

Collaborative Governance of Juvenile Aftercare in Zamboanga City, Philippines: Implementation Fidelity and Service Delivery Performance for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL)

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A B S T R A C T

Youth offenders transitioning out of institutional care face elevated risks of disrupted education, limited employment prospects, social stigma, and reoffending. In the Philippines, these risks are compounded by resource constraints and multi-actor implementation arrangements under decentralized governance. This study evaluates how local governance structures enable or constrain the implementation and service delivery performance of statutory aftercare for children in conflict with the law (CICL) in Zamboanga City. Anchored in Collaborative Governance Theory, the analysis examines the institutional design, facilitative leadership, collaborative processes, and outcome monitoring conditions that shape aftercare delivery across government and non-government actors. The study adopts a mixed-methods design. Quantitatively, it analyzes administrative records of all CICL discharged from institutional care between 2021 and 2025 (n=171), focusing on aftercare enrollment and recorded recidivism outcomes. Qualitatively, it draws on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with purposively selected implementers from government and civil society organizations (n=20), complemented by document and policy review. Descriptive statistics summarize coverage and outcomes, while thematic analysis identifies coordination dynamics, capacity constraints, and beneficiary engagement gaps. Findings indicate strong system reach and formal compliance with national mandates: all discharged CICL were enrolled in aftercare, and recidivism remained low at 1.1 percent (two recorded cases). However, qualitative evidence suggests that these headline indicators may mask persistent governance weaknesses. While the Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC) provides a mandated collaborative platform, stakeholder participation in actual service delivery is uneven, coordination remains episodic, and continuity relies heavily on the City Social Welfare and Development Office. A fragmented information environment—without an integrated digital case management and monitoring system—limits reliable tracking of service packages, case continuity, and longer-term reintegration outcomes. Youth participation in planning and evaluation remains ad hoc, reducing policy responsiveness. The study concludes that strengthening juvenile aftercare requires moving from compliance-based coverage toward performance-driven governance—through local legal codification of roles and budgets, shared accountability mechanisms, workforce capacity-building, integrated data systems, diversified financing, and institutionalized youth representation

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth offenders transitioning from institutional care face critical challenges that affect their successful reintegration into society. Globally, research underscores the vulnerability of this population due to the disruption

of social ties, limited access to education and employment, and persistent social stigma (Muncie, 2020; Schubert et al., 2022). In the Philippines, these challenges are amplified by resource constraints, fragmented governance structures, and the complex socio-political context of urban centers like Zamboanga City. The government has established aftercare policies intended to

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support youth offenders during their transition; however, implementation and service delivery remain uneven and under-examined (Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development [DSWD], 2023).

Aftercare policies represent a critical component of child welfare governance, encompassing programs designed to support youth offenders beyond institutional walls. These programs typically include psychosocial support, education and skills training, family reunification efforts, and community integration initiatives (Cullen & Jonson, 2017). Effective aftercare reduces recidivism, promotes positive youth development, and enhances public safety (Bazemore & Stinchcomb, 2019). However, delivering aftercare services requires coordinated governance among multiple actors, including local government units, social welfare agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and the youth themselves.

In Zamboanga City, the complexity of child welfare governance grows due to the diverse stakeholder environment and socio-cultural factors. The City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the Juvenile Justice Welfare Council (JJWC) oversee aftercare programming. NGOs and community organizations contribute frontline services, while institutional care centers provide initial rehabilitation. Despite these efforts, limited formalization of roles, gaps in capacity, and fragmented information systems hinder seamless service delivery (CSWDO, 2024).

This research examines the governance and performance of aftercare policies for youth offenders transitioning out of institutional care in Zamboanga City. It focuses on three core questions: (1) How do governance structures facilitate or constrain the implementation of aftercare policies? (2) What is the current performance of service delivery in terms of enrollment and recidivism? (3) What challenges and opportunities emerge for strengthening aftercare governance?

The study applies Collaborative Governance Theory, which emphasizes inclusive, consensus-oriented decision-making involving public agencies and non-state actors to achieve public goals (Ansell & Gash, 2008). This framework suits the multi-actor nature of aftercare governance, highlighting the importance of formal agreements, shared responsibility, and sustained collaboration. Through a mixed-methods approach combining document review, quantitative analysis of administrative data, and qualitative interviews, the study provides an in-depth evaluation grounded in local realities.

Findings indicate that a multi-sectoral collaboration mechanism is formally in place through the establishment of the Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC), as mandated by DILG Memorandum Circular No. 39, s. 2021. However, participation among council members in the delivery of aftercare services remains uneven, resulting in fragmented coordination and

inconsistent service provision. These challenges are compounded by the absence of an integrated digital information system, high social worker turnover, and limited active engagement of partner agencies, all of which weaken continuity of care and case management.

