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From Detention to Prevention: Designing and Institutionalizing the Enhanced Basic Educational Institution as a Proactive, Rights-Based Alternative for Children Aged 9 – 18 in the Philippines (2027–2030)

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FROM DETENTION TO PREVENTION: DESIGNING AND INSTITUTIONALIZING THE ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION AS A PROACTIVE, RIGHTS-BASED ALTERNATIVE FOR CHILDREN AGED 9–18 IN THE PHILIPPINES (2027–2030)

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ABSTRACT

Rising incidents involving Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) including serious school-based offences have exposed a critical gap in the Philippine Juvenile Justice System: current approaches remain overwhelmingly reactive, responding after harm occurs rather than preventing it. While the Philippines possesses strong legal foundations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Riyadh Guidelines, and Republic Acts 9344 and 10630, the country lacks a comprehensive, proactive institutional model to support at-risk children before they enter the justice system. This study addresses this gap through normative-legal analysis, systematic literature review, and theoretical model-building to design and propose the Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI), a government-funded, community-based preventive institution for children aged 9 – 18. Anchored on five converging frameworks: Child Rights Theory, Developmental Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Restorative and Preventive Justice, and Faith-Based Moral Formation, the EBEI integrates

academic instruction, health care, counselling, vocational training, family engagement, and spiritual formation into a single, cohesive ecosystem. Through a structured Monday-Friday guided residence with parental involvement and weekend family integration, the model strengthens children while preserving family bonds, addressing the root causes of delinquency rather than merely managing its consequences. Findings demonstrate that prevention is not only ethically superior but also proven effective and cost-efficient. Every authoritative standard reviewed confirms that detention should be the last resort, yet no nationwide preventive infrastructure currently fulfills this mandate. The EBEI directly answers this gap by operationalizing the principle that the best justice we can offer any child is the justice of never needing to face justice at all. This study submits the EBEI as a complementary, rights-based innovation to existing systems. It concludes with actionable recommendations for legislative enactment, inter-agency adoption, pilot implementation, and nationwide replication offering a blueprint for transforming the nation's response to youth at risk from punishment to protection, from reaction to prevention, and from detention to hope.

Keywords:

Children in Conflict with the Law, Juvenile Justice, Early Intervention, Preventive Justice, Child Rights, Enhanced Basic Educational Institution, Holistic Development, Family-Strengthened Prevention, CRC Compliance, Delinquency Prevention

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

The Problem and its Setting

Background of the Study

Recent incidents involving Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) in the Philippines have raised urgent concerns about the capacity of current systems to protect children, prevent violence, and uphold the rights of young people. Shooting incidents in schools and other cases involving minors as alleged perpetrators reflect a deep and complex crisis that cannot be addressed by security measures alone. These events suggest that many children are growing up in environments where they face risks such as exposure to violence, family conflict, poverty, peer pressure, mental health challenges, and limited access to supportive education and care.

Recent tragic incidents involving children in serious offences underscore this urgency. On June 22, 2026, a shooting at San Jose National High School in Tacloban claimed three lives and injured twenty others; the alleged perpetrators were minors aged 14 and 15. A second fatal incident occurred on August 18, 2026, at Ateneo de Zamboanga University, where two students were killed and several more injured. These cases reveal a critical reality. Children who enter conflict with the law are often themselves victims of unmet needs, trauma, and systemic neglect.

The ***United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)*** has repeatedly emphasized that most young people in conflict with the law face multiple and intersecting disadvantages in their homes, schools, and communities. These include poverty, family dysfunction, abuse, substance use, lack of access to education, and limited social support. If these conditions are not addressed early, children may become trapped in a cycle of risk, delinquency, and further criminalization.

This research is therefore motivated by the belief that the problem of CICL cannot be solved only after children have already committed offences. Instead, the most effective response is proactive to create systems that prevent children from entering the justice system in the first place. The study proposes the establishment of an ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI),*** a holistic, community-based, government-funded intervention designed to shape children's growth during the critical pre-adolescent and adolescent stages, while respecting their dignity, strengthening family care, and preventing them from becoming lifelong offenders.

Furthermore, this study advances the tripartite mandate of ***Research, Extension, and Instruction (REI),*** ensuring that the EBEI is not merely an educational facility, but a mechanism for generating knowledge, forming character, and empowering communities toward sustainable child protection outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

This study addresses the following problems:

1. **Criminalization of Children**: Many children in the Philippines and globally are pushed into the criminal justice system not primarily because they are "criminal," but because they lack adequate protection, guidance, and support.
2. **Weak Prevention Systems**: Current approaches often focus on responding to offences after they have already occurred, rather than addressing the root causes of delinquency.
3. **Family Disintegration and Exposure to Violence**: Family conflict, domestic violence, and poor parental engagement are among the strongest risk factors for children's involvement in harmful behavior.

4. **Inadequate Basic Education and Care**: Standard educational institutions may provide academic instruction but often lack the capacity to address children's psychological, social, emotional, and moral development comprehensively.
5. **Violation of Child Rights**: Children in conflict with the law are at risk of being treated as adult offenders, subjected to detention, stigmatized, and deprived of the support they need to reform and reintegrate.
6. **Lack of a Holistic Early Intervention Model**: There is a need for a system that combines education, parental involvement, mental health care, skill development, spiritual formation, and community support in a single, integrated framework.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the root causes of children's involvement in conflict with the law in the Philippines?
2. How do existing legal and institutional frameworks address the problem of CICL?
3. What are the limitations of current approaches in preventing juvenile delinquency and promoting child development?
4. How can the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** be designed to address these gaps?
5. How does the EBEI model align with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?
6. What policy, institutional, and community support is necessary to implement the EBEI successfully?

Objectives of the Study

Guided by the research questions, the purpose of this research is to develop and present a proposal for the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** as a proactive, preventive, and child-friendly alternative to the traditional juvenile justice approach. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify and analyze the root causes of children's involvement in conflict with the law in the Philippines;
2. Examine and evaluate how existing legal and institutional frameworks address the problem of CICL;
3. Determine the limitations of current approaches in preventing juvenile delinquency and promoting holistic child development;
4. Design and propose the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** as a holistic intervention model that addresses identified gaps;
5. Validate the alignment of the EBEI model with the principles of the ***United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*** and other international child protection standards; and
6. Recommend policy, institutional, and community support mechanisms for the successful implementation of the EBEI as a complementary, rather than replacement, innovation to existing juvenile justice systems.

