

Intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations of children in conflict with the law

Jame Bryan L. Batara¹, Kriza Mae Alexa L. Rule², Cristyl Ann P. Bontilao³,
Ma. Gina P. Montederamos⁴, and Bernice Pauline D. McCarthy⁵

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ABSTRACT

Aspirations provide a driving force for people to achieve what they want in life. The researchers aimed to explore the aspirations of children in conflict with the law, being interested to understand how these children aspire in life given the situation that they are in where they are stigmatized in the society. However, studies about aspirations of CICL were limited, so this research explores their intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations. Semi-structured interview was created based on the Aspirations Index. Eleven CICL, ages 9 to 18 years, were interviewed. The researchers found out that they exhibited intrinsic aspirations more saliently than extrinsic aspirations. Aspirations other than suggested in the Aspiration index were also found namely the spiritual and nurturance aspirations. The results imply that CICL still hope to become better individuals. The study provides better understanding on how they plan to live their lives despite having been in conflict with the law. This paper provides a wider perspective for the community towards CICL, and can be used for further studies in relation to aspirations of Children in Conflict with the Law.

Keywords: children in conflict with the law (CICL), intrinsic aspirations, extrinsic aspirations

I. INTRODUCTION

In the development of the human person, children approaching adolescence have needs to grow physically and psychologically. Adolescence is a developmental stage when a child transitions into different changes in the physical, cognitive, emotional and social aspects (Papalia, Feldman & Olds, 2009). However, in making use of these still developing capacities, adolescents and children are less capable than adults in making real-world choices (Scott & Steinberg, 2008). With this and other factors, children may engage in deviant behavior.

Deviant behaviors may also be reflected in violating the law. Republic Act 9344 (also known as Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006) and UNICEF (2005) indicate that a child in conflict with the law is an individual (below 18 years old) who is accused as having violated any of the Philippine laws. These violations include minor crimes and property crimes like vagrancy, truancy, alcohol use,

and burglary (referred as status offenses).

Several factors have been found why children engage in deviant behaviors and even to the extent of committing violations against the law. These include poor child-rearing capacity of parents (Smith & Stern, 1997), less life experience and inefficient information processing (Scott & Steinberg, 2008), and experience of abuse and/or neglect (Kostic, 2013). In the case of CICL, child detention and labelling, as well as creating borders towards their families and the community makes the children have more chances of committing a crime again (UNICEF, 2005). With this, it is a wonder on what could be the factors that can plausibly help these CICL not to violate the law again and ultimately live a flourishing life. In the present study, interviews were conducted to CICL in order to investigate their aspirations in life. This may provide implications on how they and the institutions housing them will be able to address positive change in

1. ORCID Number: 0000-0003-4649-0976, J. B. L. Batara is with the Department of Psychology, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, 6000, Philippines (e-mail: jblbatara@usc.edu.ph).

2. ORCID Number: 0000-0003-0189-722X, K. M. A. L. Rule is with the Executive Boutique Ph., Cebu City, 6000, Philippines (e-mail: kmalexa.rule@gmail.com).

3. ORCID Number: 0000-0003-4469-0595, C. A. P. Bontilao is from University of San Carlos, Cebu City, 6000, Philippines (e-mail: cristyl_bontilao@yahoo.com).

4. ORCID Number: 0000-0001-8455-5035, M. G. P. Montederamos is studying Bachelor of Law at University of San Jose-Recoletos, Cebu City, 6000, Philippines (email: magina.montederamos@yahoo.com)

5. ORCID Number: 0000-0001-9829-8842, B. P. D. McCarthy is with the NVEC-Cebu, Mandaue City, 6014, Philippines (email: Pauline.cebuh@gmail.com)

their lives.