From 2021 to 2025, all released children in conflict with the law (CICL) were reportedly enrolled in aftercare and provided with core support services, and recidivism remained relatively low at 1.1 percent. Nonetheless, the lack of a unified monitoring and evaluation system has led to data gaps, constraining accurate tracking of outcomes and long-term reintegration. While Republic Act No. 9344 mandates the automatic enrollment of CICL in aftercare services upon release from institutional care, persistent staff capacity limitations and workload pressures undermine the quality and sustainability of reintegration interventions. Moreover, youth participation in program planning and governance remains largely ad hoc, restricting the extent to which policies and services are responsive to the actual needs and perspectives of beneficiaries.

This paper contributes to child welfare governance literature by offering an empirical case study of aftercare policy implementation in a middle-income country urban setting. It also informs policymakers and practitioners seeking to strengthen youth rehabilitation frameworks through practical recommendations such as enhancing multi-agency partnerships, capacity building, data integration, funding diversification and institutionalized youth engagement.

2. BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Child Welfare Governance and Aftercare Policies

Child welfare governance encompasses the structures, processes, and relationships through which governments and stakeholders deliver services aimed at protecting and promoting children's well-being (O'Neill 2017). Governance in this context involves multiple actors, including government agencies, local governments, civil society, families, and youth themselves (Lewis and Kanji 2009). Effective governance demands coordination, accountability, and the capacity to mobilize resources to meet diverse child needs.

Aftercare policies specifically target youth offenders transitioning from institutional care, recognizing that this phase is crucial for preventing recidivism and fostering social reintegration (Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2019). The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules) underscore aftercare as a fundamental obligation for member states to ensure rehabilitative support beyond confinement (UN General Assembly 1985).

In many countries, aftercare programs include components such as psychosocial counseling, educational and vocational training, family reunification assistance, and community-based supervision (Cullen and Jonson 2017). These services demand not only resources but also collaborative governance to integrate the diverse

providers and support systems involved (Leung and Poon 2021).

Table 1
Dimensions of Collaborative Governance in Aftercare Programs

Dimension	Definition	Application in Aftercare Governance	Source
Inclusiveness	Involving all relevant stakeholders in decision-making	Engagement of LGUs, NGOs, youth representatives	Ansell and Gash (2008)
Formalization	Clear roles, rules, and agreements among actors	MOUs, policy frameworks, defined mandates	Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh (2012)
Trust Building	Developing mutual trust through transparency and interaction	Regular inter-agency meetings, open communication	Ansell and Gash (2008)
Shared Motivation	Commitment to common goals and mutual benefits	Joint planning and resource sharing	Emerson et al. (2012)
Capacity for Action	Availability of resources, expertise, and coordination mechanisms	Training programs, integrated databases	Klijn and Koppenjan (2016)

Table 2
Challenges in Aftercare Service Delivery and Governance

Challenge	Description	Impact on Aftercare Services	Source
Resource Scarcity	Limited funding and staff capacity	Reduced program reach and quality	DSWD (2023); Schubert et al. (2022)
Fragmented Coordination	Lack of formalized inter-agency agreements	Disjointed service delivery and duplication	Capuno et al. (2019); O'Leary and Bingham (2009)
Social Stigma	Negative community attitudes	Hindered reintegration and	Santos and Alindogan (2021)

Challenge	Description	Impact on Aftercare Services	Source
	toward youth offenders	community acceptance	
Limited Youth Engagement	Insufficient participation of youth in policy processes	Policies may not reflect actual youth needs	Lacson and Mendoza (2019)
Weak Data Systems	Absence of integrated information sharing platforms	Inefficient case tracking and monitoring	CSWDO (2024)

Table 3
Key Components of Aftercare Services for Youth Offenders

Component	Description	Example Activities	Source
Psychosocial Support	Emotional and mental health counseling	Individual counseling, group therapy	Cullen and Jonson (2017)
Education & Training	Access to formal education and vocational skills development	Literacy classes, job skills training	Leung and Poon (2021)
Family Reunification	Assistance to restore family relationships	Family counseling, mediation	Bazemore and Stinchcomb (2019)
Community Integration	Facilitating youth acceptance and participation in community	Community service, mentorship programs	UN General Assembly (1985)
Supervision & Monitoring	Oversight to ensure compliance with aftercare plans	Probation visits, case management	Cullen and Jonson (2017)

2.2 Aftercare Service Delivery: Global and Philippine Contexts

Globally, aftercare services face common challenges including resource scarcity, staff turnover, lack of standardized protocols, and social stigma against youth offenders (Schubert et al. 2022; Bazemore and Stinchcomb 2019). Despite these challenges, well-

implemented aftercare programs contribute significantly to reducing recidivism and improving youth outcomes in employment, education, and mental health (Cullen and Jonson 2017).