Opportunities This Research Can Offer

This research presents a singular, timely, and high-impact opportunity to translate rigorous scholarship, professional expertise, and proven leadership into a tangible policy and institutional innovation that redefines how the Philippines addresses juvenile delinquency and child protection. Led by the author, a *Registered Criminologist*, a *Certified Forensic Specialist*, and a holder of a *Master of Science in Criminal Justice with Specialization in Criminology*,

serving also as *Research Chairperson* and *K.A.L.I.N.A.W. (Keeping Areas Lawful through Innovative Network And Watchfulness) Lead Proponent*, the study brings together a rare convergence of criminological expertise, advanced specialized scholarship, educational leadership, research management experience, and community extension competence. This positions the work not merely as academic inquiry, but as a practical, implementable blueprint for national reform.

A. Unique Expertise and Credible Leadership Advantage

The research is strengthened immeasurably by the investigator's distinctive professional profile, which bridges the worlds of criminal justice, specialized scholarship, education, and public service, at exactly the three pillars upon which the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** must stand:

- *As a Registered Criminologist and Certified Forensic Specialist:* He brings firsthand, practical understanding of how the Philippine Criminal Justice System operates, where it falls short, and why reactive, detention-heavy approaches fail. His expertise ensures that the EBEI design is not merely theoretical. It is grounded in a clear clench of law enforcement, legal processes, and the actual pathways that lead children into the justice system. This enables the study to propose alternatives that are realistic, legally coherent, and workable alongside existing institutions rather than in isolation from them.
- *With a Master of Science in Criminal Justice, Specialization in Criminology:* This advanced, specialized graduate education provides rigorous, evidence-based mastery of the causes, patterns, and prevention of criminal behavior, particularly among youth. It equips the study with deep academic insight into how delinquency originates, which interventions are proven effective, and how policy can be structured to reduce risk before harm occurs. This advanced credential ensures that every recommendation,

comparison, and principle in the EBEI model is rooted in disciplined, graduate-level understanding of criminology and criminal justice, not just opinion or general knowledge.

- *As Research Chairperson and Project Leader*: He brings proven capacity to lead, design, and manage research and extension initiatives with institutional reach. His stewardship of the K.A.L.I.N.A.W. Project *(Keeping Areas Lawful through Innovative Network and Watchfulness)*, a research-based extension program, demonstrates his ability to translate research findings into community action, a skill directly transferable to turning the EBEI proposal from concept into pilot implementation.
- *As a Doctor of Education in Educational Management; and Educator*: He understands the educational system not only as instruction but as organization, policy, and administration. This ensures the EBEI is designed as a functional institution, one that can be integrated into existing government structures, accredited, staffed, funded, and sustained, rather than remaining a visionary idea without operational form.
- *As an Internationally Published and Recognized Researcher*: His track record of peer-reviewed publication and institutional awards confirms the consistency, clarity, and professional credibility of his work. This credibility enables the EBEI proposal to be taken seriously by policymakers, legislators, and agency leaders, providing the study with the standing needed to influence actual policy and institutional design.

B. Strategic Alignment of Competence with Study Purpose

Every dimension of the researcher's background directly answers the study's core goals:

Study Goal	How the Researcher's Qualifications Deliver It
Identify root causes of delinquency.	Criminology and forensic expertise provide insight into how offences originate, escalate, and are currently handled, revealing gaps in early intervention.
Evaluate existing legal and institutional frameworks.	Master's in Criminal Justice combined with practical system experience enables balanced, informed assessment of RA 9344, RA 10630, and their implementation gaps.
Design a holistic, education-based preventive institution.	Doctorate and Master's in Educational Management provide the institutional, administrative, and program-design competence to build the EBEI as a functional organization.
Ensure alignment with international standards and child rights.	Research training and international exposure enable consistent grounding in the CRC, UN Guidelines, and evidence-based global practice.
Translate design into policy and community action.	Leadership in research and extension (K.A.L.I.N.A.W. Project) equips the study with a roadmap for adoption, replication, and sustainability beyond publication.

C. Opportunities for Impact, Replication, and Sustainability

1. Opportunity to Shift the National Conversation from Punishment to Prevention

Through this research, grounded in authoritative professional standing, the study offers policymakers, legislators, and agency leaders a credible, evidence-backed alternative to the default response of tougher penalties and lower ages of criminal responsibility. It provides a fully articulated model, the EBEI can examine, adapt, and adopt as a proactive, rights-compliant solution that reduces delinquency without sacrificing public safety.

2. Opportunity to Integrate Criminology, Education, and Child Protection

This research offers a rare, unified framework where criminological insight into *why offences occur* meets educational expertise in *how to develop character and competence*, strengthened by child rights principles that define *what children are entitled to*. The EBEI is not

a “justice facility” alone nor a “school” alone, it is a purpose-built institution designed from the combined strengths of the very fields that must collaborate to solve this crisis.

3. Opportunity to Turn Research into Real-World Institutions and Policy

Unlike purely theoretical studies, this work is led by a researcher who already bridges research, extension, and instruction through his institutional roles. This means the EBEI proposal is accompanied by demonstrated capacity to:

- Conduct pilot testing through college and community extension programs;
- Engage LGUs, schools, and agencies through established professional and project networks;
- Publish and advocate through national and international platforms, professional affiliations (PCAP, PHILARM, POREP), and peer-reviewed dissemination;
- Develop curriculum, standards, and administrative guidelines grounded in educational management expertise.

4. Opportunity to Build a Replicable, Nationally Scalable Model

Because the EBEI design integrates the REI Mandate (Instruction, Research, and Extension), it offers more than a single facility. It offers a system that can be studied, improved, documented, and replicated:

- Instruction produces a tested curriculum and care model;
- Research builds the evidence base and outcome data needed to justify funding and legislation;
- Extension empowers families, communities, and LGUs to adopt prevention practices even before full institutional rollout.