CICL Situation in the Philippines. In the national level, studies have been conducted in Davao and Manila concerning CICL. According to Templa (2004), particularly in Davao City, children considered as CICL are uncared for and are living in the streets, involved in peer groups and in illegal activities. In 2000 – 2002, informational data have something in common about their findings – they were gathered from different institutions of Davao City - Davao City Jail, Davao City Social Service and Development Office, Davao City Police Office, Women and Children's Desk-Davao City Police Office and Tagum City Police. Data revealed that majority of children arrested were male within ages of 9 to 15, and are involved in cases of substance abuse, offences against property, curfew violations, theft and robbery, and shoplifting. More than a third of the respondents were in high school and some have had no formal education. Arrested children were either turned over to social workers or returned to their parents. A more common crime in urbanized areas of Tagum and Davao City is substance abuse. In Nabunturan, Compostela Valley, majority of CICL cases involved theft and robbery, the data is the same with that from family courts. In Metro Manila, majority (89%) of the 706 CICL handled by the Family Courts in 2001 to 2002 were boys. Less than half (38%) of children have only been in high school because majority of them have dropped out by the age of fourteen.

Usually, CICL came from a large or poor family that consists of seven members. These children had unemployed fathers with an insufficient monthly income. Crimes against property, specifically cellular or mobile phones is the most common and is also prevalent in Metro Manila. The second most common offence for girls are drug-related offences. The third most common offence is the offence against local ordinances. Most common places of offences in Manila City are in Tondo and Sta. Cruz, Cubao and Novaliches in Quezon City. It is in Metro Manila Street where most of the offences (59%) took place. Of the 706 children's cases examined at the 22 Family Courts in 2001-2002, almost a hundred (99%) of these children were arrested for the first time.

As Templa (2004) found, studies conducted locally from 1999 to 2001 tells that a majority of arrested children were boys (79%), with an average age of 14.4 years old. This data finding from police and family courts is the same with the studies conducted in Davao City from the month of January to June 2002, and in Metro Manila from years 2001-2002. The reasons why children dropped out of school are either because of poverty or being influenced by peers. Almost a quarter (80%) of

children in Cebu said they were members of a group, thus were influenced to exhibit anti-social behaviors.

The same study mentioned that crime against property, in the form of shoplifting, is the most common offence of children and percentages of the offence against property vary in different courts in Cebu. Less than half of children (31%) committed shoplifting offense in Mandaue City but almost a quarter (80%) in Cebu City. Substance abuse in Mandaue City is 32 percent higher compared to Cebu City. Common places of offences happen around Colon St., SM, and Ayala malls. In Cebu City, CICL experience violence at the hand of police officers during their arrest unlike being apprehended by barangay tanod and security guards. In five custodial centers and those children that were arrested by police in years 1999-2001(from 86%- 94%), were arrested for the first time.

Provided with these profiles, studies conducted mainly focus on the CICL reasons or factors for their offences, their demographics, the children's juvenile system, the process for treatment, their placement. Some also studied constructs on children's delinquency and recidivism but less emphasis was given to children's intrinsic and extrinsic life aspirations, particularly in the Filipino context (e.g., Templa, 2004; Mulder, Brand, Bulles, & Marie, 2010; Luebbers & Ogloft, 2011; Hawkins & Novy, 2011). With this, the researchers looked at how these children aspire for a better life, despite being one who has been in conflict with the law.

Aspirations of Children in Conflict with the Law. Most of the CICL in Cebu who are ready for reintegration in the community are optimistic and motivated in changing their behaviors positively (Save the children UK, Breaking Rules). The change in behavior that they exhibit during rehabilitation is a hint that CICL do still aspire for their life after having been in conflict with the law.

Manzano, Puzon and Trinidad (2006) indicated that depending on their experienced situations, CICL may also have aspirations. As verbalized by some CICL in the same study, they aim for a positive outlook in life, promised to avert their unlawful ways and practice self-control once released, despite having committed offences in the past.

With this, looking into the aspirations of CICL may provide a better understanding and may provide implications on how to best serve and rehabilitate them. Personal life goals or life aspirations are thoughts that organize and direct behavior throughout life (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Goals can be defined as an instrumental motivator of what people desire to acquire in the future (Ingrid, Majda & Dubravka, 2009).