In the Philippines, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (RA 9344, as amended) mandates aftercare services for youth offenders, emphasizing community-based rehabilitation and reintegration (Republic of the Philippines 2019). The DSWD leads in policy coordination, while the Juvenile Justice Welfare Council supervises inter-agency cooperation. However, empirical evaluations report inconsistent implementation due to limited funding, inadequate staff training, and weak monitoring (DSWD 2023; JJWC 2022).

As stipulated in DSWD issuances, the aftercare program for children in conflict with the law is envisioned as a comprehensive and holistic package of interventions that extends beyond mere supervision and monitoring. It explicitly mandates the provision of interrelated services, including networking and social mobilization to strengthen community-based support systems; advocacy to promote the rights and welfare of CICL; and capability-building initiatives to enhance personal and family competencies. Educational assistance is ensured to facilitate school re-entry and continuity of learning, while family counseling, self-enhancement services, and social and vocational skills development address psychosocial recovery, values formation, and employability. In addition, psychological and spiritual services are integral in supporting emotional healing and moral development, complemented by an effective referral system that links clients to specialized institutions and resources. Collectively, these services underscore the State's commitment to a rights-based, restorative, and reintegrative approach to aftercare, aimed at enabling the successful reintegration of CICL into their families, schools, and communities (DSWD AO 36, 2003).

The Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, mandates that aftercare services for children in conflict with the law be primarily implemented through community-based programs rather than institutional settings. The law underscores that reintegration is most effective when interventions are delivered within the child's natural environment—family, school, and community—where social support systems can be strengthened and protective factors sustained. By requiring local government units, in coordination with DSWD, LCPCs, and other stakeholders, to provide community-based aftercare, RA 9344 institutionalizes a restorative and rehabilitative approach that prioritizes social inclusion, continuity of care, and the child's best interests. This legal framework affirms that aftercare is not a peripheral activity but a core component of the juvenile justice system, anchored in the community as the primary locus of recovery, development, and long-term desistance from reoffending (RA 9344, 2006).

Local government units (LGUs) like Zamboanga City serve as frontline implementers. Studies reveal LGUs' mixed capacity and varying degrees of multi-sector collaboration (Del Mundo and Castañeda 2020). Stigma

remains a persistent barrier as communities often resist accepting rehabilitated youth (Santos and Alindogan 2021). Youth participation in aftercare programs, though encouraged in policy, remains informal and underutilized (Lacson and Mendoza 2019).

2.3 Collaborative Governance Framework for Aftercare Policy Implementation

This conceptual framework illustrates key elements of collaborative governance applied to aftercare policy: inclusiveness, formalization, trust-building, shared motivation, and capacity for joint action. The framework highlights the multi-actor network consisting of LGUs, national agencies, NGOs, community groups, and youth beneficiaries coordinating through formal agreements and joint planning to achieve effective aftercare service delivery.

2.4 Theoretical Underpinnings: Collaborative Governance in Public Administration

The study situates itself within Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell and Gash 2008), which has become influential in public administration scholarship addressing multi-actor problem-solving. Collaborative governance involves public agencies engaging directly with non-state actors in formal consensus-oriented forums to produce or implement public policy. Its core dimensions include:

- Inclusiveness: Bringing together relevant stakeholders who possess legitimacy and resources.
- Formalization: Establishing clear rules, roles, and decision-making protocols.
- Trust-building: Developing mutual trust through transparency and repeated interaction.
- Shared motivation: Fostering commitment to shared goals.
- Capacity for joint action: Mobilizing necessary resources, expertise, and information.

This framework suits the governance of aftercare services, where local governments, national agencies, NGOs, community groups, and youth beneficiaries intersect. Prior research demonstrates that collaborative governance enhances service integration, improves policy responsiveness, and addresses complex social issues effectively (Emerson, Nabatchi, and Balogh 2012; Agranoff and McGuire 2003).

Figure 1
Collaborative Governance Framework



2.5 Governance Challenges in Multi-Stakeholder Settings

Governance of aftercare requires coordination among heterogeneous actors, which poses challenges in defining roles, sharing information, and aligning objectives (Provan and Kenis 2008). In the Philippine decentralized governance context, overlapping mandates and resource competition complicate collaborative efforts (Capuno et al. 2019).

Literature on network governance highlights the importance of formal agreements such as memoranda of understanding (MOUs), integrated information systems, and capacity-building initiatives to foster sustained collaboration (Klijn and Koppenjan 2016). Without these, collaboration tends to be episodic and fragile, undermining service continuity and quality (O’Leary and Bingham 2009).

Moreover, integrating youth voices as partners rather than passive recipients is critical for responsive governance. Participatory governance models advocate meaningful youth engagement in program design, monitoring, and evaluation, promoting empowerment and ownership (Checkoway and Gutierrez 2006). Yet, institutionalizing such participation remains a challenge worldwide, including in the Philippines (Lacson and Mendoza 2019).

