The presence of children-at-risk (CAR) in some of the Filipino home challenges parenting. Using a case study design, this study explored select parents-beneficiaries of Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in Ozamiz City ways of parenting Children-at-Risk (CAR). Purposeful sampling was employed to choose the 13 participants. Data were collected from multiple sources such as Focus Group Discussion (FGD), In-depth Interview (IDI), Key Informant Interview (KII), and material artifacts. Trustworthiness was observed. Reflexivity statement was written to disclose the role of the researcher. To determine the codes, categories, and themes, data were analyzed using HyperResearch software. The findings highlight the following themes such as corrective-supportive parenting, ways of addressing CAR's transitional struggles, and establishing open communication. From these themes, it can be inferred that parenting styles may differ from other parents because parenting children-at-risk has neither set of techniques nor gold standard. Parents need to be skillful, creative, and be attentive listeners to the unspoken feelings and desire of their children. Future research may be conducted to determine patterns of parenting and children's behavior in other cities and municipalities with cases of CAR.*

KEYWORDS: Case Study, Children-at-Risk (CAR), Parenting Styles, Parenting.

INTRODUCTION

Parenting children-at-risk (CAR) is influenced by the behaviors of the parents, their own experiences, expectations, and circumstances learned from cultural and societal structures. Every parent, especially those who are having CAR, has its own way of parenting and personal coping. It can cause tension between the family members and can produce wide range of feelings such as grief, anxiety, and anger. CAR, as defined by the Republic Act No. 9344 or the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act, refers to a child who is vulnerable to and at risk of committing criminal offenses because of personal, family, and social circumstances. These children, if not properly addressed or intervened, can turn into juvenile

offenders or what the law calls as “children in conflict with the law”.

The prevalence of deviant conduct has increased in the Philippines from a minor to severe form that is visible in every location, and dangerously high crime rates have been pervasive throughout the previous years (Dullas et al., 2021). Deviant behaviors among children are common issues faced by parents. These behaviors are shown in terms of frequently returning home late at night, disobeying parents, and stealing. In school this behavior can be manifested in terms of cheating, consistently arriving late, arguing with peers, and frequently missing classes. This phenomenon, a form of juvenile delinquency, can be attributed to a number of factors such as poverty (Business Mirror, 2022). It can also be a consequence of transition from childhood to adulthood (Ghongkedze, 2018). Some attributed it to bad parenting (Gu, 2021). The study by Farrington (2018) was motivated by the observation that antisocial individuals frequently have antisocial children as well as large families, inadequate parental supervision, and disrupted households, among other things. The amount of parental attention that can be provided to each child in a large family reduces as the number of children increases, making large families a moderately robust and highly reproducible predictor of delinquency.

Previous research indicated that the development of children thus greatly influences their future character and the likelihood of them engaging in delinquent acts (Mwangangi 2019). Espinosa (2020) concluded that roles and practices such as various parenting controls, disciplinary measures, and approaches for developing the moral character of the children play a key part in their development. Song and Jiang (2023) said that parent-child conflict is more likely to occur when children in their rebellious stage of development have more controlled parents because it is simpler to awaken their rebellious psyche. This kind of control and resistance will often lead to long-term consequences even the time rebellious period ends, still the have difficulty in communicating well with their parents. Furthermore, a myriad of studies has been conducted on parenting and its important role in the growth and development of a child. However, studies about parenting children-at-risk in the country are still scant. Hence, this qualitative study examined the case of parenting especially that of children-at-risk.

This study is anchored on the Ecological Systems Theory of Bronfenbrenner (1977) and the Parenting Styles Theory of Baumrind (1971). Ecological Systems Theory viewed human development as a complex system of relationships that are influenced by a range of environmental factors. Parenting styles of CARs has to address the complex system of relationship especially between the CARs-parents relationship, CARs-family relationship, and CARs-community relationship. Parenting Style Theory, on the other hand, described parenting as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. In this study, parenting styles had been investigating from this lens.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design. This study used a case study design. For Stake (1995), case study is “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). In this study, parenting of children-at-risk (CAR) is the case that was being explored.

Sample. The study used purposeful sampling. There were 13 participants in this study. There were seven parent participants for the focus group discussions (FGD), five parent participants for the in-depth interviews (IDI), and one child-at-risk as a key informant.

Data Collection. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, and key informant interviews were used to gather data from the participants. Material artifacts such as attendance in the trainings and photos were used for triangulation of data.

Data Analysis. Data were analyzed using HyperResearch (version 4.5.4) to determine the codes, categories, and themes. Coding was a helpful craft that allows for deep immersion in the data as well as transparency in the production and presentation of findings (Saldaña, 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Three themes emerged from the narratives of the participants. These themes consist of corrective-supportive parenting, ways of addressing CAR transitional struggles, and establishing open communication.