Kasser and Ryan (2001), through their self-determination theory classified life goals as extrinsic or

intrinsic. Personal maturity, emotional relationships, and contribution to the community comprise intrinsic goals. Being wealthy, famous and having a good physique comprise extrinsic goals. Extrinsic goals are molded by positive regard of other people and influenced by culture whereas intrinsic goals arise from the factors that facilitate personal development gearing individuals towards meaningful relationships with other people and the society (Ingrid et al., 2009).

Between the two classifications of aspirations, intrinsic aspiration has a more positive impact towards one's well-being. For example, individuals who are more inclined to intrinsic aspirations develop better understanding and build good relationships with others (Ingrid et al., 2009). Extrinsic aspirations have been found to be negatively associated with well-being (Niemic, Ryan, & Deci, 2009). With this connection, looking into the aspirations of CICL may provide a hint on how they see their lives in the future and may also present an idea of their well-being.

Moreover, containment theory, a classic criminological theory, also indicated that aside from the social forces that influences children to engage in delinquent behavior, inner containments (e.g., self-control) also substantially influences a child's decision whether to engage or not in delinquent behavior (Reckless, 1961). One of the elements of inner containments is an individual's life goal, purpose, or aspiration which can be achieved in a non-deviant manner. Thus, understanding the aspirations of CICL may also provide researchers and stakeholders the opportunity to further understand and help CICL especially in terms of averting potential recidivism.

Children and adolescents still experience deficiencies in areas of decision-making ability, they have greater vulnerability to external coercion, and still has relatively unformed nature of adolescent character. At this stage of development, they are less capable decision makers than adults in ways that are relevant to their criminal choices (Scott & Steinberg, 2008). The researchers chose children in conflict with the law as the subject of the study, for the reasons that: (a) the children who are in conflict with the law are still in their formative years of cognitive and psychosocial development with which the causes of their offensive actions needs to be understood by the community; (b) children are considered as the hope for the future generation, and; (c) crimes against property and substance abuse is increasing and nowadays children are used and exploited because they would not be imprisoned (Tabada, 2010).

II. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative in approach, the present study devised a

semi-structured interview which aims to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic life aspirations of CICLs. An official letter was given to the institutions housing the CICL prior to conducting the interview. Two institutions gave their consent and the interview was scheduled and held in their respective premises. Both the institution head and the participants signed the informed consent.

With the consent of the institutions we tapped, 11 children ages 9 to 18 years participated in the interviews. Respondents in the study were those who had undergone any form of treatment program and were temporarily at the rehabilitation center. They are the preferred respondents for practical purposes as it would be convenient for the researchers to find respondents in an affiliate child rehabilitation center compared to institutions that would only cater for drop-in CICL. This ensured proper monitoring of participants when they are inside an affiliate center. All participants were assured of confidentiality and no personal identifying information was disclosed. In exchange for their participation, the participants were given incentives.

Interview Schedule/Guide. A three-item semi-structured interview (in Cebuano dialect) was prepared by the researchers. These questions were: What are your aspirations in life? What are the reasons behind your aspirations? In what ways can you achieve your aspirations? The researchers speculated that the responses may be related to the seven categories of the Aspiration Index (AI; Kasser & Ryan, 1996) and also how intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations are defined.

The researchers scouted for child rehabilitation centers in Cebu to verify those centers that are housing CICL. Fifteen institutions in Cebu were contacted and asked to participate in the study. Out of the 15, two centers willingly coordinated with the researchers. The other 13 centers did not house CICL, whereas some of them do have CICL, but were already above 18 years of age. The first center housed 8 CICL and the second had 15 CICL both within the 9 to 18 years of age.