2.6 Summary of Gaps and Contribution

While global literature extensively covers aftercare services’ components and outcomes, few studies focus on governance structures and multi-actor collaboration, especially in middle-income countries’ urban settings. Philippine studies primarily document policy provisions and program descriptions but lack in-depth governance and performance evaluations grounded in theory.

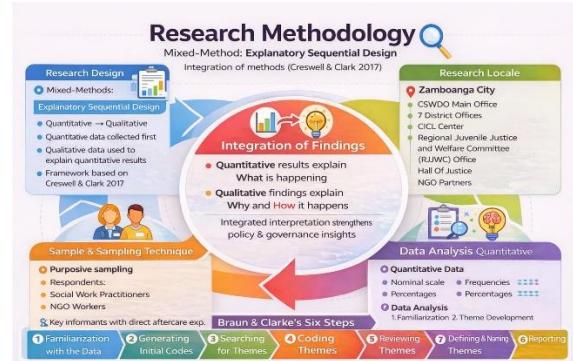
This study fills these gaps by applying Collaborative Governance Theory to examine how governance mechanisms shape the implementation and service delivery performance of aftercare policies in Zamboanga City. It also explores youth engagement and systemic barriers, offering practical recommendations for

strengthening child welfare governance in similar contexts.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Figure 2
Juvenile Justice Research Methodology



3.2 Study Setting

Zamboanga City, a highly urbanized city in the Mindanao region of the Philippines, serves as the study site due to its unique socio-political context and active child welfare programs. The city operates under decentralized governance, with the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) and the Juvenile Justice Welfare Council (JJWC) playing pivotal roles in aftercare policy implementation.

3.3 Sampling Procedures

3.3.1 Quantitative Data Sampling

The study analyzes administrative records of all youth offenders released from institutional care between January 2021 and December 2025, as reported by the CSWDO and institutional care centers. The total population consists of 171 youth offenders, with data on aftercare enrollment, service types received, and recidivism outcomes.

3.3.2 Qualitative Sampling

Purposive sampling selects 20 participants for interviews and focus groups, stratified as follows:

- 10 government officials from CSWDO, JJWC, and local government units involved in policy and service delivery.
- 10 NGO practitioners working directly on aftercare services.

This sampling ensures representation of diverse perspectives relevant to governance and service delivery.

Table 5
Sampling Strategy and Participant Profile

Participant Group	Sampling Method	Number of Participants	Roles/Description
Government Officials	Purposive Sampling	10	CSWDO, JJWC, LGU staff involved in aftercare governance and implementation
NGO Practitioners	Purposive Sampling	10	Frontline workers providing aftercare services

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1 Quantitative Data

Data extraction forms capture variables from administrative datasets including:

- Demographic characteristics (age, gender, educational attainment).
- Aftercare program enrollment status.
- Types of services accessed (counseling, vocational training, family support).

- Recidivism within 12 months post-release (defined as re-offense resulting in institutionalization).

Table 6
Quantitative Data Variables and Definitions

Variable	Description	Measurement/Source
Age	Age of youth offender at release	Administrative records (years)
Gender	Male/Female	Administrative records
Educational Attainment	Highest education level completed	Administrative records
Aftercare Enrollment	Participation status in aftercare program (Yes/No)	CSWDO program records
Types of Services Accessed	Counseling, vocational training, family support, etc.	Program service records
Recidivism	Re-offense within 12 months post-release	Institutional readmission records

3.4.2 Qualitative Instruments

Semi-structured interview guides and focus group protocols cover themes such as:

- Governance structures and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.
- Perceptions of policy implementation effectiveness.
- Challenges and barriers to service delivery.
- Youth participation in aftercare programs.
- Recommendations for governance and service improvements.

Interviews last approximately 45–60 minutes and are audio-recorded with consent.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive statistics summarize enrollment rates, service uptake, and recidivism. Cross-tabulations examine relationships between demographic variables and service outcomes. Logistic regression models assess predictors of recidivism, including program participation and service intensity.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Transcribed interviews and focus groups undergo thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework:

1. Familiarization with data.
2. Initial coding.
3. Searching for themes.

4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Producing the report.

NVivo software supports coding and retrieval. Thematic patterns regarding governance challenges, collaboration, and youth experiences inform the interpretation of quantitative findings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study follows ethical guidelines to protect participants. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from [University or Institution]. Informed consent is secured from all interviewees, with youth participants additionally requiring parental/guardian assent per local regulations.

Confidentiality is maintained by anonymizing data and securely storing recordings and transcripts. The study emphasizes voluntary participation, with the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

3.7 Limitations

Limitations include potential reporting bias in administrative data and challenges in generalizing findings beyond Zamboanga City. Qualitative findings depend on participants' willingness to share candid insights. Nonetheless, triangulation and purposive sampling mitigate these concerns.