Corrective-Supportive Parenting

The participants described their parenting styles, their ways of disciplining their children, and the values they upheld in rearing their children as a corrective-supportive parenting. Corrective-supportive parenting is also called supportive parenting. Supportive parenting is the middle ground between a permissive and authoritarian parenting (Richfield, 2019). On the other hand, corrective-supportive parenting, for the participants, means negotiating, healthy discipline, and imposing punishment when necessary. Parental psychological control like negotiations means conflict management when participants faced with any sort of resistance from their children. This kind of control is the parents less capacity to distinguish between their own demands and those of their children (Song and Jiang, 2023).

Negotiating. It usually happens when there is a parent-child confrontation. The participants refused something that their children asked with the thought that their children will yield to it in exchange of a favor given to the children. As Parent 1 described, “*We have an agreement. They know I cannot provide them all they want because I am poor. Most of the times I have nothing, no money. They knew it from the start.*” (Parent 1, FGD No. 1, Transcriptions No. 1, Page 11). He was honest to his children about his financial capability. Having an agreement like this creates a venue to motivate their children and befriend with them to get more affection instead of nagging. Moreover, the participants also believed that negotiating also means dealing with the child straight from his conscience. It is a parental strategy in which adults exercise control over their children's psychological environment by engaging in manipulative and invasive activities directed towards their ideas and feelings (Song and Jiang, 2023).

Healthy discipline. Positive discipline is a good strategy for promoting good conduct and emphasizing kindness. For the participants, healthy discipline means the non-application of grave consequences, infrequent anger displays, and sharing meals together as a family. Parent 2 said: “*I am on authoritative parenting, I ought to start by asking the kids what they did wrong. Just talk to them about it; I won't do them harm or hand out severe punishment instead of engaging in an honest discussion to help them learn their lesson.*” (Parent 2, FGD No. 1, Transcriptions No. 1, Page 4). The participants believed that by softly talking to their children, the children will realize their own mistakes. The way they understand and react to their children's behavior, moving away from punishment and toward civilized dispute resolution (Durrant, 2020).

Imposition of punishment. The participants also used fear to discipline their children in order to follow the rules and to make the children realize their mistakes. For example, Parent 5 said: “*I will scare him like, “you will be hung by your father”, only to scare him because he will not like to be hung or punished. That’s how I make him behave*” (Parent 5, FGD No. 1, Transcriptions No. 1, Page 10). The intention of punishment was to discourage “misbehavior” by applying a negative consequence after a misdeed. Imposing consequences to curb children’s inappropriate behavior is another method to take the conflict out (Martin, 2019). For the participants, punishment is not the focus of discipline. It involves guiding the children to the right direction, deciding on and establishing suitable boundaries, and encouraging them to act within those boundaries. Supportive discipline was applied in a peaceful manner, mainly in the form of verbal suggestions and cautions for behavior modification in order to regulate the child and get them back on task.

Ways of Addressing CAR’s Transitional Struggles

The ways of addressing CAR’s transitional struggles for the participants means struggling with peer group influence and demonstrating positive disposition. One may anticipate a shift in the most common behavioral issues in adolescence as a result of the particularly noticeable behavioral changes associated with the transition from childhood to adolescence (Bahtelt, etal, 2021). For the participants, they narrated how their children value less on attending school and explored many things out of their control. Avedissian, & Alayan (2021), on the transitional stage of adolescence is marked by quick development, independence, and the acquisition of social skills and behaviors that set the stage for future wellbeing. Their behaviors maybe confusing for parents, can be antisocial, aggressive, and rebellious. Some possessed unpredictable conduct. As the participants experienced all of these, they were confused because they thought they were dealing with a different child. Some got frustrated because the child’s behaviour had gradually changed. These particular negative patterns of personality conflict, pride, authority, and anger hindered the participants from fostering pleasant and strong relationships with the children.

Struggling with peer group influence. Participants expressed their sentiments about the misconduct and antisocial behavior as personal development and developmental changes that occur during adolescence. Age-related variations in negative emotionality may also have some explanation in the cognitive changes of adolescence (Goossens, 2020) The participants described these behaviors to include: absenteeism, refusal to attend to school, peer influence, engaging in pity crimes, constant

arguments with parents, fight back to parents, disobedience, being disrespectful, rude behaviors, and being mischievous. The behaviors of their children disturbed the stability of the social order which frequently resulted into crime and violence. One of the reasons of having deviant behaviors among the participants' children was peer pressure. Parent 12 claimed: *"I did all I needed to with him, telling him that completing basic school is essential for their future, but I wondered when his teacher told me that he was not showing up at all. I later learned that he was hanging out with his peers who also detested going to school."* (Parent 12, Transcriptions IDI-5, Page 4).