After getting the consent and approval, interview was scheduled. Eleven children participated in the individual interview. Participants were told to be honest with their answers and were also encouraged to raise any questions for clarification regarding the interview, and were informed that there are no right or wrong answers. The interview was conducted using the Cebuano dialect. Each interview was recorded and responses were transcribed into a text document to facilitate analysis. The respondents were asked open-ended questions designed to assess their extrinsic and intrinsic life aspirations.

Thematic analysis was used to classify the answers of the CICL. Thematic analysis is a way to identify common

ideas to be grouped into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interview data were transcribed and coded into categories of repeating ideas. These categories were grouped and coded accordingly, based on the 7 categories of Aspirations Index, be it under extrinsic or intrinsic life aspirations. Other repeating ideas were further classified into groups of categories related to life aspirations. Inter-rater reliability was used to check one interviewer's judgment of the respondent's answers per transcript (i.e., two raters analyze the transcript separately). Rater one and rater two then compared their judgment and made decision to accept whether one-themed response fits under a certain aspiration category by having a score of one indicating a reliable judgment rating.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the research presents the different life aspirations of children who are in conflict with the law. A total of eleven children from both two institutions voluntarily participated in an interview session, as these children tell about the things that they want to achieve or want to be in the future.

Throughout the interviews, themes were extracted and were related to the different categories under the Aspirations Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). These categories are namely, wealth, image and fame for Extrinsic and personal growth, relationships, community and health for intrinsic life aspirations. There were also new themes namely Spiritual and Nurturance. Combined themes were also found which represent the use of one aspiration as means to achieve another aspiration. The lines depicted in the write-up are already in translated English language; however, originally the interview was in Cebuano dialect.

Intrinsic Aspirations. In an interview with the eleven CICL respondents, they have given their point of view as to how important it is for them to aspire intrinsically. They have indicated personal growth, relationship, community, and health aspirations.

Subthemes that emerged under personal growth were to pursue one's education, to become a professional, to help oneself and to become a better person. For relationship, the subthemes extracted were to help and gather their family members who were separated from them, and also to have their own family in the future. Subthemes under community were to warn in a good manner those individuals who have intentions of violating the law and to feel concerned about them through encouraging them, as well as giving advice based from personal experiences in order to lessen the likelihood of behaving unlawfully. The theme that fall under health was to live longer.

Personal Growth. A relative consensus among the respondents is observed. All of them gave importance to aspire for personal growth. Having personal growth as the most aspired for is a natural characteristic in any individual to give the best of his or her potentials, bringing about the sense of self, and to have volition (Davids & Roman, 2013). People who aspire for personal development are said to have a greater sense of well-being, thus satisfying their inherent human physiological needs will in turn make them feel happy. One respondent named R shared what he wants to be in his future life.

R: I want to be a fashion designer. (Line 22)

To continue his high school and to be able to proceed to college, E mentioned what he aims to become soon in his life.

E: I will continue. To continue studying, then after it is to become a policeman. (Line 157)

J has given importance to aspire for personal growth:

J: I will do something good in my life. To pursue my dreams. I will change myself. (Lines 38-39)

During the interview, S had his aspiration to personally grow as an individual. He shared how he does not want to be just like the child he was.

S: Drugs, I will do my best not to go back to what I have experienced before like selling drugs. It is nice that you work hard, you work hard for it. (Lines 42-43)

Also, S said further about his goal to continue his studies.

S: That is why I will do my best to go back in studying. (Line 108)

Another theme that emerged under personal growth is from RA. He dreamed to go to other countries and to experience what is it like being there.

RA: To be able to go abroad, that is my dream ever since before. (Lines 22)

It was also observed that the respondents also aspire more meaningful relationships and fulfill the need to belong as young people with aspirations that are more into career, educational and even into life building or

starting a family, transitioning to meaningful relationships and community contributions (Gutman & Akerman, 2008).