Table 7
Summary of Research Design and Methods

Research Aspect	Description
Research Design	Mixed-methods (quantitative and qualitative)
Quantitative Data	Administrative records of 412 youth offenders (2021–2023)
Qualitative Data	20 purposively sampled participants (government, NGOs, youth)
Data Collection	Data extraction forms; semi-structured interviews and FGDs
Data Analysis	Descriptive statistics; logistic regression; thematic analysis
Ethical Protocols	IRB approval; informed consent; confidentiality
Study Location	Zamboanga City, Philippines

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents in-depth empirical findings on the governance and service delivery performance of aftercare policies for youth offenders transitioning from institutional care in Zamboanga City. It incorporates quantitative analysis of administrative data and rich

qualitative insights from interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document review. The presentation follows the dimensions of Collaborative Governance Theory—starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, collaborative processes, and outcomes.

4.1 Quantitative Findings: Enrollment, Services, and Recidivism

4.1.1 Demographics and Enrollment Rates

For the results on aftercare enrollment in Zamboanga City from 2021 to 2025. Out of 212 youth admitted to institutional care, 171 were discharged and all were enrolled in aftercare services, resulting in a 100 percent enrollment rate. This indicates strong system reach and compliance with national aftercare mandates under DSWD Administrative Order No. 36, Series of 2003. However, governance literature cautions that enrollment alone does not guarantee effective reintegration, underscoring the need to examine service quality, coordination, and outcomes beyond access (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Table 8
Illustrates annual breakdowns

Year	Admitted	Discharged	Enrolled	Enrollment Rate
2021	34	37	37	100%
2022	43	33	33	100%
2023	69	32	32	100%
2024	39	38	38	100%
2025	27	31	31	100%
TOTAL	212	171	171	100%

Table 9
Service Uptake

Enrolled youth accessed the following services:

Services	Enrolled	Enrollment rate
Counseling	171	100%
Community Reintegration	171	100%
Other Services	Provided but no data	

The full range of aftercare services mandated under DSWD Administrative Order No. 36, Series of 2003—including counseling, educational assistance, skills training, networking, social mobilization, advocacy, capability-building, family counseling, self-enhancement services, social and vocational skills development, psychological services, and referral services—are reportedly being provided; however, implementation remains fragmented. In principle, children in conflict with

the law (CICL) are automatically enrolled in aftercare services upon release from institutional care, as mandated under Republic Act No. 9344. The major gap lies in the absence of a unified monitoring and information system that can systematically track the specific services received by each child, the continuity of interventions, and reintegration outcomes over time. This lack of an integrated database constrains coordination among service providers and limits evidence-based assessment of program effectiveness, thereby weakening the overall implementation of community-based aftercare for reintegrating youth in Zamboanga City (DSWD AO 36, s. 2003; Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Table 10
Recidivism Outcomes

Within 12 months post-discharge:

Year	Discharged	Recidivism	Rate
2021	37		1.1%
2022	33		
2023	32	1	
2024	38		
2025	31	1	
TOTAL	171	2	

From 2021 to 2025, a total of 171 children in conflict with the law were discharged from institutional care, with only two cases of reoffending recorded. This corresponds to a low overall recidivism rate of 1.1 percent, indicating generally positive reintegration outcomes.

4.2 Governance and Institutional Design

4.2.1 Starting Conditions: Trust and Coordination Baseline

Interviews and document reviews reveal an existing foundation of trust among stakeholders but limited in scope. A senior NGO practitioner notes: “We know each other and can reach out informally, but we lack systemic, structured collaboration.”

There is an existing foundation of trust among stakeholders, although it remains limited in scope and depth. Zamboanga City has an established and structured framework for collaboration through the Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC).

Zamboanga City Executive Order No. KYMY-074-2025 formally reconstituted the City Council for the Protection of Children, strengthening its mandate and operational structure.

4.2.2 Institutional Design: Coordination Mechanisms and Agreements

Though RA 9344 mandates aftercare, no city-level ordinance codifies the role of CSWDO or formalizes inter-agency roles. Coordination occurs through ad-hoc MOUs and collaborative meetings—often unstructured and without accountability metrics. This design gap creates variability in collaboration consistency.

DSWD Administrative Order No. 36, Series of 2003, provides for the transfer of aftercare service implementation to local government units (LGUs).

Republic Act No. 9344 mandates the delivery of aftercare services for children in conflict with the law (CICL) through community-based mechanisms.

DILG Memorandum Circular No. 39, Series of 2021, institutionalizes the Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC):

- Establishes the LCPC in every local government unit;
- Designates the Local Chief Executive (LCE) as its Chairperson;
- Structures the LCPC as an inherently collaborative and multi-sectoral body; and
- Mandates it to plan, implement, and monitor programs for children, including aftercare and reintegration services.

