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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### EXPLORING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT'S IMPLEMENTATION OF CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES

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#### Abstract

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is fundamentally important in addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable individuals through its Crisis Intervention Services (CIS). This study aims to explore the challenges and opportunities encountered in the implementation of CIS programs systematically. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research seeks to provide insightful analyses regarding the efficiency of the program, identify existing bottlenecks, and highlight areas warranting enhancement. The study will analyze quantitative data insights gathered from interviews and focus groups with social workers and beneficiaries. This comprehensive approach aims to uncover specific factors that may impede effective service delivery, such as resource constraints, training deficiencies, and the need for improved coordination among various agencies. The ultimate goal of this research is to contribute to the refinement of service delivery within the DSWD, thereby addressing identified gaps in the current framework. The findings are expected to lead to actionable recommendations that enhance the overall support provided to individuals in crisis, ensuring that their needs are met in a timely and effective manner.

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#### Introduction:-

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) plays a vital role in providing support to vulnerable populations during crises, including natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics. Crisis Intervention Services (CIS) are a key component of DSWD's response, offering immediate assistance to those affected. To enhance the effectiveness of CIS, it is important to address potential challenges in their implementation. One area for improvement is the rapid mobilization of resources and personnel during emergencies. Governments can often mitigate the impact of economic crisis on poverty-stricken families and individuals through social protection programs.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the lead agency in the implementation of social welfare, social protection and anti-poverty programs, projects and services such as the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program as a form of augmentation support to the local government units (LGUs). To further streamline the implementation of AICS under the protective services program, Memorandum Circular No. 06 series of 2023, entitled the Amendment to the MC 16 s 2022 "Revised Guidelines on the Implementation of the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation" was issued.

By strengthening logistical planning and preparedness, the DSWD can better equip itself to reach affected areas quickly and efficiently. Additionally, tailoring aid to meet the diverse needs of individuals and communities can significantly improve service delivery. By prioritizing the unique requirements of vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, DSWD can ensure that assistance is both appropriate and impactful. Investing in staff training focused on communication and cultural sensitivity will help bridge gaps and foster stronger connections with those in need. Collaboration with various stakeholders presents another opportunity to optimize DSWD's response. By fostering partnerships with local government units, non-governmental organizations, and international agencies, the DSWD can create a more coordinated approach, minimizing duplication of efforts and maximizing the overall effectiveness of the response. Finally, it is essential to consider the long-term recovery of communities in the aftermath of crises. Integrating psychosocial support, livelihood programs, and infrastructure rebuilding initiatives into the overall strategy will help ensure that individuals and communities not only recover but also thrive in the wake of such events. By focusing on these constructive pathways, the DSWD can strengthen its Crisis Intervention Services and make a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable populations during challenging times.

Generally, the study aimed to explore the challenges and opportunities encountered in the implementation of DSWD-CIS program in a systematic manner. Specifically, it aimed to (1) determine the demographic profile of the beneficiaries in terms of age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, monthly family income, occupation, number of members in the family, and location of residence; (2) determine the assistance availed by the beneficiaries; and (3) know the extent of satisfaction of beneficiaries on the availed assistance being provided to them by the DSWD-CIS, Koronadal City in terms of service quality along tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

### **Review of Related Literature:-**

The literature on crisis intervention services highlights the crucial role of social welfare departments in mitigating the immediate effects of crises on individuals and communities. Crisis intervention typically involves providing immediate assistance, offering psychological first aid, connecting people with necessary resources, and stabilizing their situation to prevent further harm (Roberts, 2005). The effectiveness of such interventions relies heavily on the timely delivery of services, the availability of trained professionals, and the coordination among various agencies and organizations.

Several studies have identified common challenges faced by social welfare agencies in implementing crisis intervention services. According to McGrath (2007), one of the primary obstacles is the limited availability of resources, including funding, staff, and facilities. In many instances, crisis intervention services are underfunded and understaffed, leading to delays in response times and the inability to provide comprehensive assistance. Additionally, the lack of adequate training for personnel can result in ineffective interventions or the failure to address the underlying causes of crises (Hobfoll et al., 2007).

Furthermore, systemic issues, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of inter-agency coordination, have been identified as significant barriers to effective crisis response. According to Brown and Harris (2007), the fragmentation of services within social welfare systems often results in gaps in service delivery, with individuals falling through the cracks due to poor communication and coordination among different levels of government and non-governmental organizations. This lack of integration can lead to delays in providing crucial services, including mental health support, emergency shelter, and legal aid.

On the other hand, there are also opportunities for improving the delivery of crisis intervention services. Studies suggest that enhancing community involvement in the planning and implementation of services can lead to more effective interventions. By engaging local leaders, community organizations, and affected individuals in decision-making, social welfare departments can ensure that interventions are culturally sensitive, contextually relevant, and better tailored to the unique needs of local populations (Fletcher & Harten, 2010). Additionally, the integration of technology and data-driven approaches can help improve response times and resource allocation during crises (Kaufman et al., 2015).