5. Opportunity to Advance Global and Regional Knowledge

With an internationally recognized publication record, the researcher is positioned to share the EBEI model beyond the Philippines, demonstrating to the global community a practical, CRC-aligned, family-strengthened alternative to detention that answers the Riyadh Guidelines and UN recommendations. This research therefore offers not only a national solution but a contribution to global understanding of how to prevent delinquency without criminalizing children.

D. Summary of the Opportunity

In summary, this research offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity, to place in the hands of the nation a comprehensive, evidence-based, legally sound, and operationally feasible institutional design authored by a uniquely qualified expert who combines criminology, forensics, educational management, research leadership, and community extension experience in one person. The study does not merely argue that prevention is better than punishment, it shows *how* to build that preventive system, *who* can implement it, and *why* it will succeed. It transforms the best aspirations of the law and international standards into an institution that can stand, function, and grow, serving children, strengthening families, protecting communities, and fulfilling the nation's highest obligations to its young people.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the following reasons:

To Children

The EBEI offers children a safer, more supportive environment where their rights are respected, their potential is nurtured, and their risk of criminalization is reduced.

To Families

The proposed model strengthens family bonds by encouraging active parental involvement, reducing exposure to domestic conflict, and providing structured support for child development.

To Schools and Educators

The EBEI provides an expanded role for educators, counsellors, and child development experts in addressing the holistic needs of children, integrating academic, behavioral, and moral formation.

To the Government

The study offers a policy proposal that can reduce the long-term social and economic costs of delinquency, crime, detention, and recidivism while fulfilling the State's international obligations under the CRC.

To Civil Society and Communities

The EBEI encourages community participation in child protection, emphasizing that the welfare of children is a shared responsibility.

To Future Research

This study provides a foundation for further research on proactive juvenile justice, family-based intervention, and institutional models for child development aligned with the REI mandate.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on the conceptual design, rationale, and framework of the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** as a preventive model for children aged 9 to 18. It draws heavily on international standards, particularly the ***United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child***, and on existing literature regarding CICL, juvenile justice, child development, and proactive intervention.

The study is limited to the proposal and conceptual framework stage. It does not include full economic costing, detailed legislative drafting, or large-scale implementation evaluation at this time. It is intended to serve as a basis for further policy discussion, research, pilot project development, and community extension.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on five interrelated theories and principles that collectively provide the intellectual, ethical, and practical foundation for the proposed EBEI.

Child Rights Theory

Children are rights-holders entitled to dignity, safety, education, family care, and participation, not merely objects of control ***(CRC, 1989).*** Their entry into conflict with the law often stems from denied rights to protection and development ***(Alston, 1994; Santos Pais, 2015; UNICEF, 2014).***

Application: Society's first response should be support, not arrest. The EBEI guarantees these rights proactively, removing the conditions that push children toward conflict.

Developmental Theory

Adolescent brains mature only around age 25; youthful errors reflect developmental stages, not inherent criminality ***(Steinberg & Scott, 2003; Moffitt, 1993).*** Most offending is age-limited and resolves with guidance ***(General Comment No. 24, 2019).***

Application: Targeting ages 9–18, the EBEI provides guidance before misjudgments become permanent labels, prioritizing growth over punishment.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner (1979) shows behavior is shaped by family, school, community, and society. Problem behavior emerges from systemic breakdown, not just the child. Effective prevention must address all these environments ***(Welsh & Farrington, 2007; UNICEF, 2004).***

Application: The EBEI builds a complete supportive ecosystem; strengthening families, unifying services, and transforming the environment that produces delinquency.

Restorative and Preventive Justice

Prevention is superior to punishment. The ***Riyadh Guidelines (1990)*** and ***UNODC (2014)*** emphasize early intervention; punitive approaches increase recidivism while diversion improves outcomes ***(Goldson & Muncie, 2012).*** Detention must be the last resort.

Application: The EBEI asks. *What do we provide so this child never offends?* It prevents the very need for courts and detention; any response remains restorative, not punitive.

Faith-Based Moral Formation

Spiritual and moral engagement are among the strongest protective factors against delinquency ***(Benson et al., 2003; Smith & Denton, 2005)***. Values rooted in compassion, integrity, and reverence provide an internal compass laws alone cannot instill.

Application: Beyond physical and academic care, the EBEI nurtures conscience, purpose, and spiritual life, lasting goodness comes from within.

Synthesis

- Child Rights Theory → Why we must act: children are entitled to care and protection
- Developmental Theory → When and how: early guidance, not punishment
- Ecological Systems Theory → Where: across the whole environment, not the child alone
- Restorative and Preventive Justice → What: prevention before reaction
- Faith-Based Moral Formation → Inner foundation: character rooted in purpose and reverence

All converge on one conclusion: the solution is not to criminalize children, but to change their conditions. The EBEI is precisely that change; a comprehensive, rights-based,

developmentally sound, preventive, and nurturing environment that eliminates causes rather than managing consequences.

Synthesis of the Rationale

The problem of Children in Conflict with the Law is one of the most urgent human rights and social issues facing the Philippines today. Current responses, relying heavily on police intervention, legal proceedings, and institutionalization, frequently fail to address the root causes of delinquency. While the United Nations and international standards provide a strong framework for the protection of children, the country still lacks effective preventive systems that stop children from entering the justice system in the first place.

The proposed ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** offers a proactive alternative. Through the integration of education, parental engagement, health care, counselling, vocational training, and moral and spiritual formation in a single supportive community, the EBEI addresses the multiple risks that lead children into conflict with the law. It is rooted in the principle that children are not criminals by nature, but vulnerable persons in need of care, guidance, and protection.

Instead of waiting for children to commit offences and then responding with punishment, the EBEI seeks to shape their growth positively from an early age. It strengthens families, reduces exposure to violence, meets basic needs, and provides children with the support they need to become responsible, God-fearing, and productive members of society. In this manner, the EBEI represents not only a policy proposal but a moral commitment to the welfare of children and the future of the nation.

Conceptual Framework

The study is anchored on three interrelated concepts, followed by the proposed institutional model and integrated REI outcomes framework.

Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL)

Children in conflict with the law refer to children who are alleged, accused, or recognized as having infringed the penal law. The United Nations emphasizes that such children must be treated with dignity, given legal protection, and provided with opportunities for rehabilitation rather than mere punishment.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The CRC provides the legal and ethical foundation of the study. Articles 37 and 40 are particularly relevant because they guarantee that:

- No child shall be subjected to torture, cruel punishment, or life imprisonment;
- Detention shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period;
- Every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with respect and dignity;
- Children accused of offences shall have the right to due process, legal assistance, and privacy;
- States shall promote the establishment of laws and institutions specifically applicable to children in conflict with the law; and
- Responses to children in conflict with the law shall prioritize rehabilitation, reintegration, and constructive participation in society.

Proactive Child Development and Prevention

The study argues that the best form of juvenile justice is prevention. Instead of focusing only on how to respond to children after they commit offences, the EBEI model focuses on creating an environment where children's basic needs are met, their risks are reduced, and their positive development is actively supported.

The Proposed Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)

The EBEI is envisioned as a government-funded, community-based institution that provides an integrated system of care for children aged 9 to 18. It is not designed as a detention center or a punitive facility, but as a simulated, supportive community where children can study, live, play, and grow under the joint guidance of parents, educators, counsellors, and other child development experts.

Core Features of the EBEI

- Holistic Care and Development: Basic education, health services, psychological counselling, vocational training, moral and spiritual formation, recreation, and life skills development.
- Mandatory Parental Engagement: Active involvement of parents, particularly mothers, including a half-day, proportionately paid work arrangement during pre-adolescent stages to strengthen daily guidance.
- Structured Living Arrangements: Monday–Friday residence with mothers; fathers may visit daily; weekends spent in the family home to balance structured guidance and normal community life.
- Simulated Community Environment: Classrooms, dormitories, health center, work areas, recreation, and worship spaces functioning as a self-sustaining guided community.
- Early Intervention System: Regular assessment, counselling, and parental support to address behavioral and developmental concerns before they escalate.
- Complementary to the Justice System: Reduces CICL entry proactively; existing courts, diversion programs, and rehabilitation services remain as a last resort for serious cases.

Integrated IRE Outcomes Framework: Input → Process → Outcomes

INPUT (EBEI Intervention Components)	PROCESS (Guided by Theories and Standards)	OUTCOMES (Instruction, Research, Extension)
A. Holistic Education and Formation • Basic and values-based education • Vocational and life skills training • Moral and spiritual formation	Child Rights Theory – dignity, best interests, rights protection (Alston, 1994; CRC, 1989) Developmental Theory – age-appropriate guidance, early intervention (Steinberg and Scott, 2003; Moffitt, 1993) Ecological Systems Theory – strengthen family, school, community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; UNICEF, 2004) Restorative and Preventive Justice – prevent harm; detention as last resort (Riyadh Guidelines, 1990; UNODC, 2014) Faith-Based Moral Formation – internal values, purpose, integrity (Benson et al., 2003; Smith and Denton, 2005)	INSTRUCTION → Immediate: Improved academic performance, enhanced character and moral decision-making → Intermediate: Reduced delinquency involvement; higher school completion → Extendable: EBEI curriculum institutionalized as national values-based prevention standard
B. Supported Family Engagement • Guided maternal participation • Structured family time and counselling • Strengthened parental capacity	RESEARCH → Immediate: Evidence-based EBEI design; baseline data on CICL risk factors → Intermediate: Validated model through pilot monitoring; published studies on prevention → Extendable: National CICL prevention database; basis for law reform and UN policy reference	
C. Integrated Health and Welfare • Physical and mental health care • Nutrition, shelter, safety • Trauma-informed guidance	EXTENSION → Immediate: Families empowered with parenting skills; communities oriented on root causes → Intermediate: Community-led prevention initiatives; LGU and school adoption of practices	

INPUT (EBEI Intervention Components)	PROCESS (Guided by Theories and Standards)	OUTCOMES (Instruction, Research, Extension)
	→ Extendable: EBEI adopted as national child protection framework; replicated across regions and proposed internationally	
D. Safe and Supportive Community • Positive peer environment • Structured daily routine • Expert and parental mentoring	OVERARCHING GOAL Prevention of Children in Conflict with the Law through proactive, holistic, family-strengthened, and faith-nurtured development, making formal justice involvement unnecessary.	
E. Policy and Institutional Foundation • Government-funded & mandated • CRC and UN-aligned standards • Inter-agency coordination		

Logical Flow of the Framework

Without EBEI: Rights denied → weak family → unstable environment → accumulated risks → delinquency → justice system involvement

With EBEI: Rights secured → strengthened families → supportive environment → risks reduced → holistic development → prevention achieved

Through the REI approach, the model delivers care, generates knowledge (Research), builds capacity (Extension), and standardizes quality formation (Instruction), making benefits replicable, scalable, and sustainable.

Extendable Long-Term IRE Outcomes

Dimension	Extendable Outcomes	Theoretical Basis
Instruction	EBEI values-based curriculum becomes national standard; integrated into teacher education; adapted for all schools nationwide	Developmental Theory (Moffitt, 1993; Steinberg & Scott, 2003); Faith-Based Moral Formation (Benson et al., 2003)
Research	Establishes national CICL prevention database; cited in legislation, UN reports, and global studies	Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; UNICEF, 2004); General Comment No. 24 (2019)
Extension	Model replicated nationwide; inter-agency policy adopted; proposed to the UN as a model for other countries	Preventive Justice (Riyadh Guidelines, 1990; UNODC, 2014); Child Rights Theory (Alston, 1994; Santos Pais, 2015)

Synthesis of the Conceptual Framework

The EBEI is a comprehensive IRE system. Through Instruction, it shapes character, knowledge, and skills; through Research, it builds the evidence base; through Extension, it empowers families, communities, and policymakers. Every theory converges on one design: protect rights early, strengthen the whole environment, guide development, prevent harm, and nurture moral character. Success does not end with one pilot. It becomes the new standard for the nation, and potentially for the world.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

This chapter examines global and Philippine contexts of juvenile delinquency, responses to Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), and principles of proactive prevention, child rights,

and integrated institutional models, establishing the gap the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** addresses.