4.2.3 Facilitative Leadership

CSWDO leadership emerges as a driving force in maintaining partnership continuity. Directors facilitate joint planning sessions, manage resource sharing, and mediate disputes. However, frequent leadership turnover disrupts continuity, prompting stakeholders to express concern:

“With each new director, we restart the coordination process.” (NGO representative)

The Local Council for the Protection of Children (LCPC) is led by the Local Chief Executive (LCE).

The City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) has emerged as the key driving force in sustaining partnership continuity and inter-agency coordination.

The CSWDO serves as the primary service provider for children in conflict with the law (CICL), particularly in the delivery of aftercare and reintegration services.

Despite these roles, only a minimal portion of the one percent (1%) Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) for child welfare is allocated to programs for CICL.

4.3 Collaborative Processes and Youth Engagement

4.3.1 Collaborative Dynamics

There is uneven participation among key stakeholders in aftercare and reintegration efforts. Several LCPC member agencies demonstrate limited and inconsistent engagement in the actual delivery of services. Non-government organizations and community partners report irregular participation, largely due to conflicting schedules and the absence of clear, focused agendas during council activities. Children in conflict with the law (CICL) continue to receive only a minimal share of the local government’s mandated one percent (1%) Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) for child welfare.

4.3.2 Youth Voice and Participation

Youth involvement remains limited to occasional consultations. The absence of formal youth representation mechanisms undermines program relevance and empowerment potential.

4.4 Barriers and Enablers to Effective Aftercare Delivery

4.4.1 Barriers

- Funding Constraints: Program continuity and outreach suffer without stable funding.
- Capacity Gaps: Limited training in trauma-informed care and case management affects service quality.
- Social worker (fast turnover)
- Data Limitations: Disparate record systems hinder unified case tracking and outcome monitoring.
- Social Stigma: Community resistance and negative perceptions deter youth reintegration.

4.4.2 Enablers

- Committed Leadership: CSWDO drives coordination efforts and fosters inter-agency ties.
- Multi-Sector Engagement: Joint initiatives among agencies and NGOs support holistic service delivery.
- There is active involvement of the Regional Juvenile Justice and Welfare Committee (RJJWC) in providing technical assistance and monitoring the implementation of juvenile justice and aftercare programs.

4.5 Synthesis of Findings

Trust among stakeholders exists but remains informal and insufficiently institutionalized for sustained collaboration. The LCPC provides a formal multi-sectoral structure, yet the absence of a local ordinance weakens role clarity and accountability. CSWDO leadership is central to coordination, but frequent leadership turnover disrupts continuity and institutional memory. Aftercare delivery is constrained by uneven stakeholder participation, limited funding, and weak outcome monitoring systems. Youth participation and data-driven governance remain underdeveloped, limiting the responsiveness and effectiveness of community-based aftercare.

5. DISCUSSIONS

This chapter interprets the study's empirical findings within the framework of Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell & Gash 2008), exploring how governance mechanisms shape aftercare service performance and youth reintegration outcomes in Zamboanga City. It assesses the interplay of institutional design, leadership, collaborative dynamics, and outcomes. The discussion

also integrates comparative insights, underscores policy implications, and suggests avenues for reform.

5.1 Interpreting Enrollment and Recidivism Trends

While the study records a **100 percent enrollment rate**, indicating strong system reach and policy compliance, enrollment alone does not guarantee meaningful reintegration. The findings show that without **coordinated, high-quality, and multi-service interventions**, outcomes remain limited. Consistent with prior research, youth who receive combined services—such as counseling, skills training, and family support—demonstrate better outcomes than those receiving single interventions. This underscores the importance of **cross-sector collaboration** in aftercare delivery and aligns with evidence that integrated service models are more effective in reducing recidivism (Cullen & Jonson, 2017).

The **recidivism outcomes** of youth offenders who completed aftercare services in Zamboanga City From 2021 to 2025, **171 CICL were discharged**, and only **two cases of recidivism** were recorded, resulting in an overall **recidivism rate of approximately 1.1 percent**. This low rate suggests that aftercare interventions contributed to positive short-term reintegration outcomes. However, governance literature cautions that sustaining low recidivism requires consistent coordination, monitoring, and quality service delivery beyond initial program compliance (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Cullen & Jonson, 2017).