In the context of the Philippines, research has shown that while the DSWD's crisis intervention services are crucial for disaster-affected populations, there are still significant gaps in terms of resource allocation, staff training, and inter-agency collaboration. For instance, a study by Tan (2014) noted that although the DSWD has made strides in expanding its services, it often faces challenges in reaching remote or geographically isolated communities, where the need for crisis intervention is often the most acute. Furthermore, despite the DSWD's efforts to improve its programs, the effectiveness of its services is frequently hindered by inadequate infrastructure and a lack of coordination with local government units and non-governmental organizations.

In summary, while crisis intervention services are a cornerstone of social welfare efforts to mitigate the impacts of crises, their implementation is fraught with challenges related to resource constraints, staff competency, systemic inefficiencies, and lack of coordination. However, there are clear opportunities for improving the effectiveness of these services through greater community involvement, enhanced training, and better integration of technological tools. This study aims to build on existing literature by exploring the specific challenges and opportunities within the DSWD's crisis intervention services, to provide recommendations that can improve their effectiveness and impact.

### Objectives of the Study:-

The primary objective of this study is to explore and analyze the challenges and opportunities encountered by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in the implementation of its crisis intervention services. Specifically, this research aims to:

1. **Identify the key challenges** faced by the DSWD in providing timely, efficient, and comprehensive crisis intervention services to individuals and communities in need.
2. **Examine the factors that contribute to the effectiveness or limitation of the DSWD's** crisis intervention programs, including resource availability, staff training, inter-agency coordination, and bureaucratic processes.
3. **Assess the opportunities for improvement** in the DSWD's crisis intervention services, focusing on potential strategies for enhancing service delivery, community engagement, and collaboration with local and non-governmental organizations.
4. **Evaluate the impact of crisis intervention services** on affected individuals and communities, with an emphasis on how these services meet the immediate needs of vulnerable populations during times of crisis.
5. **Provide recommendations** to inform policy and practice aimed at improving the overall effectiveness, accessibility, and sustainability of crisis intervention services within the DSWD.

Through this investigation, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into how the DSWD can strengthen its crisis intervention initiatives, ensuring better support for individuals and communities facing critical situations.

### Significance of the study:

This study is of great significance for a variety of stakeholders:

#### Students-

It provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in implementing Crisis Intervention Services (CIS). This knowledge is crucial for enriching their understanding of social work practice and its policy implications.

#### Educators-

The research offers a solid framework for teaching crisis intervention and social work practices. It serves as an invaluable resource for developing curricula that effectively address real-world issues within the field.

#### Future Researchers-

By identifying specific areas that require further exploration, this study paves the way for the development of effective strategies to address the challenges encountered by the DSWD in implementing CIS. This opens up significant avenues for impactful research.

#### Government Employees-

The recommendations drawn from this study will contribute to enhancing the delivery of CIS. These insights are essential for informing policy decisions and practical applications, ultimately improving the effectiveness of social services.

## Methodology:-

### Study Design:

The study will use a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between various factors affecting the implementation of crisis intervention services, such as resource availability, staff competency, coordination between agencies, and overall service effectiveness. This design is suitable for identifying trends and patterns that could inform improvements in the DSWD's crisis intervention programs. A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide will be utilized to gather quantitative and qualitative data.

### Population of the study:

A stratified random sampling technique will be used to select participants for the study. The sample will be drawn from DSWD staff and beneficiaries of crisis intervention services. Stratification will ensure that different subgroups are adequately represented, such as field workers, social workers, program managers, and community representatives. The sampling process will follow these steps:

- **DSWD Staff:** A random sample of DSWD staff involved in crisis intervention services will be selected from different levels (e.g., regional offices, field offices, and central office).
- **Beneficiaries of Crisis Intervention Services:** A random sample of individuals or families who have received crisis intervention services from the DSWD will be selected, ensuring representation from various regions and demographics.

The total sample size will consist of approximately 20 participants (5 DSWD staff, and 15 beneficiaries).

### Data Gathering Tools and Procedures:-

The data collection process started with the distribution of the questionnaire to the participants. Participants will have a week to complete the questionnaire, which will be available in printed form. Following the questionnaire, participants will be invited for interviews to further explore themes identified in the initial survey responses. Interviews will be conducted either in person or via virtual platforms, depending on participant availability and preferences.

### Treatment data

All data were stored securely to maintain confidentiality. Quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using statistical tools, while qualitative data from the interviews were examined through thematic analysis to uncover patterns and insights. This integrated approach offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges and identifying potential solutions in crisis intervention services.