Relationships. All respondents gave importance for having a deep connection with their family, with their future family and even with their friends. Pomm (2005) defined that a natural child is dependent to parents and is vulnerable implying the important role that parents play with their children. Whenever parents are granting their children autonomy, motivating them and molding them to be a goal-oriented individual, their children are more likely to aspire for meaningful relationships which in turn lead to a lesser possibility of being influenced with peers and other environmental factors (Cox, Williams, Hedberg, & Deci, 1997). Furthermore, these children shared how well attached they are with their family members, particularly for RO and his younger siblings.

RO: I want to help my siblings like. (Line 3)

Aside from RO, their relationship with their family is one of their aspirations. In their own ways, they want to help their family:

N: To be able to help my family. (Line 42)

V: To also be able to help families and other people. (Line 19)

RA: I want to raise my family. (Line 56)

RA further elaborated why he aspires for his family and shares how deeply connected he is with his family.

RA: They [family] are special to me. (Line 234)
They serve as the ones who encourage me.
(Line 239)

S and J also aspired to have their own family in the future. J is an orphan and was only nurtured by his aunt. The deprivation of his parents may have encouraged him to have his own family in the future.

J: To create a family. (Line 17)

Another aspiration similar with that of J is the aspiration of S. He also dreamed to have a woman whom he will call his wife and to have his own children someday.

S: I aspire for my family, my personal family and to my future family, which I will be with for the rest of my life, that will be my family

soon, that will be my wife too. (Lines 256-258)

Respondents may have different ways of telling the researchers how they are so inclined with their family relations, also with friends, here's another one who sees and wants to repay back the goodness his family has done to him.

JC: Before they were the ones who work hard to help me, to my siblings but at least if I will help them soon I can repay them. (Lines 63-65)

For RE, his family guides him and is at his side which makes him consider his family as his happiness. His relationship with his friends signifies the connection they have as they share each other's emotions.

RE: I will be happy if they [friends] are by my side. They will guide me. (Line 110)

When parents are unable to support or provide for their children, the possibility is their child will find other sources of worth and security from other people or even from other communities (Burns, Homel & Godnow, 1984). This in turn would open doors to having meaningful relationships with other people, emphasizing that it is natural to seek deep connections and establish a sense of belongingness to people in society (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Speculatively, one of the reasons the respondents have the aim to have meaningful relationships with people is because they may have been provided but insufficient parental care and guidance as a child or they may also want to extend a hand to others as they have been helped.

Community. Respondents also aspire to actively participate in the community. Some of them are concerned about their fellow citizens that they want to let people with unlawful behaviors be aware of their actions that can cause harm to themselves and to others. Some also have innate desire to help people not just because they have been helped.

N: If my peers will do something bad, I will tell them. I will share my experiences that it is not good to do it because it will ruin their dreams. (Lines 218-221)

EL and J have similar goals with N. They said that they will arrest criminals to teach them a lesson and to change for good. They will tell those people to live their life as good, righteous, and as legally as it should be.

EL: I will catch them [violators] and approach them in a right way. (Line 44)

J: Catch the bad ones so they will have the chance to change. (Line 23)

RE also had his desire to help by actively contributing good deeds to his community as well as making himself grow as a better individual.

RE: I just want the ambition of helping other people. I just want to help. (Lines 101-102)

To be able to play the role as a productive individual through engaging in activities that promote the community's welfare as a whole, one also has to consider attaining a good mental, emotional and physical state.

Health. There was also an aspiration for a healthy and longer life. When experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness is maximized, the more likely it is to happen that the regulation of health-related behaviors will be internalized, thus having a better maintenance of the behavior change (Ryan, Patrick, Deci & Williams, 2008). Health is a valued aspiration for the reason that it facilitates attainment of physiological needs. This explanation infers that aspiring for a healthy life contributes to a person's happiness and satisfaction of its physiological needs which results to positive well-being.

RA: To be able to live long, that is all. (Line 79)

CICL respondents mentioned intrinsic aspirations related to pursuing their interests, creating deep and harmonious relationships with others, engaging in community contributions and valuing one's health. Moreover, the respondents also had extrinsic aspirations related to money, good physique and being well-known.