5.2 Governance Structures: Crafting an Enabling Institutional Design

DILG Memorandum Circular No. 39, Series of 2021 formally established the Local Council for the Protection of Children, or LCPC, as a collaborative platform for coordinating child welfare and aftercare services. In Zamboanga City, this mandate was reinforced through Executive Order KYMY-074-2025, which reconstituted the City Council for the Protection of Children. However, despite these administrative actions, there is absence of role clarity and enforcement among LCPC members. As a result, aftercare coordination relies heavily on informal arrangements rather than institutionalized rules. Strengthening the LCPC through local legislation is essential to formalize mandates, improve accountability, and ensure sustained aftercare services for children transitioning out of institutional care, consistent with collaborative governance principles (Ansell & Gash, 2008; DILG, 2021).

5.3 Facilitative Leadership and Governance Continuity

The results highlight the combined leadership roles of the Local Chief Executive and the CSWDO as central to effective collaborative governance. With the Local Chief Executive chairing the LCPC and the CSWDO serving as its secretariat, these actors function as the core conveners

of the aftercare system. They bring agencies and partners together, coordinate actions across sectors, and mediate operational conflicts. This facilitative leadership structure enables trust, sustained participation, and collective problem-solving, reinforcing collaborative functioning and service delivery. These findings align with collaborative governance frameworks that identify facilitative leadership as a key enabler of coordinated and effective public service outcomes (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012).

This aligns with findings in public administration: trust and collaboration persist only when supported by both personal leadership and institutional anchors. Thus, leaders must not only coordinate but also institutionalize practices to sustain policy momentum beyond individual tenures.

5.4 Collaborative Dynamics: From Sporadic to Sustained Engagement

Findings indicate that collaborative engagement in aftercare remains largely sporadic. While meetings and information-sharing mechanisms exist, participation is fragmented and irregular, limiting trust and continuity. Collaborative governance theory emphasizes that durable collaboration depends on transparent communication, shared understanding, and sustained interaction among stakeholders. These conditions are best supported through stable, institutionalized forums with co-designed agendas and shared accountability metrics. Without these mechanisms, collaboration remains procedural rather than strategic, weakening collective problem-solving and long-term service effectiveness.

Studies (O’Leary & Bingham 2009) stress the importance of process rituals, such as regular inter-agency reviews and performance scorecards, to sustain collaborative momentum. Zamboanga’s coordination lacks this structured continuity, leading to reactive rather than proactive governance.

5.5 Youth Participation: From Tokenism to Co-Leadership

Youth involvement appears largely symbolic, confined to consultation rather than shared decision-making. Participatory governance theory underscores that meaningful inclusion of beneficiaries strengthens legitimacy, supports contextual adaptation, and improves service uptake (Checkoway & Gutierrez 2006). Without institutionalized mechanisms—like Youth Advisory Boards—youth remain passive participants rather than empowered co-creators.

5.6 Barriers and Enablers Revisited

Barriers identified—such as stigma, limited budgets, capacity constraints, and fractured data systems—pose significant risks to aftercare efficacy. These reflect structural and cultural challenges that lie beyond administrative design alone.

Conversely, **enablers**—notably leadership and existing collaboration—offer foundational strengths. Effective governance reform must consolidate these strengths, mitigate barriers, and transform practice from ad hoc to systematic.

5.7 Comparative Reflections and Broader Implications

International experiences with juvenile aftercare (e.g., Australia, Canada) show that integrated governance models with dedicated case managers, youth-centered planning, and outcome monitoring significantly lower recidivism rates (Mulvey et al. 2010). Zamboanga’s governance structure mirrors early stages of such models but lacks infrastructure and coherence.

Broader public administration lessons underscore the importance of “joined-up government” for social services with overlapping mandates. Zamboanga’s case reinforces that legislative alignment, leadership, and collaborative infrastructure are prerequisites for effective policy execution.

5.8 Implications for Theory and Practice

- **Theoretical Contribution:** This study demonstrates how Collaborative Governance Theory applies to juvenile aftercare in a decentralized context, highlighting the necessity of formal mandates, leadership stability, and meaningful youth participation.
- **Practical Relevance:** Policymakers and practitioners must prioritize institutional reforms—ordinance adoption, data systems, training, youth engagement—to translate policy intent into tangible outcomes.

5.9 Limitations and Next Steps

While the research offers rich, context-specific insights, generalizability to other cities is limited. Longitudinal tracking of youth beyond 12 months post-release is also needed.

Future research should compare governance models across LGUs, assess digital system deployment impacts, and explore youth-centred innovation in aftercare.