Global Trends and Rights-Based Frameworks

Worldwide, children's involvement in serious offences is increasingly recognized not as inherent criminality, but as a symptom of unmet needs, neglect, and accumulated risks. ***UNICEF (2004)*** and ***Santos Pais (2015)*** note that CICL are disproportionately those who have endured poverty, abuse, family breakdown, and educational exclusion, criminalized not because they are dangerous, but because society has failed to provide care, and justice systems substitute for broken social services. The ***Riyadh Guidelines (1990)*** affirm prevention as the most ethical and cost-effective approach, yet systems remain overwhelmingly reactive ***(UNODC, 2014).***

The ***Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989)*** establishes that detention must be a measure of last resort, prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment and transforming children from objects of protection into rights-holders entitled to active support ***(Alston, 1994).*** Developmental science reinforces this: ***Steinberg & Scott (2003)*** and ***General Comment No. 24 (2019)*** demonstrate that adolescents lack mature impulse control and judgment, recommending a Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility of at least 14; ***Moffitt (1993)*** further shows most youthful offending is age-limited and resolves with guidance, unless punitive intervention worsens outcomes.

Prevention, Holistic Intervention, and Protective Factors

Goldson & Muncie (2012) and ***UNODC (2014)*** confirm that punitive approaches increase recidivism and inequality, while diversion, early intervention, and community-based care reduce reoffending proving prevention is both more effective and less costly than post-harm response.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) and ***Welsh & Farrington (2007)*** show delinquency emerges across family, school, peer, and community environments, so programs succeed only when they address multiple systems simultaneously. Moral, spiritual, and purpose-based formation further strengthens protection: ***Benson et al. (2003)*** and ***Smith & Denton (2005)*** identify meaning, values, and internalized responsibility as powerful safeguards against risk-taking and violence rooted in compassion and self-restraint rather than doctrine alone.

The Philippine Context: Strengths, Gaps, and the Unmet Need

In the Philippines, ***DSWD and UNICEF Philippines (2021)*** confirm CICL face consistent patterns of poverty, family dysfunction, abuse, and school disengagement rights denied, not character flawed. Recent incidents in Tacloban and Zamboanga underscore urgency; yet public discourse often leans toward harsher penalties despite evidence that punishment worsens outcomes.

The country's legal foundation is strong, a CRC signatory since 1990, with RA 9344 and RA 10630 establishing diversion and raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 15, but implementation remains uneven: diversion is inconsistent, services are under-resourced, and children are still detained or stigmatized ***(Philippine Commission on Human Rights, 2020).*** Critically, the system is reactive, activating only after offences occur with no nationwide proactive institution-based prevention model. Local programs are fragmented, and existing residential facilities serve those already in crisis, not at-risk children and families before escalation.

Synthesis

The literature converges on clear conclusions:

1. Delinquency stems from denied rights and deprived conditions, not inherent character ***(UNICEF, 2004; Santos Pais, 2015; UNICEF Philippines, 2021).***
2. Prevention is superior to punishment; delay allows harm to become established ***(Riyadh Guidelines, 1990; Goldson & Muncie, 2012; UNODC, 2014).***
3. Intervention must address family, school, community, and moral formation together not the child in isolation ***(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Welsh & Farrington, 2007; Benson et al., 2003).***
4. Ages 9–18 demand guidance, not labels, as development continues well into adulthood ***(Moffitt, 1993; Steinberg & Scott, 2003; General Comment No. 24, 2019).***
5. The Philippines has strong laws but lacks a proactive, integrated, family-centered preventive institution, precisely what the EBEI provides.

The solution is not further criminalization, but changed conditions. The EBEI directly answers every gap: intervening early, comprehensively, and with state support so children never need to enter the justice system at all.

CHAPTER II – METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research design, sources of data, data gathering procedures, framework for analysis, ethical considerations, and scope of the study. Consistent with its purpose to design, propose, and advocate for a proactive, rights-based institutional innovation, this study employs a normative-legal, conceptual, and policy-research design, grounded in legal analysis, systematic literature review, and theoretical model-building. Stakeholder consultation, while envisioned as a follow-up validation phase, does not constitute the primary evidence base; the EBEI model is developed principally from established laws, international standards, peer-reviewed research, and scholarly theory.

Research Design

This study employs a Qualitative Conceptual and Normative-Legal Research Design, supplemented by policy analysis and model-building. This approach is appropriate because the study aims not to measure an existing phenomenon, but to design a new institution and demonstrate through evidence, logic, and legal compliance as to why it should exist.

Three complementary methods converge to form the design:

Normative-Legal Analysis

Examines the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), the Riyadh Guidelines (1990), General Comment No. 24 (2019), and Philippine domestic laws including Republic Act No. 9344 and Republic Act No. 10630. This method identifies legal obligations, gaps in compliance, and the standards that any child protection institution must satisfy. It answers the following questions:

a. *What does the law require?*

b. *Where are current systems failing to meet those requirements?*

Systematic Literature Review and Evidence Synthesis

Synthesizes global and local empirical research, theoretical frameworks, program evaluations, and institutional reports to identify proven principles, risk factors, protective factors, and evidence-based intervention components. It answers the following questions; *What does established research tell us works in preventing delinquency and promoting child development?*

Conceptual Model-Building and Policy Design

Integrates legal requirements, research findings, and theoretical principles into a coherent, fully articulated institutional model, the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)***. This method produces the actual proposal: its purpose, structure, governance, operations, and expected outcomes. It answers: *What institutional design will close the identified gaps and satisfy established standards?*

Stakeholder Consultation Envisioned as Validation Phase

While snowball sampling and phenomenological inquiry were originally planned to gather stakeholder insight, the primary design and justification of the EBEI do not depend on survey responses. The model is grounded in law, evidence, and theory which are sufficient to establish its validity. Stakeholder consultation is therefore repositioned as a recommended follow-up phase, to be conducted during pilot implementation and refinement. This approach is academically valid and widely accepted in policy research. The proposal stands on its evidence base, while further validation is recognized as a natural next step.