Extrinsic Aspirations. Under Extrinsic aspirations are wealth, image and fame where aspirations of CICL respondents were noted. Subthemes found under wealth were to raise their living condition, to work, to have a business in the future. Subtheme for image include being able to bring in good ways one's family name. Subthemes for fame were to be praised by grandparents and be known by them.

Wealth. This aspiration refers to acquiring appropriate resources like money, material properties, and the like. Before these children were tagged as CICL, they have experienced financial problem in the family that prompted them to aspire wealth (Davids & Roman, 2013). As one of the participants who underwent therapy

said that he wanted to have money to help his family, to buy a big house and to have monetary resources by engaging in business or having a job.

V mentioned what he wanted to happen in the future.

V: To improve (Line 48). To buy another house, the big one. You are now rich. (Lines 119-200)

Partly similar with the response of V, through using the skills he learned from his stay at the center, RO wants to start a business to support himself and his family.

RO: To have a business from what I learned here. (Line 143)

For some, they want to have a business through using the things they have learned from the center and some simply aspire to have job and be able to work for financial purposes. However, one child has his own view which is to aspire to go and work abroad because of the amount of salary that he will get than just working here. He even finds and describes the way of living here in the Philippines as difficult.

RA: Maybe because of the lifestyle here. It is really difficult here. That is first, then I could say that I want to go abroad because the salary there is high. (Lines 34-36)

To be successful, wealth and fame were considered as a requisite for self-accomplishment (Kasser & Ryan, 1993). On the other hand, if people may not have the resources people try to do things that would associate their success with being famous (Rojek, 2001).

Fame. As V was interviewed, he shared his aspiration for fame. For him, he finds it important to receive praises from other people and be acknowledged by his achievements in life.

V: So, the family will tell, "Oh, my grandson is very good because he improved". So they will know. (Lines 62-63)

As young as these children are, they already have a notion of valuing how other people perceive them.

Image. Delinquency is said to be associated with social image (Carroll, Hattie, Durkin, & Houghton, 2001).

N finds it important to aspire for image. Basing from his answers, he wanted to preserve the image of his family as well as to pursue what his family have started. He also shared the reason why he wanted to take up

criminology. For him, since most of their family's career was criminology he also wanted to be like them.

N: My relatives and in our family, it [criminology] is the course that they usually take. I also want to take it. (Lines 48-49)

Additional Aspirations. Observed among CICL respondents were other aspirations that go beyond the 7 categories found in the Aspirations Index and we named them spiritual and nurturance. These were themes that the researches deemed to be relevant, but were not part of the Aspirations Index (Kasser & Ryan, 1996). Respondents mentioned aspirations related to religiosity/spirituality in which they recognize a difference in the presence of God in distinct places and the power of prayer. Another is having a peaceful home, or a good environment to live in, and the extent of being ready to go back to their home place and live life at peace.

Spiritual. Two of the respondents have aspirations related to religiosity/spirituality. They both believe God. One believes in answered prayers and the other one believes in the presence of the Almighty in different settings. Religious involvement can have positive psychological effects to the children. Religion can help in the improvement of the psychological health through increased self-esteem, deliverance from anxiety about after life, helping others, and finding meaning in life (Batara, 2015; Chiswick & Mirtchevra, 2010). These children recognize the role of prayer and God in their lives.

RE: There is a difference because when I was in our house there is no God. (Line 188)

V: If prayers are prayed by heart, they will be heard. (Beat boxing) (Line 147)

Nurturance. The environments where these children live include influences of different people that have contributed to their actions. It plays an essential role in influencing the behavior and the thoughts of the children especially regarding their aspirations and attitudes (Singh, 2011). In the same study it was mentioned that individuals who came from miserable home environments during their childhood years are not high in self-confidence and they do not look forward on any achievement in life. This means that the environment is very important in the growth years of the children because the environment serves as the training ground for the children in molding their life and their aspirations are also influenced by what kind of environment they

have.

S aspired to have a peaceful home and found himself not yet ready to go back to his home environment because for him, many things can happen.