Table 11
Summary Table: Collaboration Continuum & Zamboanga City Implications

Governance Dimension	Ideal in Collaborative Governance	Observed in Zamboanga City
Formal Mandates	Local laws or MOUs defining roles	Absent local ordinance, ad hoc MOUs
Leadership Continuity	Empowered convener, stable leadership	Strong leadership but turnover-prone

Governance Dimension	Ideal in Collaborative Governance	Observed in Zamboanga City
Collaborative Processes	Regular, structured coordination	Irregular, reactive engagement
Youth Participation	Institutionalized inclusion	Informal, limited consultation
Data Systems	Integrated monitoring and evaluation	Fragmented data systems
Outcome Tracking	Long-term reintegration metrics	Recidivism tracked; other metrics limited
Service Quality	Multi-service access, trauma-informed delivery	Partial service mix; training gaps

7. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The reintegration of youth offenders from institutional care into society remains a complex, cross-sectoral governance challenge. This study assessed how collaborative governance practices affect the implementation and service delivery of aftercare policies in Zamboanga City. It drew on empirical data from government records, stakeholder interviews, and youth focus groups, and interpreted these findings through the lens of Collaborative Governance Theory (Ansell & Gash 2008).

Findings show that while Zamboanga City has achieved commendable outcomes in aftercare implementation—evidenced by 100% enrollment of released youth in aftercare services and a low recidivism rate of 1.1% from 2021 to 2025—significant governance and service delivery gaps persist (CSWDO records; Ansell & Gash, 2008). Despite this positive overall performance, service delivery remains uneven due to weak and inconsistent participation of LCPC member agencies, the absence of a formal local policy codifying roles and accountabilities, irregular and largely reactive inter-agency coordination, lack of an integrated data and monitoring system, capacity constraints among service providers, and the limited inclusion of youth voices in planning and evaluation. These structural and process gaps contribute to fragmentation in implementation and constrain the sustainability and quality of community-based aftercare services, even in the context of low reoffending and high enrollment coverage.

Although the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) has taken the initiative in convening stakeholders and coordinating partnerships, service delivery remains uneven due to limited participation of

LCPC member agencies, weak data integration, and minimal youth involvement. While CSWDO plays a central facilitative leadership role, the absence of stable funding and shared accountability mechanisms constrains effective collaborative governance, consistent with the conditions identified by Ansell and Gash (2008).

From a theoretical perspective, the study demonstrates that while Zamboanga City's approach aligns partially with Collaborative Governance principles—particularly in leadership and inclusiveness—it falls short in joint accountability. The findings reinforce the need for strong legal frameworks, coordinated systems, and genuine youth participation to fully realize collaborative governance outcomes in juvenile aftercare.

6.2 Policy and Practice Recommendations

To address these gaps and improve both governance and service delivery for youth aftercare, the following evidence-based and prioritized recommendations are proposed:

6.2.1 Institutionalize Aftercare through Local Ordinance

The absence of a city-level ordinance codifying aftercare weakens accountability and coordination. A formal ordinance should:

- Designate CSWDO as the lead aftercare coordinating body.
- Define the roles of NGOs, schools, barangay councils, and PNP Women and Children's Desks.
- Allocate annual budget provisions for aftercare operations.

This legal mandate will anchor all other interventions and ensure policy continuity.

6.2.2 Establish a Multi-Stakeholder Aftercare Council

Create a formal governance structure for cross-sector coordination, modeled after Inter-Agency Councils. This council should:

- Amend the existing city ordinance to clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations of each LCPC member.
- Formalize inter-agency coordination and collaboration mechanisms to reduce fragmentation and improve accountability.
- Institutionalize arrangements that ensure continuity of aftercare governance and coordination despite changes in local leadership.
- Guarantee the allocation and proper utilization of the mandated one percent (1%) Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) for child welfare, with a clearly earmarked portion for children in conflict with the law (CICL).

6.2.3 Implement Capacity-Building Programs for Aftercare Workers

Frontline caseworkers and staff lack specialized training in trauma-informed and youth-centered approaches. Suggested actions include:

- Partnering with academic institutions and the JJWC for certified training programs.
- Institutionalizing onboarding workshops for new aftercare providers.
- Developing manuals and standard operating procedures for service delivery.

6.2.4 Develop a Unified Case Management and Monitoring System

Disparate data systems across agencies make it difficult to track progress, identify gaps, or report outcomes. Zamboanga City should:

- Digitize case records through a shared inter-agency platform.
- Train all aftercare stakeholders in data entry, analysis, and privacy protection.
- Monitor key indicators such as service access, educational reintegration, recidivism, and psychosocial improvement.

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6.2.5 Formalize Youth Participation Mechanisms

Current youth involvement is sporadic and informal. To ensure meaningful participation:

- Establish a Youth Advisory Board embedded within the Aftercare Council.
- Include youth voices in program design, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Provide leadership training and stipends for youth representatives.

This will enhance program responsiveness and empower youth to become agents of their own reintegration.

6.2.6 Address Structural Barriers through Social Reintegration Campaigns

Stigma remains a major barrier to reintegration. The city should:

- Launch public education campaigns promoting restorative justice and second chances.
- Incentivize businesses and barangay leaders to offer jobs, internships, or volunteer placements for returning youth.
- Recognize successful reintegration stories to shift public perception.

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