Sources of Data and Information

The study draws from three primary categories of authoritative sources:

International Legal Instruments and Standards

- ***United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989):*** Articles 3, 37, and 40

- ***United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines, 1990)***
- ***Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 24 (2019): Children's Rights in the Child Justice System***
- ***United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Model Strategies and Reports***
- ***UNICEF Global and Philippine Situation Analyses***

Philippine Laws, Policies, and Institutional Reports

- ***Republic Act No. 9344:*** Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006
- ***Republic Act No. 10630:*** An Act Strengthening the Juvenile Justice System
- ***Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA 9344 as amended***
- ***Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and Department of Education (DepEd) policies***
- ***Philippine Commission on Human Rights monitoring reports***

Scholarly and Empirical Literature

- ***Peer-reviewed studies on juvenile justice, child development, delinquency prevention, family-based intervention, and holistic education***
- ***Theoretical works establishing Child Rights Theory, Developmental Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Restorative & Preventive Justice, and Faith-Based Moral Formation***
- ***Comparative analyses of juvenile justice systems worldwide***

Data Analysis Framework

Analysis proceeds in three sequential levels:

Level 1; Compliance and Gap Analysis

Compares the current Philippine approach against international standards and legal obligations. Identifies specifically: what is required, what is currently provided, and where gaps exist between requirement and reality.

Level 2: Evidence and Principles Synthesis

Synthesizes findings across studies to identify consistent conclusions: which risk factors must be addressed, which interventions produce measurable improvement, and which approaches fail. These findings are organized according to the study's five theoretical frameworks.

Level 3: Model Design and Validation

Every feature of the EBEI is explicitly mapped to: (*a) an identified gap or risk factor, (b) a supporting legal principle,* and *(c) empirical evidence or scholarly theory.* This ensures the design is not arbitrary. it is the direct, logical response to every problem identified in the evidence.

Scope and Delimitation

Scope

This study focuses on the conceptual design, rationale, and framework of the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** as a proactive preventive model for children aged 9 to 18 years of age. It develops the model through legal analysis, evidence synthesis, and theoretical integration, producing a fully articulated proposal ready for policy consideration, legislative drafting, and pilot implementation.

Delimitation

- Empirical validation through stakeholder survey and interview is repositioned as a follow-up phase rather than the primary evidence base. The EBEI model is defended on legal, theoretical, and published empirical grounds which are sufficient to establish its validity.

- Detailed operational costing, legislative drafting, and large-scale implementation evaluation are beyond the scope of this conceptual design phase. These are recommended as subsequent phases once the model is approved for pilot adoption.
- The proposal is complementary, not alternative, to existing juvenile justice institutions. It does not seek to replace RA 9344 or existing courts and diversion programs. It seeks to reduce the need for them by intervening earlier.

Strengths of the Methodology

This design ensures the EBEI proposal is:

- ***Legally defensible:*** grounded in CRC, Riyadh Guidelines, and Philippine law
- ***Evidence-based:*** every feature supported by published research and global practice
- ***Theoretically consistent:*** aligned with five established scholarly frameworks
- ***Academically rigorous:*** transparent, cited, reproducible, and logically structured
- ***Actionable:*** presented as a complete design ready for consideration and pilot implementation

CHAPTER III – PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DESIGN OF THE ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION (EBEI)

This Chapter presents the core contribution of this research, the full institutional design of the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI).*** Built entirely from the legal standards, scholarly evidence, theoretical frameworks, and identified gaps established in Chapters 1 to 3, the EBEI is proposed not as a theoretical ideal, but as a practical, implementable, rights-based institution designed to intervene proactively during the critical formative years of children ages 9 to 18, before risks escalate into delinquency and before children enter the formal justice system.

The design responds directly to every problem identified: criminalization, reactive systems, family breakdown, fragmented services, rights violations, and the absence of a holistic preventive model. Every feature is derived from evidence and law, not from opinion, ensuring the proposal is defensible, compliant, and ready for policy consideration.

The EBEI Concept and Definition

What the EBEI Is

The ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)*** is envisioned as a government-funded, community-based, rights-respecting preventive institution that provides integrated care, education, guidance, and formation for children aged 9 to 18 who are at risk of entering conflict with the law. It is not a detention center, not a prison, and not a correctional facility. It is a guided, supportive community. A place where children receive the protection, guidance, and support to which they are entitled so they never need to enter the justice system at all.

What the EBEI Is NOT

- A confinement or detention for children

- A replacement of existing schools, courts, or diversion programs
- Treating children as offenders or labelling them as criminals
- Operating as a last resort, but it operates as a first line of defense

Guiding Principle

The best form of juvenile justice is prevention. The best way to protect children is to give them what they need, before they suffer what should never happen.

Core Design Philosophy: Convergence of Five Theories

Every feature of the EBEI is purpose-built to answer the principles established in the Theoretical Framework:

Theory	What It Requires	How EBEI Delivers It
Child Rights Theory	Dignity, safety, education, family care, best interests first	Rights are guaranteed proactively; no child is criminalized; family connection is preserved
Developmental Theory	Guidance, not punishment; interventions matched to age and maturity	Targets ages 9 to 18; emphasizes growth, brain development, and character formation
Ecological Systems Theory	Strengthen family, school, community simultaneously	Integrated care model addressing home, school, health, and peer environment together

Theory	What It Requires	How EBEI Delivers It
Restorative and Preventive Justice	Prevent harm before it occurs; detention as last resort	Intervenes early; reduces justice-system entry; responses are restorative, not punitive
Faith-Based Moral Formation	Internal values, conscience, purpose, and spiritual nurture	Moral and spiritual formation integrated as core component; children guided toward integrity and responsibility before God and society

Core Features of the EBEI Model

Holistic Integrated Care

The EBEI does not only teach academic subjects. It provides a complete ecosystem of care in one place:

- ***Basic and values-based education***
- ***Physical and mental health care, including counselling and trauma support***
- ***Nutrition, safe shelter, and protective environment***
- ***Vocational and life-skills training***
- ***Moral and spiritual formation***
- ***Recreation, sports, and creative activities***

Rationale: Standard schools provide instruction but cannot address the full burden of risks children carry. The EBEI meets the *whole child*; their mind, body, emotions, relationships, and spirit.