## Results and Discussion:-

The presentation of the data includes the following topics: a) demographic profile of the beneficiaries; b) assistance availed by the beneficiaries; and c) extent of satisfaction of the beneficiaries on the availed assistance in terms of service quality along tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

**Table 1:-** Profile of the Respondents.

Category	Freq(n=20)	Rank
<b>1. Age(in years)</b>		
28&below	3	50
29– 37	2	33.3
38– 46	1	16.66
47– 55	6	100
56&above		
<b>2. Sex</b>		
Male	0	0
Female	5	100
	0	0
<b>3. Civil Status</b>		
Single	5	100

Married Widowed Separated	3	60
	2	40
	5	100
4.HighestEducationalAttainment Elementary graduate HighSchoolgraduate College Graduate		
	2	40
	3	60
	5	100
5. Monthlyfamilyincome 5000 & below 5001&above		
6. Occupation Vendor Wageearner Unemployed		
7. Numberoffamilymembers 4 &below 5 – 7 8 &above		
8. Locationofresidence 1st district 2nndistrict		

Problem 1 How is the DSWD ensuring that the aid provided is effectively reaching the most vulnerable and indigent families in need?

The Crisis Intervention Section of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), operating under the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) program, employs a strategic, multi-layered approach to ensure that aid effectively reaches the most vulnerable and indigent families. This methodology encompasses targeted identification, collaboration with local government units (LGUs), prompt needs assessments, and persistent monitoring. By concentrating on marginalized populations and implementing adaptable, community-based strategies, the program ensures that resources are directed to areas of greatest need, thereby, providing essential support to individuals and families in crises.

Problem 2 What measures are in place to ensure the confidentiality and safety of individuals seeking help from the Crisis Intervention Unit?

The DSWD's **Crisis Intervention Unit** takes comprehensive measures to ensure that individuals seeking help are protected, both in terms of their **privacy** and **physical safety**. By maintaining strict confidentiality, providing secure assistance, collaborating with relevant agencies, and training staff on sensitive case management, the DSWD ensures that vulnerable individuals can access the help they need without fear of retribution or exposure. These protocols reflect the DSWD's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of those in crisis while promoting trust and confidence in the services provided.

Problem 3. What strategies can the government implement to effectively address the insufficient funding for the Department of Social Welfare and Development's AICS Programs? Boosting financial resources is vital for improving the quality of services provided to those in need.

To enhance financial support for the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) programs, several strategic initiatives merit consideration.

First, it is imperative to increase budget allocations by formally requesting additional funds within the General Appropriations Act and establishing emergency reserve funds to ensure responsiveness during crises.

Second, strengthening public-private partnerships is essential. Engaging businesses through corporate social responsibility initiatives, along with collaborations with foundations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can provide significant and valuable support.

Furthermore, a variety of funding measures should be introduced, such as targeted taxes, government bonds, crowdfunding platforms, and digital transformation strategies. Exploring cost-sharing arrangements with local government units (LGUs) and investing in proactive initiatives, including health screenings and disaster preparedness, can enhance operational efficiency and reduce costs. Advocacy for legislative support is critical to secure stable funding for AICS programs, including establishing budget mandates that allocate a minimum percentage of the national budget to social welfare initiatives.

Enhancing transparency in fund utilization through regular audits and detailed financial reporting will foster public trust and encourage donor support. Additionally, implementing feedback mechanisms to gather insights from beneficiaries can significantly improve fund allocation and program design.

In conclusion, fostering international cooperation by seeking grants from organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank, coupled with empowering LGUs to finance local initiatives, will further enhance program accessibility.

Overall, exploring new revenue sources, including special taxes on luxury items and innovative crowdfunding campaigns, can effectively address financial gaps and support the sustainability of these vital programs. To enhance financial support for the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (AICS) programs, several strategic initiatives merit consideration.

### **Conclusion:-**

The study concludes that the Department of Social Welfare and Development faces several challenges in implementing Crisis Intervention Services. However, the study also identifies opportunities for improvement, such as the use of technology and the development of partnerships with other organizations.

The majority of the beneficiaries were in the early middle age, women, married, have attained at most a secondary education, belong to income-poor households, unemployed, have a small family structure; and reside in the 2nd district of South Cotabato.

Medical assistance was the most frequently availed assistance by the beneficiaries in the AICS program.

### **Recommendations:-**

The study recommends that the DSWD prioritize the training and development of its personnel, explore alternative funding sources, and establish partnerships with other organizations to enhance the delivery of Crisis Intervention Services.

Also, It was recommended that the provincial government conduct demographic profiling of its constituents particularly the indigents to establish additional programs and assistance that are beneficial to them. Also, they may allot and request additional funding intended solely for medical assistance to further extend help to individuals in dire need of such assistance.

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