Demonstrating positive dispositions. The participants discovered that occasionally it was fruitful to apply what they had learned especially in parenting their children. Learning from their elders and other family members was essential. Parenting skills also was partly acquired from Family Development Sessions which refreshed and enhanced their skills as they were able to interact with other parents and share stories about their CAR to lean individual coping strategies. Participants acknowledged that they occasionally found it difficult to manage their children's difficult behavior. However, they used modeling as a means of demonstrating positive ways to their children. They did this through simple acts like asking their permission, encouraging the child, giving well-defined responses, making fair treatment, guiding the child, leading them to work, teaching by examples, and showing gestures of respects. For instance, Parent 2 said: *"I will always tell them and inform them whenever I went out, what time I'll be back so they will do the same. We know that children will copy what the parents do. I told my wife too so the children will imitate us."* (Parent 2, FGD No. 1, Transcriptions No. 1, Page 8). Demonstrating positive ways can be reflected by kissing hands, *Amin* or *Pagmano*. This is a Filipino tradition which has been upheld for generations. It shows gesture of respect. As practiced, Parent 7 said: *"The most significant gesture in our home is pagmamano (kissing hands). Calling Ate and Kuya to the older siblings to demonstrate the enduring affection between them that has been inherited from our ancestors. Likewise, sharing meals."* (Parent 7, FGD No. 1, Transcriptions No. 1, Page 9). The participants' family values, which they frequently impart to their children were typically learned from their parents and elders. The struggles of the participant come in many forms that may be typically labelled as practicing bad parenting techniques. Zhao & Wang, (2023) poses negative parental practices have an impact on teenagers' psychological crises and demonstrate the mediating and moderating functions of self-worth and school connectedness, offering more avenues for explanation for the mechanisms underlying teenagers' psychological crises.

Open Communication

Participants are concerned about their children's feelings, their presence during difficult situations, and their ability to make decisions. Communicating with the children is building rapport with them that may need parenting skills and demeanour (Amran & Basri, 2020). According to Bi & Wang (2021), parental openness encouraged the growth of teenagers' independence and sense of purpose in order to improve their quality of life. It also demonstrated personal coping strategies as they exerted all efforts in devising basic methods in overcoming difficulties and challenges having children being at risk. They built teamwork and established communication avenues adopting a specific position when speaking to their children like one-on-one conversation and feedbacking to help to settle concerns with their behaviour; they responded their children's need in any way possible, though as much as they want to

provide, situations were not always ideal and they were not always able to provide them immediately, thus initiated calm conversation to make them feel loved and supported.

Making time to talk to the children. There are distinct verbal and nonverbal communication routes. To raise the child's self-esteem, parents and children need to have effective two-way communication which are demonstrated abilities when dealing with their children being at risk. So that the participants can establish communication opportunities with their children, they approached their children to give them feedback of their school's activities. Some parents did feedback after school to provide kids positive attention and sparked their enthusiasm in going to school and find positive reinforcement which they believed the likelihood for their kids to behave properly. For Parent 7, she said: *"I used to ask them about their day and how it was going. Sometimes they received reprimands, but I always reminded them that kids make mistakes and sometimes parents will ground them because they love them and want them to be good persons."* (Parent 7, FGD No. 1, Transcriptions No. 1, Page 11). According to Li & Guo (2023), children's wellbeing increased with the amount of time parents spent with them. They are more likely to be physically healthy and less likely to engage in risky behaviours.

Boundless patience. Parents will naturally worry about the safety of their children. This has been mentioned multiple times by the participants both in focus group discussions and in in-depth interview. For instance, Parent 6 shared: *"Even though it is late at night and he has spent the evening with his buddies, I will still pick him up since I am worried about him. I keep going back to get him if he won't come with me."* (Parent 6, FGD No. 1, Transcriptions No. 1, Page 11). Responding to the needs of children is accepting for who really is your child in a unique and special way and loving them unconditionally. Raising responsible children presents nearly the same challenges for all parents. (Cline & Fay, 2020). However, for the participants, accepting their child for who they are does not imply that they condone bad behavior. Rather, adjusted their reaction to the conduct in a way that is more beneficial in the long run and more important to them.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parenting children-at-risk poses several challenges among parents. In this light, parents learn to develop their own ways and strategies to address the demands of parenting these types of children. They learn how to correct their children and at the same time support them. Moreover, they learn how to understand their children and maintain boundless patience especially at this stage where these children are struggling too in finding for their identity. These parents also try to establish communication avenues where their children can easily vent their feelings and struggles through dialogues. These experiences of parenting lead to a realization that parenting styles of children-at-risk has neither set of techniques nor gold standard. It is imperative then that parents of CAR need to be skillful, creative, and be an attentive listener to the unspoken feelings, desire, and struggles of their children. It is therefore recommended that future research may be conducted to determine patterns of parenting and children's behavior in other cities and municipalities with cases of CAR.

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