S: To have a peaceful house (Line 9). As I can see I am not ready to go back home because I know that staying here [center] helps me learn more and many things will happen to my life. (Lines 11-13)

Overall, CICL showed intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations. Interestingly, it is noticed that there are more themes (with two additional themes) extracted from their responses pointing to intrinsic aspirations. Implications of the present study's findings may point to developing ways in rehabilitating the psychological state of CICL. Change in behavior needs time, and can be reinforced by different interventions starting from the self, such as having self-determination, as well as help from professionals like therapy, and support from family, friends and significant others, which can be helpful in their reintegration to the community (Maruna & Immarigeon, 2004). Both self-determination theory (Kasser & Ryan, 2001) and containment theory (Reckless, 1961) indicate that one's aspirations and goals in life influence the thoughts and behaviors of an individual and eventually can help them not to engage in delinquent behaviors. Knowing and honing the aspirations of CICL can provide us additional insights into dealing with and helping them. As such, programs aiming to develop the intrinsic aspirations of CICL are important in helping them deal with their present and future lives. Multi-stakeholder intervention programs that also include aspirations will be ideal for those CICL who are still confused with how they see and what they will do with their future.

IV. CONCLUSION

Childhood is an important stage in life, wherein a person starts to explore the things in his or her environment, and start to identify the things that he or she wants to have or become. This needs guidance from support systems that would provide for their basic physiological and psychological needs. However, in the case of CICL, some of these needs may have not been met, and have led them to behave against the law just to meet these needs. As consequence, they are stigmatized as offenders. Their hopes of living a good life taken from them and are perceived as not worthy to be treated as normal children. The researchers believe that the CICL have their hopes in life too, and are also worthy to be

heard.

The present study provides insights for the potential of CICL to transform into better individuals. Their lives do not end by being branded as someone in conflict with the law, but can also be someone who can achieve greater things in life. They aspire more for personal growth, relationship, community, health, than wealth, image and fame. Moreover, they also exhibited both spiritual and nurturance aspirations. These aspirations are born out of unfortunate life circumstances and this may serve as a powerful propeller to achieve their dreams.

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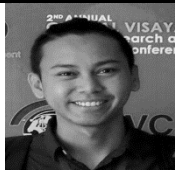
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AUTHORS



Jame Bryan Lamberte Batara is a faculty member and the research coordinator of the Department of Psychology, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, Philippines. He is also a faculty member and the research committee head of the Department of General Education and Mission of the same institution. He is also a member of the School of Arts and Science Research Committee and University Research Ethics Committee. As a licensed psychometrician, he is also a member of the Psychological Association of the Philippines. He obtained his Bachelor of Science in Psychology (2012) and Master of Arts in Psychology with concentration in Social Psychology (2015) at the University of San Carlos. He has earned some units in Doctor of Philosophy in Social Psychology at University of the Philippines – Diliman.



Kriza Mae Alexa L. Rule is currently a Team Leader Trainee at Executive Boutique Ph., a sales and customer service BPO company. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Psychology (2015) from the university of San Carlos, is a registered Psychometrician, and previously worked as an HR generalist as well. She is also an Alumni Facilitator (2016) of the Facilitators' Circle, a professional organization in Cebu, where she participates in training and teambuilding seminars as an associate facilitator in her available time.



Cristyl Ann Ponce Bontilao is a graduate of Bachelor of Science in Psychology at University of San Carlos (2015). She has previously worked as service operations specialist in a health diagnostics company in Cebu City and a customer service representative in a BPO industry.



Ma. Gina Pueblas Montederamos is currently studying law at the University of San Jose-Recoletos. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Psychology at University of San Carlos (2015).



Bernice Pauline D. McCarthy is presently a Human Resource Officer at NVEC Cebu, an ESL company. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Psychology (2015) from the University of San Carlos and is currently studying Masters in Business Administration major in Human Resource Management and Development at the University of Cebu.