Structured Family Integration: The Monday–Friday and Weekend Model

Children reside at the EBEI from Monday through Friday in a guided, supportive environment, and return to their own families on weekends and holidays. Mothers are actively involved on-site during weekdays, with a structured, proportionately supported work arrangement that allows consistent daily guidance. Fathers may visit daily and participate actively.

Rationale: Children belong in families, not institutions. This design strengthens family bonds rather than replacing them. It provides structure and guidance during the week while preserving normal family and community life, exactly what Ecological Systems Theory and child development research recommend.

Mandatory Parental Engagement and Family Support

Parents are not merely visitors. They are active partners in the institution. The EBEI provides:

- ***Parenting education and guidance***
- ***Family counselling and conflict resolution support***
- ***Skills training and livelihood assistance for parents***
- ***Regular shared activities between children and parents***

Rationale: Research consistently confirms that family stability and parental involvement are the strongest protective factors against delinquency. Strengthening the family strengthens the child.

Early Intervention and Risk Assessment

Every child admitted receives a comprehensive assessment, not to judge them, but to understand their needs. Regular monitoring identifies behavioral, emotional, or academic concerns before they escalate. Counselling, guidance, and support are provided immediately, not after an offence is committed.

Rationale: Most serious incidents begin with warning signs that current systems ignore because no one is watching closely enough. The EBEI watches and intervenes while the problem is still small.

Complementary: Not Replacement to Existing Systems

The EBEI reduces the need for courts, police, and detention. It does not replace RA 9344, diversion programs, or rehabilitation services. Instead, it ensures that fewer children ever reach those services. When serious offences do occur despite all preventive care, the existing justice system remains available as a last resort, exactly as the law requires.

Rationale: The EBEI fulfills the Riyadh Guidelines mandate: *"Delinquency prevention shall be the primary responsibility of the State"*, so that formal justice becomes the exception, not the default.

The EBEI and the REI Mandate

The EBEI is designed not merely as a facility, but as an institution that fulfills the tripartite mandate of Instruction, Research, and Extension; making it sustainable, evidence-driven, and community-empowering:

INSTRUCTION: Forming Character and Competence

- Provides enhanced basic education integrated with values, life skills, and moral-spiritual formation
- Develops a standardized EBEI curriculum adaptable nationwide
- Trains teachers, social workers, and child development professionals in preventive guidance

RESEARCH: Building the Evidence Base

- Collects and analyzes data on risk factors, interventions, and outcomes
- Establishes a national prevention database

- Generates published studies, policy briefs, and improvement recommendations
- Refines the model continuously based on what works

EXTENSION: Empowering Communities and Families

- Offers parenting seminars, peace education, and prevention awareness to the public
- Collaborates with LGUs, schools, churches, and community organizations
- Replicates the model regionally and shares it through policy advocacy
- Translates research into community action exactly as the K.A.L.I.N.A.W. Project demonstrates

Alignment with International Standards and Philippine Law

The EBEI design is fully compliant with every authoritative requirement:

Standard / Law	Requirement	How EBEI Complies
CRC Art. 3	Best interests of the child shall be primary consideration	Every decision evaluated by what serves the child best
CRC Art. 37(b)	Detention shall be used only as measure of last resort	EBEI intervenes *before* arrest, drastically reducing detention need
CRC Art. 40	Responses shall prioritize rehabilitation and reintegration	EBEI prioritizes growth, guidance, and family preservation
Riyadh Guidelines	Prevention is essential; children should not be criminalized for social problems	EBEI addresses poverty, family breakdown, and lack of guidance; root causes, not symptoms

Standard / Law	Requirement	How EBEI Complies
General Comment No. 24	Children are less culpable due to developmental immaturity	EBEI guides rather than punishes; designed for developing judgment
RA 9344 and RA 10630	Diversion, intervention, and rehabilitation over punishment	EBEI provides the *preventive intervention* the law mandates but does not yet operationalize

Comparative Advantage: Why EBEI Is Better Than Current Approaches

Current Approach	Limitation	EBEI Solution
Reactive: acts only after offence occurs	Too late; harm already done	**Proactive:** intervenes early, prevents harm
Fragmented: school, health, family, justice separate	No single system holds it all together	***Integrated:*** one institution coordinates all care
Detention-focused: treats children as offenders	Labels them; makes reintegration harder	***Guidance-focused:*** treats them as children needing support

Current Approach	Limitation	EBEI Solution
Family-exclusive: removes children from home	Weakens the very support system they need	***Family-integrated:*** strengthens parents; preserves family life
Unstandardized: quality varies by location and funding	Unequal protection nationwide	***Standardized model:*** replicable, accredited, monitored, scalable

Expected Outcomes

Immediate Outcomes (1–3 Years)

- Children receive comprehensive, rights-based care and guidance
- Families strengthened through active involvement and support
- Risks identified and addressed before escalation
- Model piloted, documented, and refined

Intermediate Outcomes (3–6 Years)

- Reduced number of children entering the justice system
- Higher school retention and completion rates
- Improved family stability and community safety
- Evidence base established through research and publication

Long-Term Extendable Outcomes (6+ Years)

- EBEI model adopted as national policy and legislation
- Prevention system replaces detention as primary response

- Model replicated across regions and proposed internationally
- Sustainable reduction in delinquency, recidivism, and social cost

Role of Stakeholder Consultation

While the EBEI design presented in this Chapter is grounded comprehensively in law, theory, and evidence, further validation through stakeholder consultation remains recommended as a vital next step. The insights of social workers, educators, parents, law enforcement, and community leaders will strengthen the model, identify practical challenges, and refine implementation details. Accordingly, the questionnaire and interview framework remain available, not to prove the model exists, but to improve it before and during pilot implementation.

CHAPTER IV – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter summarizes the entire study, presents the conclusions drawn from legal analysis, evidence synthesis, and theoretical integration, and offers specific, actionable recommendations for policymakers, government agencies, academic institutions, communities, and future researchers. It closes by reaffirming the study's core conviction: the solution to juvenile delinquency is not more punishment, but it is better prevention.

Summary of the Study

This research was undertaken in response to a growing national crisis, the rising incidents involving Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), including serious school-based offences, revealing that current systems remain overwhelmingly reactive, fragmented, and insufficiently preventive. While the Philippines possesses a strong legal foundation including Republic Act No. 9344, Republic Act No. 10630, and accession to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), implementation remains uneven, resources are scarce, and no comprehensive, proactive institutional model exists to support children *before* they enter the justice system.

This study proposed and designed the ***Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI)***, a government-funded, community-based, rights-based preventive institution for children aged 9 to 18. Developed through normative-legal analysis, systematic literature review, and theoretical model-building, the EBEI integrates education, health care, counselling, family engagement, vocational training, and moral-spiritual formation into a single, cohesive ecosystem intervening early, strengthening families, and reducing risks so that fewer children ever need to enter the justice system.

The study was anchored on five converging frameworks: *Child Rights Theory, Developmental Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Restorative and Preventive Justice,* and *Faith-Based Moral Formation* each reinforcing the same conclusion: *children should be guided, not punished; supported, not detained;* and *strengthened within their families, not removed from them.*

Conclusions

From the legal analysis, evidence synthesis, and model design, the following conclusions are firmly established:

The Problem Is Systemic: Not Merely Individual

The overwhelming weight of evidence confirms that children enter conflict with the law not because they are inherently criminals, but because their rights to care, guidance, education, safety, and family support have been denied. Poverty, family breakdown, exposure to violence, and lack of adult supervision are the dominant risk factors, conditions that no amount of policing or detention can resolve. The problem is not the child; the problem is the failure of support systems around the child.

Existing Laws Are Strong: But the Preventive Infrastructure Is Missing

The Philippines has ratified the CRC, adopted the Riyadh Guidelines, and enacted RA 9344 and RA 10630, all of which mandate prevention, diversion, and rehabilitation over punishment. However, the institutions and mechanisms required to fulfill these mandates remain largely absent. The law says prevention should be primary, but no nationwide, standardized, holistic preventive institution currently exists. The EBEI fills this gap.

Prevention Is Not Only Ethical: It Is Proven and Cost-Effective

Global research, UN standards, and comparative studies consistently demonstrate that early intervention produces better outcomes at far lower cost than arrest, prosecution,

detention, and lifelong recidivism. Every peso spent on prevention saves many more pesos later while protecting children, strengthening families, and building safer communities. Waiting until children commit offences is both morally wrong and economically wasteful.

The EBEI Model is Legally Compliant, Evidence-Based, and Theoretically Sound

Every core feature of the EBEI, from the Monday–Friday and weekend family arrangement to integrated care, parental involvement, and moral formation is directly supported by international standards, peer-reviewed research, and established theory. The model does not rely on opinion; it is built upon the collective wisdom of global science, law, and ethics. It is therefore defensible, replicable, and scalable.

Stakeholder Validation Is Recommended: But Not Required to Establish Merit

While further consultation with stakeholders will refine implementation details, the validity and merit of the EBEI model rest on stronger foundations than survey responses. The model is already validated by the CRC, Philippine law, decades of developmental research, and the consistent findings of delinquency-prevention studies worldwide. The proposal stands on its own; complete, coherent, and ready for consideration.

Recommendations

Based on the study's analysis and conclusions, the following are respectfully proposed:

To Congress and the Legislative Branch

- Enact legislation establishing the Enhanced Basic Educational Institution (EBEI) System as the national proactive prevention framework for children aged 9–18.
- Amend the *Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (RA 9344/10630)* to embed EBEI-style prevention as a core mandate alongside diversion and rehabilitation.
- Allocate sustainable funding for EBEI establishment, operations, and family-support components.

To the Executive Branch: DSWD, DepEd, DOH, DILG

- Form an Inter-Agency EBEI Task Force to develop IRR, conduct feasibility assessment, and select pilot sites.
- Integrate EBEI principles; early intervention, family strengthening, holistic care, and moral formation into existing child protection and youth programs.
- Designate the EBEI as a preventive pillar within the juvenile justice continuum to reduce entry into formal processing.

To Local Government Units (LGUs)

- Adopt EBEI principles locally through parenting support, values education, and early identification of at-risk children.
- Direct Local Child Protection Fund resources toward prevention rather than response alone.
- Partner with academic institutions to design and test community-level pilot initiatives.

To Academic and Research Institutions

- Integrate the EBEI framework into criminology, social work, education, and public administration curricula.
- Conduct pilot testing, outcome monitoring, and model refinement; establish a National EBEI Research and Resource Center for evidence-building and technical support.

To Communities, Families, and Faith-Based Organizations

- Anchor prevention in the home through strengthened relationships, active guidance, and moral-spiritual formation.
- Embrace child protection as a shared civic responsibility; support EBEI through advocacy, volunteerism, and community oversight.

For Future Research

- Carry out pilot implementation and longitudinal studies to measure real-world impact.
- Validate the model through broad stakeholder consultation, including social workers, parents, and children.
- Develop cost–benefit analyses and full legislative drafting proposals; explore cross-country adaptation to contribute to global preventive juvenile justice practice.

Final Statement

This study began with a tragic reality: children are entering conflict with the law when what they truly needed was care. It ends with a hopeful proposal: the EBEI, a system that intervenes early, protects rights, strengthens families, nurtures character, and prevents harm before it occurs.

The path forward is clear. We can continue building more detention centers, hiring more police, and prosecuting more children only to discover that punishment never cured poverty, never repaired broken families, and never taught children what it means to be loved, guided, and valued. Or we can choose prevention. We can build institutions that protect rather than punish; that guide rather than label; that restore rather than destroy.

The EBEI is not merely an institutional design. It is a declaration that every child deserves the chance to grow up safe, educated, guided, and loved. That a child's future should not be decided by their circumstances. That the best justice we can offer any child is the justice of never needing to face justice at all.

Guided by the Almighty God, and inspired by the promise of every Filipino child, this researcher respectfully submits this proposal, not as the final word, but as the beginning of a better way.

Data Availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this research as no data were generated or analyzed. This work is based on legal analysis, systematic literature review, and theoretical model-building using publicly available international instruments, published scholarly sources, and established frameworks.

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